REVOLUTION AND COUNTERREVOLUTION:

U.S.-NICARAGUAN RELATIONS SUBSEQUENT TO THE 1979 NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

by

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ABSTRACT

Historically, the United States has displayed a marked intolerance for revolutionary activity in Latin America. Its aversion to Latin American revolution stems from the conviction that U.S. preeminence and economic interests in the Western Hemisphere are inextricably linked to the exclusion of foreign intervention, regional stability, and cooperative relations with its Latin American neighbors. Given this particular definition of national and security interests, the assertion of the United States' control and influence over hemispheric affairs has been the cornerstone of its Latin American foreign policy. Accordingly, Washington has often responded to such activity with economic sanctions, invasion, and counterrevolution. The experience of the Nicaraguan Sandinista regime is only a recent a example of Washington's reflexive response.

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CHAPTER ONE:

WASHINGTON'S AVERSION TO LATIN AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS

In view of the destabilization of the Central American region in the 1980s resulting from the increasingly tense relationship between the United States government and the Sandinista regime in Managua, this study attempts to present an objective analysis of that relationship by focusing on the strategies and motivations of the respective governments as they reacted to each other. This chapter examines a variety of issues which have decisively influenced the development of the U.S.-Latin American relationship and also suggests the urgent need for a reassessment of Washington's preferred policy instruments to resolve sensitive issues which affect the United States' national and security interests as well as those of the Latin American nations.

As exemplified by the U.S.-Nicaraguan controversy of the 1980s, the United States has largely defined its national interests in Latin America within a security framework. This analysis contends that the United States has yet to construct a foreign policy to enhance its long-term security interests in the region because of its adherence to a narrow definition of national interests concentrating primarily on short-term gains. The present crisis in U.S.-Nicaraguan relations is only the most recent manifestation of this chronic failure of U.S.-Latin American foreign policy.

Much of this failure can be traced to the United States'

perception that Latin America has been, and continues to be, subordinate to U.S. authority. Such a perception has contributed to the United States' propensity to want to control events in the region which, in turn, has occasioned frequent intervention by the United States in the domestic affairs of the Latin American republics.

As witnessed by the repeated U.S. interventions in the Caribbean states toward the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the United States grew quite accustomed to freely exercising its authority in Latin America. While there was a brief hiatus of U.S. intervention during the period of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy" in the 1930s and 1940s, the United States, once again, resorted to unilateral action to secure its national interests during the 1950s and 1960s. For the two decades immediately following World War II, the United States dominated the world political economy and exploited its economic preeminence in the international system to secure its geopolitical objectives. When regimes in the region were not to Washington's liking, and all else failed to produce its preferred outcome of events, invasion, counterrevolution, and intervention were deemed acceptable alternatives to diplomacy. This is what happened in Guatemala in 1954, Cuba in 1961, and the Dominican Republic in 1965.

While the use of such blunt policy instruments tended to generate resentment toward the United States in Latin America, Washington was usually satisfied with the results. The

exception, of course, was the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and it was not until the Nicaraguan Revolution in 1979 that the United States experienced another unsettling experience of that magnitude.

Events of the late 1970s in Nicaragua suggested that times had, indeed, changed. As will be shown later in this chapter, the post-hegemonic order of the world political economy has imposed constraints upon the United States which have diminished its geopolitical influence. This has been true even in a region which has generally been perceived to be in the United States' "own backyard."

Having established the National Guard in Nicaragua in the 1930s, the United States had laid the foundation for the tyranny of the Somoza dynasty which would rule Nicaragua for the next forty-three years. However, during the 1978-1979 period, Washington failed to secure its preferred outcome. The United States could no longer impose its will in the region as it had done so frequently since the late 1800s.

As detailed in Chapter Two of this thesis, despite arduous efforts to prevent the ascendancy of the Sandinistas following Somoza's ouster in 1979, the Carter administration was unable to engineer the events which would facilitate a transition of power to a moderate regime in Nicaragua. However, striving to avoid the same mistakes in Nicaragua that the United States had made in Castro's Cuba in 1959 and 1960, which, in effect, firmly entrenched Cuba in the Soviet bloc for economic and military assistance, the Carter administra-

tion initially demonstrated a willingness to work with the Sandinista regime.

The argument presented in Chapter Three maintains that this accommodationist approach has been completely abandoned by the Reagan administration; military measures have supplanted diplomatic dialogue. Since 1981, the Reagan administration has supported the counterrevolutionaries, or *contras* as they are more popularly known, to overthrow the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

While its Latin American policy strives to protect the security interests of the United States as well as those of its Latin American neighbors, support for the *contras* has been counterproductive to the expressed aims of that policy. Reluctant to pursue diplomatic channels to resolve this crisis, the current policy has had the effect of destabilizing the region. An action-reaction phenomenon has been set in motion. As the United States has supplied assistance to the *contras*, the Sandinista regime has appealed to the Soviet bloc for support. With Soviet bloc assistance and their own manpower resources the Sandinistas' armed forces presently exceeds the combined men in arms of the Central American republics. In short, in the absence of a sincere diplomatic dialogue between the United States and Nicaragua, the Central American region has become a militarized zone.

As already mentioned, the present U.S.-Nicaraguan controversy is only the most recent manifestation of the United States' failed Latin American foreign policy. To

understand the current difficulties in U.S.-Latin American relations, and the crisis in U.S.-Nicaraguan relations in particular, requires an examination not only of the underlying assumptions of the United States' security interests in the region but also of the United States' foreign policy which has been designed ostensibly to protect those interests.

THE UNITED STATES' PURSUIT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Latin America has not always commanded the prominent position on the United States' foreign policy agenda that it has assumed since the late 1970s as a result of the revolutionary turmoil in Central America. Nonetheless, it is a region which has hardly escaped the notice of U.S. policy-makers throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The vital strategic value of this region to its national interests has consistently been stressed in the United States' Latin American foreign policy. This strategic orientation is a reflection of the emphasis which has traditionally been placed upon the defense and security dimensions of those interests in the Western Hemisphere.

Historically, the United States has responded unfavorably to revolutionary movements in Latin America believing that they constitute a threat to North American security by providing an opportunity for foreign intervention in the hemisphere, thereby placing the United States at a disadvantage in exercising dominance over its southern neighbors as it typically has done. The architects of U.S.-Latin American

foreign policy have been primarily concerned with guarding against this eventuality.

For more than a century and a half the United States has presumed to interfere in the internal affairs of its Latin American neighbors fearing that to do otherwise would be detrimental to its national interests. As argued by Morris J. Blachman, *et al.*, U.S. policymakers have been guided by a hegemonic strategic vision and their primary responsibility has been "...to identify the source of any threats that might lead to foreign intervention (and thereby jeopardize U.S. security) and to devise methods for dealing with them."[1]

As early as 1823, President James Monroe warned that any attempt at foreign intervention in the Western Hemisphere would be considered "...as dangerous to our peace and safety."[2] Unarguably, when first promulgated in 1823, the ambition of the Monroe Doctrine could not be vigorously pursued; the United States did not have the wherewithal to defend its preposterous claim as the sole power in the hemisphere. It did, however, set the stage for what was to come. By the end of the nineteenth century this situation had begun to change. As the economic, military, and political power of the United States grew, its power and influence in the Western Hemisphere went virtually unopposed.

In his Annual Message to Congress on December 6, 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt announced that:

> ...chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a

> general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.[3]

Revolutions were to be discouraged, and inept and corrupt financial practices were to be eliminated. If these conditions of political and economic instability were allowed to persist, Washington feared that the region would be vulnerable to extracontintental influence (viz., Europe). In other words, these conditions threatened the exercise of U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere, and this was viewed as an intolerable situation in Washington.

Consequently, Washington consistently stressed the importance of having stable, predictable, and pro-U.S. governments in the hemisphere. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, when the United States achieved hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, it became apparent that any foreign interference in Latin American affairs would be disdained by the United States government. Frankly, the United States appeared to regard any such action as its sole prerogative and sought to eliminate any foreign presence that might take the liberty of capitalizing on regional political, social, and economic instability, thereby threatening the U.S. hegemonic position in the hemisphere.

This is the logic which influenced the United States' Caribbean policy in the decades immediately preceding the

inauguration of Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy" in 1933. During this period the United States intervened repeatedly in Panama, Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.

Toward the close of the nineteenth century the Caribbean became recognized as a trade route of immense significance. While the United States had increased its financial stake in the region (U.S. investors were especially attracted to Cuba's sugar industry), European investment in the region remained substantial. After the Spanish American War Spain's influence in the Caribbean had declined, but other European powers displayed an avid interest in foreign trade and investment in the region. As evidenced by their efforts to intervene in Venezuela and the Dominican Republic and to extend their influence into Haiti, Mexico, and elsewhere, Germany and Italy seemed particularly anxious to fill the void created by Spain's decline.[4]

This European interest was perceived as a threat to North American security. As the Caribbean governments were dominated by economic and political turmoil, there was always the possibility of a European power taking advantage of the regional instability, and posing a potential threat to the United States' interests in the hemisphere.

The administrations of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson sought to arrest the region's chronic instability and financial chaos. Each insisted that the Caribbean nations accept reforms designed to assure financial solvency and remove the potential danger of foreign interven-

tion. While the establishment of customs receiverships was the preferred instrument to eliminate gross abuses and improve economic conditions, throughout the twentieth century Washington's preoccupation with hemispheric security led successive administrations to intervene with military force to remove unfriendly governments or to prevent such governments from taking power.

The Roosevelt administration sought the control of the isthmian canal in Panama not only because of its commercial value but also because of the enhanced naval capabilities it would offer to the country which controlled the canal. This rationale set the stage for U.S. intervention in the Panama Revolution in 1903 and the ultimate control of the canal by the United States.

When Haiti and the Dominican Republic resisted United States' interference in their internal affairs, the Wilson administration responded with armed force. Conditions of political and economic instability could not be allowed to prevail in the region.

Nicaragua was another victim of U.S. military occupation. The Marines arrived in Nicaragua in 1909. When they left in January 1933, a U.S.-trained domestic police force was there to take their place. In 1932, Anastasio Somoza Garcia had assumed command of the National Guard. By 1937, he had assumed the presidency. The National Guard, a professional army, was the power behind the Somoza dictatorship which would have lasting consequences not only for Nicaragua but for the

United States as well.

Since World War II and the onset of the Cold War, Washington has regarded communism as its principal and implacable enemy. By the 1940s, Latin America was experiencing fundamental changes in the region's social, political, and economic structures. The inequitable distribution of economic prosperity throughout the region had stimulated political and social unrest, and Washington feared that the Soviet Union could take advantage of this revolutionary turmoil. Hence, in the years immediately following the war, the primary objectives of the United States in Latin America were to prevent Soviet expansion and to support anti-communist governments in the region.

Apparently, Washington attached little significance to the fact that such revolutionary ferment might not be communist-inspired, but rather might be caused by indigenous conditions of social inequality and injustice. This view certainly did not influence Washington's thinking in 1947 when it proceeded to strengthen the inter-American system against perceived communist aggression by signing the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, more commonly known as the Rio Treaty, to be followed in 1948 by the establishment of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Bogota, Colombia.

The signatories of the Rio Treaty agreed to peacefully resolve disputes among themselves, declared that an act of aggression against one member state would be interpreted as an attack against all members, and created an inter-American

security system in which a two-thirds vote by the foreign ministers would be sufficient to enforce sanctions against any American state found guilty of committing an act of aggression against another. The Charter of the OAS established a multilateral political organization with oversight authority for the peaceful settlement of disputes among the American states.

While these initiatives stemmed from a mutual desire for a stronger regional alliance following the war, interestingly, the United States and the Latin American nations viewed these agreements from different perspectives. On the one hand, Washington was determined to prevent the encroachment of communism in the Western Hemisphere and sought to create a hemispheric alliance to thwart communist expansion. While political and security relations were made multilateral, the United States maintained bilateral military agreements with the Latin American nations to facilitate the standardization of weaponry throughout the Americas which would help strengthen the Latin American militaries so that they might resist Soviet aggression. However, the military aid program ignored the obvious; well-trained and well-equipped militaries which would no doubt strengthen the Americas' security mechanism could also have serious internal political ramifications in the Latin American countries.

Unlike the United States, the Latin Americans were not primarily motivated by a concern to create a hemispheric military apparatus to combat an external enemy. For their

part, the Latin Americans sought to establish a regional collective security alliance to peacefully resolve member disputes and to defuse tensions which could explode into a regional war. They also viewed the 1947 and 1948 initiatives as mechanisms which could reconcile the overwhelming economic and military superiority of the United States as well as its influence with their aspirations to be politically independent and legally sovereign states.

Moreover, the Latin Americans had urged the United States for the development of a large-scale program of economic reconstruction for the region, something similar to the United States' Marshall Plan for Europe. However, they were to be disappointed by Washington's response to their appeals. An economic assistance program akin to the Marshall Plan was not forthcoming. Rather Washington emphasized the significance of private domestic and foreign investment for Latin American economic development.[5]

While the emphasis of the Rio Treaty and the OAS was on collective security arrangements, events in the 1950s and 1960s suggested that the United States was not adverse to resorting to unilateral action to secure its national interests. The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations undertook actions to counter the spread of communism and Soviet influence in the hemisphere. In 1954, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), under Eisenhower, intervened in Guatemala. In 1961, Kennedy authorized an invasion of Cuban emigres, trained by the CIA, into Cuba. Later, during the

1962 Cuban missile crisis, he authorized a naval blockade to force the withdrawal of Soviet offensive missiles from the island. In 1965, Johnson ordered the invasion of the Dominican Republic by American troops.

More recently, in the 1980s, the Reagan administration has targeted the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and has demonstrated that it is willing to take extraordinary measures to protect this region from falling victim to any foreign influence, notably that of the Soviet Union and Cuba. Nicaragua has been labelled a "crucial steppingstone for Cuban and Soviet efforts to promote armed insurgency in Central America."[6] Given the Reagan administration's hostile rhetoric which clearly positions the Central American struggle within an East-West framework, it is imperative to address some of the more frequently expressed concerns over Soviet intentions in the Western Hemisphere.

In a recent analysis of U.S.-Latin American policy concerns, Margaret D. Hayes maintains:

> ...the United States' principal interest in the area is to maintain its unchallenged and unconstrained freedom of movement through the region. The principal threat to U.S. security lies in the emergence of governments that would provide bases from which the United States' enemies might operate to constrain U.S. freedom of access throughout the region.[7]

The sea lanes of the Caribbean represent the primary passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans for both commercial and naval traffic. With half of U.S. trade, two-thirds of

imported oil, and roughly three-quarters of troop reinforcements expected to pass through the Caribbean Basin in the event of a NATO conflict, the United States is concerned that the region could be vulnerable to Soviet and/or Cuban penetration.[8]

While extraordinarily unlikely militarily, the Soviet Union could conceivably mount a damaging interdiction campaign against the Caribbean sea lanes. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the Soviet Union's military resources are not unbounded and are hampered by constraints similar to those of the U.S. military. If Moscow were to attempt any interdiction of the sea lanes, the United States would most assuredly retaliate and such action need not be confined to the Caribbean Basin area, thereby drawing upon the military personnel, supplies, equipment, fuel and ammunition needed to effectively wage an interdiction campaign.[9] Is the Soviet Union willing to risk a major confrontation with the United States?

Latin America appears to be of marginal importance to Moscow. The Kremlin's cost of underwriting Fidel Castro's Cuba has not diminished over the years; the Kremlin leadership has not appeared willing to subsidize the costs of another Cuba.[10] This was especially evident by the failure of Salvador Allende to attract significant Soviet funding for his socialist experiment in Chile between 1970-1973.

While Moscow might offer quiet encouragement to revolutionary movements in Latin America, the Kremlin realizes that

neither Moscow nor its satellites can operate with impunity. If, for example, Nicaragua were to launch an attack against one of its neighbors, under the terms of the 1947 Rio Treaty, the United States would be justified in resorting to military action to come to the defense of that nation. If the Sandinistas provide the opportunity to do so, there is no reason to believe that the United States would refrain from retaliatory action. It might even be argued that the United States would welcome this opportunity.

Moscow has given no indication that it anticipates an imminent collapse of U.S. power in the region and is aware that there are definite limits to U.S. tolerance for Soviet transgressions in the Western Hemisphere. The 1962 Cuban missile crisis erased any doubt that the United States would countenance the introduction of nuclear weapons in the region by the Soviet Union.

If the Soviet Union were to establish military basing facilities in Nicaragua, the disruption of the geopolitical strategic balance in the hemisphere would undoubtedly precipitate a direct military confrontation with the United States. The question must be asked: Is the Kremlin ready to bear the enormous consequences of such a step?

There is no reason to believe the Kremlin is ready to risk war with the United States. Since the Cuban missile crisis, the Kremlin has been sensitive to Washington's reactions to Soviet movements in the Latin American and Caribbean Basin area, has chosen to move cautiously, and has

not demonstrated any willingness to resort to offensive military power to assert its presence in the region.

However, while the Soviet Union has been circumspect in its dealings in an area generally regarded as part of the U.S. sphere of influence, this is not to infer that Moscow has no interest in the area. As William M. LeoGrande argues:

> ...Political turmoil in Central America is generally beneficial to the Soviet Union. It distracts U.S. attention from issues that are of more interest to Moscow, it corrodes U.S. relations with Latin America, and it exacerbates political debate within the United States, making it all the more difficult to achieve a foreign policy consensus.[11]

At issue is not whether the United States has legitimate national interests at stake in the region. Interests in defensive considerations, real threats to U.S. power and influence, and fair access to the economic resources of Latin America cannot be forgotten or ignored.

Latin America represents a sizeable market for U.S. manufactures and agricultural products. In fact, by the late 1970s Latin America was importing in excess of $2.5 billion worth of U.S. farm products. And, as a percentage of total U.S. investment abroad, Latin America represented more than nineteen percent of all U.S. foreign investment.[12] These figures are not insignificant. The United States clearly has an interest in guaranteeing that Latin American resources and markets remain part of the international trading system.

With respect to security considerations, it is true that

given the tremendous innovations in military technology and intelligence-gathering capabilities, the Soviet Union might not enjoy a significant strategic advantage by establishing a forward military base in Latin America. It is also true that given the limited dependency of the United States on Latin America for strategic raw material imports (i.e., manganese, tantalum, columbium, bauxite), the United States' access to these imports may not be absolutely vital.[13] However, in the event of an international crisis, there is no doubt that most people in the United States would be considerably more comfortable if no Soviet military base was located in Latin America. Similarly, they would prefer that no disruption in access to strategic raw materials occur, regardless of how critical to vital security interests. And certainly, a rigorous defense would be recommended against any sea lane interdiction effort.

These are the kinds of issues which affect the United States' national and security interests that concern U.S. policymakers. However, are the interests of the United States best served by monopolizing control and virtually excluding the Latin American nations from participation in the regional decision making process in matters which affect their own security interests as well as those of the United States?

While the United States was once able to exercise a domineering will over hemispheric affairs without fear of serious reprisal for such action, this situation no longer prevails. Having recognized that legitimate interests are at

stake in the region, the issue then becomes how the United States can most favorably influence the future course of Latin American development to safeguard those interests. Under such changing circumstances, the United States might be more successful in securing its long-term national and security interests in the region if the familiar means of pressure and force were renounced in favor of persuasion, patience, and self-restraint.

A changing international climate has changed the rules of the game. At issue is whether the rewards gained from the exercise of hemispheric dominance are as great as those gained when the impulse to unilaterally pursue objectives is sharply curbed and a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect obtains. The remaining sections of this chapter focus upon this changing international system, Latin America's integration into that system, and the challenge that it presents to the United States' definition of security in Latin America.

A CHANGING INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

From 1945 until 1967, the United States' domination of the world political economy was virtually undisputed. U.S. hegemony of the global economic forces during this period can best be explained by the unique position in which this country found itself after World War II; the United States had emerged from the war not merely intact but with a booming economy. In contrast, Germany and Japan had been defeated, and the economies of our European allies had been crippled by the war

effort.

Following the war, the United States proceeded to develop strong alliances with Western Europe and Japan who were to become the United States' principal trading partners and beneficiaries of economic assistance and military protection. Given the massive injections of developmental and military assistance, Western Europe and Japan functioned as virtual client states of the United States throughout the 1950s. Under these conditions, the United States' dominant position in the international system encountered no serious opposition for a generation following World War II.[14]

However, by the late 1960s these alliances had begun to show signs of strain. By 1967, the United States was in a period of decelerated growth and the U.S. dollar was suffering the effects of the currency and gold crises.[13] Whereas throughout the 1950s the United States had dominated the markets of the industrialized economies of Western Europe and Japan, by the end of the 1960s this situation no longer obtained. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, one of the most significant effects of this period of relative economic stagnation was "...a striking decline in the competitiveness of U.S.-based production organizations compared with those located in Japan and Western Europe..."[15]

Western Europe and Japan had been transformed by the reconstruction of their economies and were no longer merely client states following the leadership of the United States. These nations had emerged as strong rivals of the United

States' industrial power, and, in fact, Europe and Japan had become centers of competition for U.S.-based firms.

The world political economy has become increasingly defined by this rivalry between the great industrial powers. Today, Western European and Japanese steel, automobile, and electronics industries are undercutting U.S.-based firms not only abroad but also within the U.S. home market itself. Clearly, the United States' once indomitable position of hegemony in the world political economy is no longer unchallenged.

LATIN AMERICA'S INTEGRATION INTO THE WORLD POLITICAL ECONOMY

According to Michael J. Kryzanek,

> ...Latin America remains a region desperately in need of industrialization, new investment, expanded markets, and greater financial security, but now it is approaching these problems much differently. Governmental and business leaders are actively pursuing trade and capital formation arrangements on a worldwide scale and in the process have left the United States without the assurance that its commercial and financial interests will be offered primary consideration.[17]

The competition between the United States, Western Europe, and Japan has intensified throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and, as a region rich in natural resources, Latin America has become a target of the sharpening rivalry between these industrial powers. These countries have increasingly regarded Latin America as a source of cheap raw materials and low-priced labor, as well as an attractive overseas market for

their goods. As C. Fred Bergsten, former U.S. Under Secretary of the Treasury, observes:

> ...Japan and several European countries have concluded that they must fashion their own "resources diplomacy" as centerpieces of their own foreign policies, and hence Latin America is in some senses a new battleground for competition among the industrialized countries.[18]

As a result of Japan's strategic dependency, Japanese multinationals began to invest heavily in Latin America after World War II. These firms invested primarily in the mining industries of Bolivia, Chile, Mexico, and Peru to guarantee sources of iron and copper ore for their industries.[19]

Similarly, by 1965, West Germany had already invested approximately DM 1.6 billion in Latin America. In search of foodstuffs and raw materials, West Germany concentrated its investments primarily in Brazil, Peru, and Mexico. Accordingly, Latin America represented a twenty percent share of that nation's investments; ranked second in total German investments, exceeded only by Europe with fifty-four percent.[20]

A recent study conducted by Heraldo Munoz provides the following data on foreign investment in Latin America:

> ...since 1967 the U.S. presence has declined in importance, owing particularly to the fast growth of Japanese investment in the region. While in 1967 the United States accounted for 63.8 percent of external investment in Latin America, in 1974 it accounted for only 50 percent; during the same period, the relative partici-

> pation of the EEC [European Economic Community] grew from 17.5 percent to 25 percent and that of Japan jumped from 2.2 percent to 22 percent.[21]

Although Latin America remains tightly integrated into the American economic system by virtue of foreign trade, private investment, and public investment in the form of aid programs, and while the United States remains Latin America's major trading partner, nonetheless Latin America has sought to reduce its dependency on the United States. As Margaret D. Hayes recognizes, "economic issues are the chief determinants of Latin American foreign policy..."[22] As Latin America has been primarily concerned with continued economic growth in the region, it welcomed the reemergence of Europe and the emergence of Japan in the aftermath of World War II as key actors in the global economy. However, the United States has had some difficulty adjusting to the reality of this multipolar international economy in which European and Japanese investments compete with the United States for Latin American goods and markets, and, one in which Latin America is no longer a passive and docile trading partner willing to accept the inequities of the partnership.[23]

Recognizing that the scales have been tipped in the United States' favor in the trade equation, Latin Americans have sought to redress this imbalance by diversifying their economies into areas of manufacturing, heavy industry, and to some extent high technology in an effort to compete more effectively in the global economy. Although the region's debt

burden is staggering, the economies of Brazil, Venezuela, and Argentina are considered among the most rapidly developing, most advanced, and most diversified in the developing world.

This transformation of the international system has had a significant impact on Latin America. As Munoz observes:

> ...The phenomenon of redistribution or relocation of production at the world level implies that the old international division of labor between advanced exporters of manufactures...and underdeveloped exporters of raw materials...is being substantially modified. Consequently, the pattern of insertion of Latin America into the world economy is also experiencing a transformation.[24]

A CHALLENGE TO THE UNITED STATES' DEFINITION OF SECURITY IN LATIN AMERICA

Yet the changing economic environment is only one manifestation of the transformation in U.S.-Latin American relations. Latin America's integration into the world political economy has increased the region's aspirations and bargaining power *vis-a-vis* the industrialized countries and has altered the balance in the U.S.-Latin American relationship which for more than a century and a half has been guided by the United States' hegemonic presumption. However, this continued presumption ignores the changes in the world political economy and the steady erosion of its hegemonic position among the global economic forces. Since 1967, the international system has become increasingly decentralized and the United States is no longer the undisputed world hegemonic power. Given this new political context, its traditional

reliance on "gunboat diplomacy" to enforce agreements with Latin American governments is arrogant and inappropriate.

Past transgressions and interference—both overt and covert—by the United States in their domestic affairs have long rankled the Latin Americans and this festering resentment has given voice to regional peace initiatives such as the Contadora process and others which challenge the United States' unique definition of security.

Stability in Latin America was of paramount importance to this U.S. definition of security. In the overwhelmingly inegalitarian societies of Latin America, however, stability was often synonomous with the preservation of the *status quo*, and the preservation of the *status quo* could usually be translated into the preservation of the privileged position of Latin America's elites, a situation which militated against meaningful social reform.

However, the Latin American nations are now taking an unprecedented stance *vis-a-vis* the United States. According to Terry Karl, "...Latin American nations have put forward their own definitions of collective security," which link hemispheric peace to "...social reform as well as to the more traditional balance of military power between the United States and the Soviet Union."[25] While acutely aware of U.S. security interests in the region, they insist upon "...Latin American sovereignty to cope with revolutionary conflict in a setting of sharpened global competition."[26]

Contadora and other regional forums challenge the United

States' definition of hemispheric security. However, while these regional actors seek an alternative to Washington's military agenda to settle disputes, they are not prepared to ignore Washington's historical influence in the region. Although determined to assert their sovereignty, their interests are closely connected to those of the United States.

Certainly, it is in their interests as well that they retain access to international markets and economic resources. Similarly, regional stability is as important to the Latin American nations as it is to the United States. After all, they are the victims of the regional turmoil and instability. However, whereas Washington has identified communism and the Soviet Union (and its surrogates) as the cause of instability, the Latin Americans have begun to look elsewhere for the answer. They have identified the need for reforms to improve the distribution of economic and political resources throughout the region to alleviate the fundamental causes of regional instability.

These nations resent the United States' hegemonic intentions toward their region and do not aspire to client-state status of the Soviet Union. Issues such as the establishment of foreign miiltary bases and the introduction of offensive military capabilities into Latin America have consistently been addressed in the various mediation efforts to resolve the Nicaraguan conflict. Hence, while these regional actors support a peaceful settlement which excludes the United States' preferred military option, there is no

reason to assume that they are fundamentally opposed to the United States' core security and economic interests in Latin America.

Although the United States has been accustomed to having a free rein in Latin America, a restraining influence on its familiar blunt policy approach to the region is being exerted by the contemporary international system and Latin America's present position within that system. While in the past the United States' unique security definition encountered little resistance in the region, hemispheric security is no longer recognized as Washington's exclusive prerogative.

As the discussion in the following chapters suggests, the United States' present policy, with its ideological bias that inhibits constructive dialogue with the Sandinista regime, has failed to achieve its objectives. It is becoming abundantly clear that the United States' pursuit of security in Latin America has directly contributed to the escalating tensions in Central America, and, if this situation is allowed to prevail, in all likelihood, regional hostilities will continue unabated and direct military confrontation involving U.S. armed forces could become a reality. It is also becoming increasingly clear that the Latin American nations view this explosive situation with growing apprehension.

NOTES

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[3]*Roosevelt Corollary* (1904).

[4]Dana G. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean 1900-1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 4-7.

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[7]Margaret D. Hayes, *Latin America and the U.S. National Interest: A Basis for U.S. Foreign Policy* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1984), p. 220.

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[14]Abraham F. Lowenthal, "The United States And Latin America: Ending The Hegemonic Presumption," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 55, no. 1, October 1976, p. 204.

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[16]Ibid.

[17]Michael J. Kryzanek, *U.S.-Latin American Relations*, p. 203.

[18]C.Fred Bergsten quoted in Heraldo Munoz, "The Strategic Dependence of the Centers and the Economic Importance of the Latin American Periphery," in *From Dependency to Development*, p. 85.

[19]Ibid., p. 63-65.

[20]Ibid., p. 65.

[21]Ibid., p. 79

[22]Margaret D. Hayes, *Latin America and the U.S. National Interest: A Basis for U.S. Foreign Policy*, p. 20.

[23]James R. Kurth, "The New Realism in U.S.-Latin American Relations: Principles for a New U.S. Foreign Policy," in *FROM GUNBOATS TO DIPLOMACY New U.S. Policies for Latin America*, ed. Richard Newfarmer (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 6.

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CHAPTER TWO:

THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

This chapter examines the difficulties encountered by the Carter administration in its attempts to construct a viable foreign policy consistent with the United States' national security interests in Nicaragua's revolutionary setting in the late 1970s. The events of the revolution are chronicled with a focus on the administration's relationship with the FSLN revolutionary movement both during the civil war and immediately following the July 1979 victory.

For more than four decades the Nicaraguan people suffered under the tyranny and corruption of the Somoza dictatorship. The origins of the dictatorship can be traced to the United States' insistence on stability in Nicaragua. The search for stability had prompted the Taft administration to dispatch a U.S. Marine contingent to Nicaragua on August 4, 1912. When U.S. military forces were withdrawn in 1933, their task had been transferred to the U.S.-trained National Guard under the command of Anastasio Somoza Garcia. Continued U.S. support and the National Guard were the powers behind the dictatorship.

However, stability remained an elusive goal. Although the government of Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the last of the Somoza family to rule in Nicaragua, had successfully suppressed insurgencies in the past, the mass insurrections which were led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente*

Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional—FSLN) that began in September of 1978 would culminate in the demise of that dictatorship.

While the Somoza dynasty did not collapse until July 1979, the 1970s was a decade of growing turbulence within Nicaragua, a decade of popular unrest in which there was increasing disaffection with the Somoza dictatorship across broad segments of Nicaraguan society. On December 23, 1972, a massive earthquake struck Managua, destroying seventy-five percent of the city's housing and ninety percent of its commercial capacity. Conservative estimates placed the damage at $772 million.[1] In the aftermath of the earthquake, the Somoza government and the National Guard, ostensibly engaged in the reconstruction process, siezed the opportunity to siphon vast sums from international relief assistance, while the capital city lay in ruins.

From 1972 onward, opposition to the Somoza government within Nicaragua gained momentum. In 1974, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro Cardenal, a social democrat, formed the Democratic Liberation Union (*Union Democratica de Liberacion*—UDEL) which organized the moderate, middle class opposition identified within seven opposition political parties and two labor confederations operating in Nicaragua.

In addition, in the 1960s and 1970s, opposition to the regime spread throughout Nicaragua's traditionally conservative Roman Catholic Church which previously had been a stalwart supporter of the regime. The Catholic Church had

begun to undergo a transformation in the 1960s which would have a profound influence in Latin America. The 1962 Second Vatican Council committed the Roman Catholic Church to promote and defend the interests of the world's poor; this commitment was further strengthened in 1968 at the Latin American Bishops Conference in Medellin, Colombia.

The transformation occurring throughout the Latin American Catholic Church had powerful political implications in Nicaragua. The lower clergy as well as the conservative Church hierarchy under Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo were increasingly influenced by the new emphases of Vatican II and Medellin. Medellin had endorsed a call to social and political activism by the Church and its members to seek the redress of injuries suffered by the poor. Acceptance of the desperate condition of poverty and the traditional acquiescence to the established political order were rejected in favor of social justice.

Progressive priests and religious associated with the Jesuit, Maryknoll, Capuchin and Trappist orders in Nicaragua organized Christian base communities (*communidades evangelicas de base*—CEBs) which advocated social action, community improvement, and improved government services. Not surprisingly, these organizational activities calling for political and social change were brutally suppressed by Somoza's National Guard. But the repression only led to increased social awareness of the injustice of the Somoza system and to the radicalization of various CEB movements and their members.

Organizing the people during the insurrectionary phase was easier in the rural and urban communities were the CEBs were well established and most active. As Michael Dodson observes, "these institutions of religious inspiration were...effective vehicles of grass-roots political action in the revolutionary setting of the popular insurrection."[2]

Unlike the progressive priests and religious who worked at the grass-roots level with the poor, the Nicaraguan bishops were wary of adopting radical tactics which would precipitate a complete break with the Somoza regime. Many of the pastoral letters and statements of the Church hierarchy reflect this traditional conservatism and preference for moderation.

Although the June 29, 1971 pastoral urged Christians to work towards a more responsive political order, it was not a revolutionary declaration. While the March 19, 1972 pastoral advocated the need for structural changes within the existing political order, this commitment was not reaffirmed in the pastorals issued in 1974.

As Somoza and his National Guard engaged in a brutal campaign to crush the regime's opposition, the conservative Church hierarchy pursued a course of national dialogue in cooperation with other opposition groups to remove Somoza and to secure a transition to a moderate successor. In January 1977, Nicaragua's Roman Catholic Bishops joined in a pastoral letter critical of the brutal tactics of Somoza's National Guard; however, it did not approve of the use of armed opposition against the regime. Events were to change so

dramatically in 1978 that the Church hierarchy reluctantly asserted the justification for collective armed resistance.[3]

More and more of the Nicaraguan clergy and laity had become convinced that only radical action could bring about the removal of Somoza and, hence, the desperately needed social change in the country. Some members of the clergy (i.e., Ernesto Cardenal, Fernando Cardenal, Miguel d'Escoto Brockman) and laypersons alike gradually came to identify themselves with the militant leftists spearheaded by the FSLN.[4]

The 1970s was a decade of transformation for the FSLN as well. Founded in 1961, the FSLN remained a small and isolated guerrilla organization throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. By the end of the decade, however, the FSLN would transform the political landscape in Nicaragua.

In 1975 and 1976, the National Guard went on a killing spree in an exhaustive effort to annihilate opposition to the Somoza regime. Amidst the wholesale slaughter in the countryside, the *Frente* split into three tendencies, or factions, with each faction espousing a particular strategy to win the war of liberation. The discord arose over their respective assessments of the revolutionary potential of the different social classes within Nicaragua.

The Prolonged People's War tendency (*Guerra Prolongada Popular*—GPP), under the leadership of Tomas Borge and Henry Ruiz, had greater faith in the peasants in the mountainous regions, while Jaime Wheelock Roman, Luis Carrion, and Carlos

Roberto Huembes (to be succeeded after his death by Carlos Nunez Tellez) of the Proletarian tendency (*Tendencia Proletaria*—TP) believed that efforts should be concentrated on organizing the working class in the urban centers.[5] Whereas U.S. imperialism was recognized by the GPP as Nicaragua's principal enemy, the TP identified the Somoza dictatorship as the instrument of U.S. imperialism which must first be destroyed.

While members of both tendencies agreed that only a long-term struggle could lead to victory, they were polarized over the validity of guerrilla warfare versus mass struggle as the most effective means of achieving that victory. The TP argued that armed struggle in the mountains was a futile effort and, according to Donald C. Hodges, "...favored a long-term strategy aimed at preparing the workers for a nationwide political strike supported by local uprisings and armed actions."[6]

On the other hand, Daniel and Humberto Ortega Saavedra of the Insurrectional tendency (*Tendencia Insurrecional* or *Terceristas* - the Third Way [TI]) looked toward the petite bourgeoisie and others in the middle sector and waited for the most propitious moment to launch the civil war. The TI had emerged from the guerrilla warfare-mass struggle debate; its insurrectionalist strategy contradicted the prevailing notion that a protracted war was the solution to end the exploitation of either the Somoza dictatorship or U.S. imperialism and combined the GPP and TP strategies.

As Hodges maintains,

> ...the original plan was to organize the masses to support the guerrillas, but a different strategy emerged in which the guerrillas provided armed support for the people. Originally, it was thought that the guerrillas might defeat the National Guard, but it was discovered that only the armed people could do so. Alone, the guerrillas could never match the enemy's numbers and firepower.[7]

The philosophical orientations of the various tendencies added yet another dimension to the controversy. Most of the movement's leadership were admittedly adherents of Marxist-Leninist ideology. They looked toward Marxism-Leninism, a combination of Marx's analysis of capitalism and Lenin's doctrines of revolutionary action, for an adequate socio-economic theory of Nicaragua's political and economic condition and for justification of revolution as a means to relieve the condition of exploitation and oppression.

However, the FSLN leadership was divided over the issue of whether ideological purity was essential to the success of the movement. Of the three tendencies, the TP was the most ideologically pure. Given Nicaragua's economic history which was oriented toward agribusiness and industrial development, Jaime Wheelock argued that the classic Marxist proletarian struggle was indeed possible in Nicaragua. In time, his ideological commitment evolved to accommodate practical concerns. While he originally objected to the dilution of Marxist-Leninist ideology in the movement, he would later become a principal advocate of Nicaragua's mixed-economy model

following the 1979 triumph.

The Marxist-Leninist orientation prevailed in the FSLN until the TI correctly concluded that anti-Somoza sentiment was so widespread in Nicaragua that an insurrectionalist strategy which explicitly reached out to Marxists and non-Marxists alike could defeat the dictatorship. The TI had identified ideological pluralism as the key to the success of the struggle.

Finally, despite individual preferences, they were singular in purpose. By March 1979, the FSLN was united under the leadership of the *Terceristas*; the GPP and the TP had somewhat reluctantly surrendered their independent strategies in order to achieve the ultimate objective—the collapse of the dictatorship.

Pragmatic considerations continued to guide the revolutionary leadership following Somoza's departure in July 1979. Geopolitical and socioeconomic constraints could not be ignored by the Sandinistas; their revolution could not succeed without the requisite international political, economic, and diplomatic support.

Hence, as Thomas W. Walker asserts, the Sandinistas chose a "new and innovative" design for their "unusual experiment" which contained elements of "...nationalism, pragmatic Marxism, and Catholic humanism."[8] Hodges reaffirms this sentiment.

> ...The ideology of Sandinismo is a composite of national and patriotic values of Sandino and of the ethical recasting of Marxism-Leninism in the light of...philosophical humanism...it coexists with other independent social and political doctrines...It shares with the Liberal tradition a belief in basic human rights...[and] shares with the new Christianity a special bond based on belief in the ultimate redemption of the poor and oppressed.[9]

As suggested by the following, the Sandinistas' innovation evidently frightened the conservative hard-liners in Washington who had consistently encouraged a close relationship with the Somoza dictatorship.

THE UNITED STATES' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOMOZA DICTATORSHIP

Throughout most of the Somoza family's reign, the United States' preoccupation with hemispheric security muffled congressional criticism of the excesses and abuses of the Somoza government. For under the tyranny of the Somozas, Nicaragua had proven to be a staunch ally of the United States. Washington expected, and received, the automatic support of the Somoza family for U.S.-backed Latin American initiatives both within the United Nations and the OAS.[10]

The consistently pro-United States/anti-Communist stance of the dictatorship had guaranteed a powerful pro-Somoza lobby in the U.S. Congress. And, in return for such allegiance, the United States helped to perpetuate the Somoza dynasty by providing nearly $300 million in economic and military assistance between 1949 and 1979.[11]

However, with the government corruption exposed by the 1972 earthquake, followed by the indiscriminate brutality of the National Guard during the counter-insurgency campaigns of 1975 and 1976, it became increasingly difficult for human rights advocates in Congress to ignore the abuses of Somoza and his hated National Guard. As support for human rights was professedly a hallmark of the Carter administration's Latin American foreign policy, the repression and atrocities of the Somoza regime could not be overlooked.

Somoza's Nicaragua appeared to be a safe test case for the administration's human rights policy in 1977. The Somozas had consistently been amenable to Washington's demands, and when Carter was inaugurated, few knowledgeable observers, if any, credited the *Frente* with the ability to successfully engineer the defeat of Somoza and the National Guard. Hence, in 1977, the Carter administration implemented its Latin American policy when there were no readily identifiable threats to U.S. security in the region; most of Latin America was governed by repressive conservative regimes.

When such threats were identifiable, however, the Carter administration adhered to Washington's familiar policy position. For example, unable to forget the Russian threat and unwilling to forget the wealth of oil in the Persian Gulf, the Carter administration supported the Shah of Iran despite that regime's brutal practice of repression, torture, and murder. Nor was the Carter administration particularly anxious to curtail its support of the oppressive military

regime in South Korea. The same held true for Ferdinand Marcos' Philippines where U.S. air and naval facilities were strategically located. Consequently, there were whispers of hypocrisy.

Unfortunately, it is enormously difficult to execute a foreign policy grounded in morality and human rights, and simultaneously maintain U.S. security as a primary goal of that foreign policy. This was the dilemma with which the Carter administration wrestled as it became increasingly apparent that the Sandinista-led revolutionaries in Nicaragua might, indeed, succeed in toppling the Somoza dictatorship.

As is evident in the following discussion, throughout 1978 and 1979, U.S.-backed initiatives to resolve the Nicaraguan crisis and to prevent the *Frente* from assuming an influential position in any new governing coalition were largely spawned by the United States government's familiar preoccupation with hemispheric security and regional stability and were fully consonant with Washington's habitual response to revolutionary movements in Latin America. While cognizant of the Somoza government's egregious record of human rights violations, hemispheric security nonetheless remained the United States' primary Latin American foreign policy objective, and, accordingly, the Carter administration's posture toward the *Frente* reflected the pervasive suspicion within Washington of the radical political and social change invariably assumed to be associated with Marxist-based revolutionary movements.[12]

Attempting to deflect the impending defeat of Somoza and the subsequent ascendancy of the *Frente*, Washington resorted to the flawed formula that the United States government has so frequently used to shape its Latin American foreign policy. While the Carter administration was fully aware that the United States had been, and continued to be, intimately linked to one of the world's most corrupt and repressive dictatorships, the administration was trapped by the foreign policy concerns which had first encouraged and later reinforced and cemented the United States' relationship with the dictatorship.

Although the Somoza dictatorship was thoroughly reprehensible, nonethless some comfort could be taken in the knowledge that the dictatorship was a staunch anti-communist ally in the region. With the Somozas in power, there had been no excessive worry in Washington that the United States would be denied access to Latin American markets and resoures or that the Soviet Union would establish a beachhead in Nicaragua.

Ultimately, the Carter administration suffered from Washington's familiar phobia of revolutionary governments and was fearful of political power in Nicaragua concentrated in the hands of the leftist-Sandinista revolutionaries. In retrospect, this was a squandered opportunity to ease the Sandinistas' distrust of the United States caused by the long history of U.S. interference in Nicaraguan internal affairs and Washington's long association with the hated dictatorship.

The Carter administration failed to realize that the vital strategic interests of the United States in Latin America need not necessarily be threatened by the existence of a revolutionary government in the region.

THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

As economic conditions and labor unrest worsened in the years immediately following the 1972 earthquake, private sector interests which had previously given their tacit approval of the government became increasingly critical of the regime. Organized in the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) and the Nicaraguan Development Institute (INDE), members of the business community were essentially non-violent reformists who sought a peaceful resolution to the political and economic crisis.

However, Somoza had no interest in dialogue or compromise; his response to dissent was unequivocal. On December 27, 1974 the Sandinistas seized a number of hostages in a raid on a Christmas party which was attended by Nicaraguan elites. In exchange for the hostages, the FSLN demanded a $1 million ransom and the release of some of their imprisoned comrades, including Daniel Ortega of the *Terceristas*. While acceding to their demands, Somoza was incensed by the escapade and declared a state of siege. Backed by an eighty percent increase in U.S. military assistance, Somoza unleashed his National Guard and launched a reign of terror in the countryside.[13] The state of siege was to remain in effect for nearly

three years until Somoza felt the sting of Carter's human rights policy.

In the Spring of 1977, a few weeks after Carter's inauguration, the State Department announced that arms transfers to Nicaragua would be halted pending a review of its human rights performance, and later, in June, the disbursement of $12 million in economic aid was suspended. Feeling the impact of the suspension of U.S. assistance, Somoza vacillated between repression and indulgence of his opposition. In September, attempting to curry favor with the Carter administration, Somoza eased his repression and lifted the state of siege. Not yet willing to abandon a long-time ally, the United States government resumed aid to Somoza and sent $2.5 million in arms to Nicaragua.

The following month there was a resurgence of FSLN-guerrilla activity directed against National Guard outposts, and by the end of 1977 the revolutionary coalition had broadened to include establishment backers. By endorsing the FSLN's action, a group of prominent Nicaraguans led by Sergio Ramirez, known as the Group of Twelve (*el Grupo de los Doce*), linked their interests with those of the radical militant opposition. Comprised of businessmen, lawyers, professionals, priests, and intellectuals, *Los Doce* allied themselves with the Tercerista faction of the FSLN and represented them in the FAO until October 1978.[14] However, neither Somoza nor the Carter administration heeded the familiar refrain calling for negotiations.

On January 10, 1978, the crisis began to veer out of control. Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, editor and publisher of the opposition newspaper, *La Prensa*, and head of UDEL, was assassinated. A massive demonstration protesting Chamorro's murder followed, and COSEP called for a national work stoppage. As in the past, the National Guard stifled the dissenters, and there was a reimposition of martial law in some provinces.

However, moderate political opposition to Somoza began to grow. One such group, the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (*Movimiento Democratico Nicaraguense*—MDN), organized by the industrialist Alfonso Robelo Callejas in March 1978, united businessmen and professionals in their opposition to Somoza. Later, in May, the MDN joined with *Los Doce* and UDEL to form a new umbrella opposition group, the Broad Opposition Front (*Frente Amplio Opositor*—FAO).

As opposition to Somoza continued to mount, a fundamental premise of the Carter administration's Latin American foreign policy was called into question. There was growing concern in Washington that U.S. security interests were indeed jeopardized by the administration's human rights emphasis.

Since 1959, when Fidel Castro assumed power in Cuba, Washington had been determined to prevent the success of leftist movements elsewhere in Latin America. The leftist Sandinista insurgents in Nicaragua were perceived as a serious challenge to Washington's "no second Cuba" doctrine for the Western Hemisphere. More than the future of Nicaragua was at stake; Washington feared that a successful revolutionary

movement in Nicaragua might spark revolutions elsewhere in Latin America and, thus, undermine U.S. control in what traditionally had been viewed as its sphere of influence.

The pro-Somoza lobby in Congress argued that the administration's position had subverted the power base of a long-time friend and ally and had inadvertently strengthened that of the FSLN thereby endangering the United States' interests in Central America. In May, Representative Charles Wilson (D-Texas) of the Appropriations Committee threatened to block passage of the entire Foreign Assistance Bill if the $12 million aid package which the administration had suspended that previous June was not released.[15]

The Carter administration was confronted with a stark dilemma: to impose strident sanctions on Somoza could further erode his legitimacy and bolster the militant opposition, yet not to do so would suggest that its human rights policy was hypocritical indeed. But, with the familiar security perspective rising to the forefront, the suspension on the aid package was rescinded, and in June Carter wrote to Somoza to congratulate him on intended reforms (i.e., permission for *Los Doce* to return from exile, amnesty for some political prisoners, electoral reform, and an invitation for the OAS Human Rights Commission to conduct an inspection tour of Nicaragua).[16]

However, any improvement in Somoza's human rights performance was purely illusory, and this seeming endorsement of the dictatorship only undermined the moderates' position

which sought reform and encouraged the FSLN which worked toward the collapse of Somoza's political and economic empire. Ironically, wavering between sanction and approbation of the Somoza regime, the Carter administration succeeded in producing precisely those results which it had hoped to prevent. As John Booth observes,

> ...U.S. policy gradually eroded the regime's coercive strength and its support. Yet it did so in such a manner as to alienate both incumbents and insurgents, leaving the revolutionary government that came to power in July 1979 profoundly suspicious of the United States.[17]

August 1978 was the critical turning point in the insurrection in which the political initiative shifted from the moderate opposition to the FSLN. On August 22, 1978 the Sandinistas, under the command of Eden Pastora, attacked the National Palace in Managua which housed the Congress and the ministries of finance and interior. There were about fifteen hundred people in the palace transacting business at the time, and Pastora demanded several million dollars in ransom for the hostages. In effect, the Sandinistas assumed control of the Nicaraguan revolution with this daring operation and stole the momentum from the non-violent opposition groups which had heretofore sought an electoral solution to the conflict.

In the following days, Nicaragua was convulsed by anti-regime activity. And, on August 28 the FAO called for yet another national strike which was to last well into September. Somoza retaliated unmercifully as his air force

bombed and strafed several cities suspected of being rebel strongholds.

The revolt was suppressed; however, the massacre of September and October further eroded what little support Somoza had left in Nicaragua, and it became evident that his grasp of power was tenuous indeed. According to a report published by the United States Department of State, as the Carter administration recognized that Somoza's reprieve was only temporary,

> ...the United States...directed its efforts...toward facilitating a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Hoping to ensure that Somoza would not be followed by an equally repressive regime, the United States participated actively in an OAS-endorsed mission that sought to avoid violence. Consistent with this policy goal, the United States viewed with concern the role of the Sandinista front in the military events culminating in Somoza's ouster...[16]

The principal objective of the OAS mediation effort was to obtain Somoza's agreement to, and the FAO's cooperation in, the election of an interim government composed of the FAO and Somoza's Liberal Nationalist Party (*Partido Liberal Nacionalista*—PLN). It was intended that the interim government would prepare the constitutional formula for free elections in 1981 and provide political parties and groups an opportunity to organize and campaign. In addition, this plan called for the reorganization of the National Guard, purging it of political officers and placing it under the jurisdiction of an interim government acceptable to the United States.

However, this effort encountered resistance not only from Somoza but also from opposition groups because of its failure to call for the immediate resignation of Somoza and its exclusion of the Sandinistas from the mediation talks. According to Alfred Stepan, following this failed mediation effort, Washington entered "a period of policy inertia."

> ...From January to May 1979 the United States made no major new efforts...to press serious sanctions against Somoza. More than inertia, there was at least one important reversal. In mid-May, during a lull in the fighting and when many analysts in the Administration felt that possibly Somoza, and almost certainly the National Guard, could hold out until the elections scheduled for 1981, the United States allowed a $66 million IMF loan to Nicaragua without a disclaimer. This U.S. ambivalence and inertia from January to May 1979 almost certainly contributed to the final collapse of the FAO...[19]

In June, the fighting began to intensify and, with the exception of Managua, the Sandinistas rapidly secured all of the major cities. With Somoza on the verge of defeat, the United States requested that an emergency meeting of the OAS be convened to discuss the crisis.

The United States' OAS proposal offered by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance at the June 21 meeting was the product of the White House Special Coordinating Committee for crisis management. The Coordinating Committee was chaired by National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and was made up of the following senior officials: Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Defense Secretary Harold Brown, and CIA Director Stansfield Turner.[20] This proposal called for a

program of humanitarian relief, the cessation of hostilities, the dispatch of an OAS peacekeeping mission to enforce the cease-fire, and the replacement of Somoza with a government of reconciliation of all "democratic sectors"—a euphemism for the inclusion of the National Guard and the PLN, but the exclusion of the FSLN.[21]

Along with other Latin American specialists in the State Department, Lawrence Pezzullo, the U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, and Viron P. Vaky, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Inter-American Affairs, voiced their opposition to Zbigniew Brzezinki's idea of the formation of the OAS peacekeeping force and predicted that the United States' proposal would be soundly rejected by the OAS members. Nevertheless, the views of the National Security Adviser prevailed.[22]

The judgment of the Latin American specialists proved to be accurate. At the OAS meeting this proposal for *somocismo sin Somoza* was received unfavorably by all members of the OAS with the notable exception of Somoza himself. The formation of the OAS peacekeeping mission was viewed as a blatant attempt to deny the *Frente* a monopoly of military power following Somoza's resignation.

The United States made one last-ditch effort to guarantee a place for the PLN and the National Guard in the new governing coalition. However, on July 15 the Carter administration reluctantly accepted the prospect that the new government in Nicaragua would exclude both vestiges of *somocismo*.

Somoza fled Nicaragua on July 17, 1979. In the end, the

tyranny of the Somoza regime was defeated not solely by the efforts of the FSLN but by those of a broad, multiclass coalition under its leadership. Widespread animosity and resentment toward the regime had permeated all strata of Nicaraguan society. The corruption, brutality, and systematic repression of a regime that spanned more than four decades had galvanized opposition to the government and eventually had succeeded in alienating friends and foes alike.

A TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

On July 19, 1979 the Sandinista-led revolutionaries assumed power in Nicaragua. The Governing Junta of National Reconstruction (JGRN), headed by Daniel Ortega, and the FSLN Joint National Directorate (JDN)[23] found a mere $3.5 million in the foreign exchange account to offset a foreign debt incurred by Somoza which exceeded $1.5 billion; $662 million was needed to service the debt by the end of 1979.[24]

The task faced by the JGRN-JDN was enormous. The Nicaraguan countryside lay in ruins after the war, the nation's economy was in a shambles, and the new Nicaraguan government had astutely agreed to honor, in full, the debt bequeathed to them by Somoza. Failure to honor the debt would have precipitated a cessation of aid from the international financial community, and therefore, default would have been tantamount to committing economic suicide. The revolutionary leadership also realized that friendly relations with Washington was the key to continued international financial

assistance.[25]

For its part, although the Carter administration was confronted with a situation that it had assiduously strived to avoid, the soft-line interventionists within the administration (i.e., Lawrence Pezzullo, Viron P. Vaky, and his successor, William Bowdler) felt that Nicaragua's future need not necessarily include a strong military alliance with Cuba and the Soviet bloc.[26] Presumably, if both sides proceeded cautiously, this worst-case scenario could be averted. According to LeoGrande's analysis of the Carter administration's approach to the Sandinistas immediately following the revolution,

> ...U.S. policy shifted 180 degrees from an attitude of outright hostility toward the FSLN to one of cautious cordiality. The change was no less stark for having been forced by circumstances, since it carried with it the implication that even radical social and political change in Nicaragua did not necessarily endanger the vital interests of the United States.[27]

However, the wisdom of pursuing an accommodationist approach with the newly installed Nicaraguan government was not universally recognized in Washington as aptly revealed by the internal disputes within the administration and the congressional debates regarding aid to the FSLN government.[28] In the first year following the revolution, the United States did, in fact, disburse loans, grants, and food aid to Nicaragua totalling $62.6 million,[29] but the battle lines were drawn in Washington over assistance to the Sandinistas as

early as August 1979.

The controversy surrounding a meager $8.5 million economic reconstruction assistance proposal was merely a precursor of what was to follow. It would be a year of heated congressional debate, an occurrence not altogether uncommon during an election season, before a FY 1980 $75 million supplemental assistance proposal was approved for Nicaragua in September 1980. More poignantly, the aid package was authorized only after a number of restrictive conditions were attached to the proposal which provided for the cut-off of assistance. Not the least of these caveats was periodic certification by the President that Nicaragua was not engaged in exporting revolution to its Central American neighbors.[30] Such anti-Sandinista sentiment in Washington and historical experience were not lost on the new Nicaraguan government.

In contrast, the Eastern bloc was eager to offer assistance to the new regime. The expansion of health and educational programs had been accorded top priority status by the revolutionary leadership; their programs were partially modeled on the Cuban experience of the 1960s and, not surprisingly, Cuban personnel helped design these systems. Within a few short months, more than one hundred Cuban doctors and nurses were assigned to Nicaragua. An educational agreement signed between the two countries in August 1979 committed one thousand Cuban elementary school teachers and forty university professors to work in Nicaragua. Although the exact number is uncertain, there were also Cuban military

and security advisers working in Nicaragua.[31] And in the interim period, as Congress hesitated and debated the merits of the $75 million emergency aid request, Nicaragua renewed diplomatic relations with other Soviet bloc countries, and negotiated a series of trade agreements amounting to $100 million.[32]

While the soft-line interventionists in the administration pushed for developmental assistance as a means of encouraging pluralism in Nicaragua and maintaining investment, trade, and financial opportunities between the two countries, the administration nevertheless opted to move quite cautiously. Despite the urgings of Lawrence Pezzullo, the United States government patently refused military aid to the new Nicaraguan regime (with the exception of a grant for $23,000 which was used to purchase binoculars and to finance a trip for some FSLN officials to the United States). In response, Tomas Borge announced that if the United States was not prepared to supply military aid, the Sandinistas would acquire such assistance elsewhere.[33]

In the first year of revolutionary leadership, although the government appeared to be reasonably tolerant of political opposition, a free press continued to operate, and a mixed economy remained a goal of the new government, there were nevertheless some issues beyond the numerous debates in Washington on financial assistance, developmental as well as military, which strained the U.S.-Sandinista relationship. It was clear that the Sandinistas' view prevailed in the new

Nicaraguan government. Two members of the governing junta had resigned as early as April 1980. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro pleaded poor health, but Alfonso Robelo Callejas complained:

> ...essential parts of the unity that was the determining factor in our triumph over the dictatorship have been broken, substantive changes have been imposed...without the indispensable consensus, and steps have been taken that deviate from the aims of our revolution...[34]

A primary concern of Robelo was the postponement of elections to which the junta had formerly agreed on June 23, 1979; this resolution was subsequently submitted to the OAS on July 12, 1979. His fear was realized on August 23, 1980 when Humberto Ortega of the FSLN National Directorate announced that national elections would be postponed until 1985. However, in all fairness, it should be noted that the junta had not committed itself to a precise election timetable for 1980, or even for 1985 for that matter, but only to conduct "the first free elections" in Nicaragua "in this century."[35]

While it was clear that the FSLN National Directorate, not the governing junta, controlled events in Nicaragua, it was also clear that Western, liberal-styled democracy had produced only sham elections in the Somozas' Nicaragua. Under the dictatorship there had been no prospect for real social change, but real social change was possible in the political-social revolutionary setting following the demise of the dictatorship.

The Sandinistas hoped to introduce a form of participa-

tory democracy which offered social and economic equality in Nicaragua. However, before they could implement their vision of government based upon popular hegemony, or the logic of the majority, time was needed to consolidate their popular base.

In defense of their vision of democracy and the postponement of elections, Miquel d'Escoto insisted:

> ...democracy entails social democracy, economic democracy, political democracy and many rights, such as the right to work, to a family wage, to learn to read, to write--all those different rights that provide us with an opportunity to participate and not be manipulated.[36]

The National Directorate insisted that time was needed to educate the people and to prepare them for political participation. Sergio Ramirez argued that "...in Nicaragua we don't have an electoral system. The dictatorship took great care not to establish it...The literacy campaign is a priority."[37] For more than four decades the wealth of Nicaragua had been plundered by the Somozas and their cronies. Exploitation, not popular education, had been the tool of the dictatorship.

Faced with the onerous task of rebuilding a country crushed by years of tyranny and devastated by a brutal civil war, the new revolutionary leadership not only needed to maintain the spirit of the insurrection which had toppled the dictatorship but also needed to train people in the requisite technical skills if Nicaragua was to be rebuilt. However, before people could be taught such skills, they first needed to learn to read and write.

One of the primary educational texts of the campaign was *The Dawn of the People* which used the national experience to teach the people the history of the revolution, to inform them of the new social programs offered by the revolutionary government (i.e., expansion of health and educational programs, agrarian reform), and to familiarize them with the civil defense programs which were essential to their defense if the revolution was under siege.[38]

The National Literacy Crusade was a mass mobilization educational and political program which allowed the revolutionary leadership to insure that the basic literacy skills were taught and, at the same time, to reinforce the spirit of national unity and collective action which had defeated the dictatorship in the first place. It also paved the way for future broad based participatory programs.

No doubt the literacy campaign strengthened the political consciousness of the people, but after five months of intensive effort, begun in March 1980, Nicaragua's illiteracy rate dropped from 50.35 percent to 12.96 percent.[39] However, critics of the Sandinistas within Nicaragua and abroad viewed the literacy campaign as purely a propaganda ploy to indoctrinate the people with revolutionary dogma and to thwart the evolution of the democratic process. In the United States such suspicions and allegations were translated into action.

In January 1981, following the "final offensive" of the insurgents in El Salvador, the Carter administration suspended U.S. economic aid to Nicaragua; U.S. intelligence had gathered

information which supported charges that the Sandinistas had assisted the Salvadoran insurgents in the hope of presenting the Reagan administration with a *fait accompli* in El Salvador.[40] The Carter administration had already approved a program which provided overt and covert funds to support anti-Sandinista elements operating within Nicaragua.

To bolster Nicaragua's private business sector, the U.S. embassy distributed funds to COSEP and other groups opposed to the Sandinistas' program. Overt monies were channelled into development programs. The CIA was authorized to funnel covert assistance to various unions, newspapers, political parties, and businessmen who were generally recognized as being unsympathetic to the Sandinistas' cause.

In the meantime, the Sandinistas had repeatedly requested Washington to intercede on their behalf with the Honduran government to force the dismantling of the ex-Somocista/anti-Sandinista training camps which had been set up on Honduran territory after the July 1979 victory. The camps remained operational despite their requests. Washington's defense was that no ties existed between the U.S. government and these opposition groups. However, while the training camps themselves were located in Honduras, the ex-Somocista leadership had headquarters in Miami where they had been in exile since 1979.[41]

Clearly, the stage was set for the confrontational approach of the Reagan administration. In March 1981, the Sandinistas filed a note of protest with the U.S. government

which cited that the counterrevolutionaries were receiving training on U.S. soil. When junta member Sergio Ramirez noted that this activity was in contravention of the United States Federal Neutrality Act, Washington officially responded that there was no legal authority to prevent paramilitary training on private property.[42]

As detailed in the following chapter, the situation has steadily deteriorated. Had the Reagan administration been content to protect the traditional core interests of the United States in Latin America as defined in Chapter One (i.e., the exclusion of foreign military bases in the region and continued access to Latin American goods and markets), this deterioration need not have occurred. In the months immediately following their triumph, the Sandinistas had posed no serious threat to the United States' interests in the region. This is true despite their support of the Salvadoran guerrillas prior to their "final offensive."

Indeed, it is somewhat ludicrous to suggest that either the Sandinistas or the Salvadoran insurgents would be willing to incur the full wrath of the United States if its interests in the region were threatened. Such action would not only curtail crucial access to international markets and resources but also would invite direct U.S. intervention in the region. It is difficult to imagine any scenario in which such a response would be welcomed by either the Sandinistas or their compatriots in El Salvador.

However, the Reagan administration was not content to

defend the traditional core interests of the United States in Latin America. As defined by the Reagan administration, defense of those interests precluded the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the Sandinista regime regardless of any conciliatory stance toward the United States adopted by that regime. This expanded definition of security stipulated the extermination of the revolutionary regime.

Given the legacy of U.S.-Nicaraguan relations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the reluctance of the Carter administration to facilitate the Sandinistas' rise to power, and the underlying suspicion which prevailed between the two governments, it is debatable whether Washington would have been able to prevent the Sandinistas from moving in a pro-Cuban and pro-Soviet direction. Surely, the Sandinistas had good reason to be skeptical of United States' intentions and to turn to those who had been most supportive in their long struggle against the dictatorship. However, as the following suggests, the path that Washington has chosen to follow has not only increased the Sandinistas' skepticism of the United States' objectives but has also increased their dependency on the Soviet bloc.

NOTES

[1]George Black, *TRIUMPH OF THE PEOPLE The Sandinista Nicaraguan Revolution* (London: Zed Press, 1981), p. 59.

[2]Michael Dodson, "Nicaragua: The Struggle for the Church," in *RELIGION AND POLITICAL CONFLICT IN LATIN AMERICA*, ed. Daniel H. Levine (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), p.86.

[3]For a more comprehensive discussion of the role of the Nicaraguan Catholic Church in the revolution see Phillip Berryman, *THE RELIGIOUS ROOTS OF REBELLION Christians in Central American Revolutions* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1984); Philip J. Williams, "The Catholic Hierarchy in the Nicaraguan Revolution," in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 17, 2 (November 1985): 341-369.

[4]Michael Dodson and Laura Nuzzi O'Shaughnessy, "Religion and Politics," in *NICARAGUA The First Five Years*, ed. Thomas W. Walker (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), pp. 121-129.

[5]Dennis Gilbert, "Nicaragua," in *Confronting Revolution*, eds. Morris J. Blachman, William M. LeoGrande, and Kenneth E. Sharpe (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 92. For a more detailed discussion of the evolution of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) see David Nolan, *FSLN The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution*. Coral Gables: Institute of Interamerican Studies, 1984.

[6]Donald C. Hodges, *Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 235.

[7]Ibid., p. 247.

[8]Thomas W. Walker, "Introduction: Revolution In General, Nicaragua To 1984," in *NICARAGUA The First Five Years*, p. 24.

[9]Hodges, *Intellectual Foundations*, p. 288.

[10]For example, Anastasio Somoza Garcia had assisted the Eisenhower administration during the CIA-orchestrated overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954. Later, in 1961, Nicaragua was used as a staging ground by the Kennedy administration for the Bay of Pigs debacle, and, when the Johnson administration sought OAS legitimacy for the 1965 Dominican Republic intervention, Nicaragua was one of only three Latin American countries to provide a peacekeeping force.

[11]Charles D. Ameringer, "Nicaragua: The Rock That Crumbled," in *U.S. INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA IN THE 1980S*, ed. Robert Wesson (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), p. 143.

[12]For a detailed discussion of U.S. policy toward Nicaragua during the insurrection (from which material has been drawn for this chapter) see William M. LeoGrande, "The United States and the Nicaraguan Revolution," in *NICARAGUA in REVOLUTION*, ed. Thomas W. Walker (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), pp. 63-77.

[13]William M. LeoGrande, "The Revolution in Nicaragua: Another Cuba?" *Foreign Affairs* (Vol. 58, No. 1, 1979), p. 31.

[14]Members of *el Grupo de los Doce* (Group of Twelve): Sergio Ramirez, writer and FSLN Member (as of this writing Vice President of Nicaragua); Miguel d'Escoto, Catholic priest and FSLN member; Fernando Cardenal, Jesuit priest; Joaquin Cuadra Chamorro, Conservative-aligned lawyer; Emilio Baltodano Pallais, manager of Nicaragua's largest coffee-producing company; Felipe Mantica, owner of a supermarket chain and department store; Arturo Cruz, banker; Carlos Tunnermann, former rector of UNAN; Ricardo Coronel Kautz, agricultural engineer; Ernesto Castillo, lawyer; Carlos Gutierrez, dental surgeon; and Casimiro Sotelo, architect.

[15]LeoGrande, "The United States and the Nicaraguan Revolution," p. 66.

[16]Shirley Christian, *NICARAGUA Revolution In The Family* (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 57.

[17]John A. Booth, *THE END AND THE BEGINNING The Nicaraguan Revolution*, 2nd ed., (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1985), p. 130.

[18]United States Department of State, *"Revolution Beyond Our Borders" Sandinista Intervention in Central America*, Special Report No. 132 (1985), p. 19.

[19]Alfred Stepan, "The U.S. and Latin America: Vital Interests and the Instruments of Power," *Foreign Affairs* (Vol. 8, No.3, 1980), p. 681.

[20]LeoGrande, "The United States and the Nicaraguan Revolution," p. 70.

[21]Booth, *THE END AND THE BEGINNING*, p. 180.

[22]Christian, *NICARAGUA Revolution In The Family*, p. 103.

[23]Members of the Governing Junta of National Reconstruction (JGRN): Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, Moises Hassan, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, Sergio Ramirez Mercado, and Alfonso Robelo Callejas. Members of the FSLN Joint National Directorate (JDN): Daniel Ortega Saavedra, Humberto Ortega Saavedra, and Victor Tirado of the *Terceristas*; Bayardo Arce, Tomas Borge, and Henry Ruiz of the Prolonged War Faction; Luis Carrion Cruz, Carlos Nunez, and Jaime Wheelock Roman of the Proletarian Faction.

[24]Christian, *NICARAGUA Revolution In The Family*, p. 141.

[25]LeoGrande, "The United States and the Nicaraguan Revolution," pp. 71-72.

[26]William M. LeoGrande, "The United States And Nicaragua," in *NICARAGUA The First Five Years*, p. 426.

[27]LeoGrande, "The United States and the Nicaraguan Revolution," p. 71.

[28]For a more detailed discussion see Susanne Jonas, "The Nicaraguan Revolution and the Reemerging Cold War," in *NICARAGUA in REVOLUTION*, pp. 375-389.

[29]Christian, *NICARAGUA Revolution In The Family*, p. 165.

[30]LeoGrande, "The United States and the Nicaraguan Revolution," pp. 73-75.

[31]William M. LeoGrande, "Cuba," in *Confronting Revolution*, p. 234-235. The Cuban military presence expanded as regional hostilities escalated. In 1985, Nicaragua acknowledged the presence of 786 Cuban military advisers. At the time, Washington claimed there were 2500 to 3000 Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua.

[32]LeoGrande, "The United States and the Nicaraguan Revolution, p. 75.

[33]Christian, *NICARAGUA Revolution In The Family*, p. 144.

[34]Alfonso Robelo Callejas quoted in Shirley Christian, *NICARAGUA Revolution In The Family*, p. 149.

[35]Quoted in Mary B. Vanderlaan, *Revolution and Foreign Policy in NICARAGUA* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1986), p. 144.

[36]Miguel d'Escoto Brockman quoted in Mary B. Vanderlaan,

Revolution and Foreign Policy in NICARAGUA, p. 47.

[37]Sergio Ramirez quoted in Christian, *NICARAGUA Revolution In The Family*, p. 150.

[38]Deborah Barndt, "Popular Education," in *NICARAGUA The First Five Years, p. 326.*

[39]Ibid., p. 328.

[40]As much of the U.S. intelligence information pertaining to charges of the Sandinistas' assistance to the Salvadoran insurgents remains classified, it is difficult to state precisely the level of assistance given to the insurgents during this period. There is no doubt that material assistance to the insurgents increased significantly in preparation of their "final offensive." However, there is little evidence to support the Reagan administration's charge, later published in the White Paper, "Communist Interference in El Salvador," that while the insurgents were promised nearly eight hundred tons of arms and equipment, Cuba and Nicaragua had managed to deliver two hundred tons to them in late 1980. Indeed, as evidence in the White Paper was determined to be grossly exaggerated, the report was later discredited. For more information see Raymond Bonner, *WEAKNESS AND DECEIT: U.S. POLICY AND EL SALVADOR* (New York: TIMES BOOKS, The New York Times Book Co., Inc., 1984), pp. 255-261.

[41]Mary B. Vanderlaan, *Revolution and Foreign Policy in NICARAGUA*, p. 131.

[42]Jan Knipper Black, "Government and Politics," in *Nicaragua: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 179.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION AND COUNTERREVOLUTION

Throughout the 1980s, the Reagan administration consistently rejected the possibility of peaceful coexistence with an ideologically divergent political system in Managua. This chapter focuses upon the escalation of events in the U.S.-Nicaraguan conflict during this period and the consequent militarization of Central America as Washington pursued a confrontational-offensive approach toward the Sandinista regime.

If temporarily suppressed by the Carter team, the ubiquitous security perspective, once again, resumed its premier position in Washington in the 1980s under the Reagan administration and strongly influenced the shape and direction of U.S.-Latin American foreign policy. A resurgence of familiar bipolar politics and cold war themes vehemently opposed the tolerance of any hemispheric ideological diversity and squarely placed U.S.-Nicaraguan relations within an East-West framework. In a 1980 presidential campaign speech before the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations Ronald Reagan set the tenor of his administration's position.

> ...Totalitarian Marxists have control of the island of Grenada in the Caribbean, where Cuban advisors are currently training guerrillas for subversive action against other countries like Trinidad and Tobago, its democratic neighbor. In El Salvador totalitarian Marxist revolutionaries supported by Havana and Moscow are preventing the development of democratic government. Should we allow Grenada, Nicaragua, and El Salvador to

> become "new Cubas," new staging grounds for Soviet combat brigades? Shall we wait to allow Moscow and Havana to push on to the north toward Guatemala and from there to Mexico, and southward to Costa Rica and Panama?[1]

The January 1981 "final offensive" of the Salvadoran insurgents offered the Reagan administration the opportunity to launch a crusade against international communism. Reagan's first Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, affirmed that the triumph of the Sandinistas represented only the first stage of a Soviet operation designed to spread communist revolution throughout the Western Hemisphere. The Salvadoran offensive was but further evidence of this sinister plot.

In support of this contention, a February 1981 State Department White Paper, entitled "Communist Interference in El Salvador," asserted that the Salvadoran rebels were well armed by Cuba, Nicaragua, and other Communist-bloc countries. This document claimed that not only were the revolutionaries in El Salvador guided by Cuban and Soviet advisers but also that the insurgents were receiving arms shipments from the Soviet bloc with Cuba and Nicaragua acting as the principal conduits. The release of the White Paper was followed by the Reagan administration's termination of a $9.6 million credit with the Nicaraguan government formerly intended to be applied toward concessionary wheat sales.

To ease the tension between Washington and Managua, the Nicaraguan government informed the Reagan administration that it would attempt to curtail the transfer of arms through its

territory. In anticipation of an aggressive, hard-line policy approach to be crafted by the incoming administration, the flow of arms through Nicaragua to the Salvadoran insurgents had risen significantly during November and December of 1980. As indicated in Chapter Two, the detection of this increase in weapons transfers had prompted the Carter administration to temporarily suspend assistance to the FSLN government.

The amount of material assistance provided to the Salvadoran insurgents prior to the "final offensive" is difficult to determine precisely. It is known that four tons of arms were smuggled into El Salvador on September 26, 1980.[2] However, this figure is far below that alleged by the Reagan administration. As indicated elsewhere, according to the administration's White Paper, the Salvadoran insurgents had been promised almost eight hundred tons of arms and equipment and of that amount Cuba and Nicaragua had supposedly successfully delivered two hundred tons in late 1980. These "official" figures were later determined to be grossly exaggerated.

While U.S. intelligence information indicated that the incidents of these arms transfers were sharply reduced during February and March, the Reagan administration nevertheless chose to ignore the counsel of Ambassador Pezzullo, who had continued to argue for conditional economic assistance to enhance the prospect of moderation in the FSLN government. Instead, the administration elected to pursue a policy of hostility.

On April 1, 1981, the remaining $15 million of the $75

million emergency aid package to Nicaragua was withheld; the administration maintained that it was unable to certify that the Sandinista government was not supporting insurgency movements abroad. At the same time, plans were being drafted within the CIA and the NSC which laid the foundation for covert paramilitary operations against the FSLN government and more direct control of the *contra* forces by the CIA and US officials. While these plans were subsequently authorized by President Reagan in late 1981, and accorded an initial operating budget of $19.9 million,[3] defining the objective of the paramilitary operations became problematic.

Publicly, the administration's rationale for the "secret" war of the *contras* continually evolved to encompass the purported threat represented by the presence of the Sandinista government, a threat repeatedly amplified by the Reagan administration. The covert paramilitary effort was originally justified as a necessary initiative to stem the flow of arms to guerrilla forces in El Salvador. However, in the absence of the discovery of any major arms caches or revelations of significant weapons transfers through Nicaraguan territory which served to further discredit the premise of the previously published White Paper, the administration revised this rationale and claimed that its ultimate aim in backing the rebels was to apply sufficient pressure on the Sandinistas to coerce them to make concessions—but not to overthrow their government.

The administration's justification for further U.S.

involvement in the covert war was cloaked in the guise of the restoration of "genuine" democracy in Nicaragua. The administration's insistence upon democracy in Nicaragua was somewhat extraordinary. While democratic regimes were preferable to Washington, democracy had never been identified as absolutely essential to the defense of the United States' vital interests in the region.

In the past, as Washington steadfastly pursued its regional objectives, the absence of democracy had been acceptable. Successive administrations readily ignored the corrupt, repressive, authoritarian dictatorship of the Somozas in exchange for the usual assurances of continued U.S. influence, continued U.S. access to Latin American markets and resources, and the knowledge that a U.S. adversary would not be permitted to establish a beachhead in the region.

By raising the issue of democracy to the level of a vital strategic interest of the United States in Latin America, the administration created an opportunity to rationalize to its congressional critics and the American people the necessity of overthrowing the Sandinista government. However, this rationalization deliberately ignored the fact that democracy itself can assume various forms. The development of a mature democratic system of governance is the product of an evolutionary process unique to individual countries and, hence, may assume the shape of a liberal, representative, constitutional democracy, as is familiar in the United States, or may develop according to European-like parliamentary systems which are

heavily dependent upon coalitional alliances and party majorities.

In Latin America, for the most part, democracy is a recent phenomenon where conservative, authoritarian regimes had been the accepted standard of governance for so long. And, in the case of the FSLN government in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas did not share the Reaganesque conception of a liberal, pluralist democracy but rather envisioned a form of participatory democracy based upon corporatist representation with themselves in the vanguard.[4]

While the Sandinistas did plan a revolution of civil society, neither private property rights nor a pluralist system would be obsolete in Nicaragua. Although they would assume the leadership role, their plans did not call for the Mexicanization of the revolution which would have implied the nationalization of the means of production and the institutionalization of a single party system. Rather they sought to construct a system of popular hegemony which included a greater degree of participation by the people in decision-making and implementation of the political and economic processes and permitted greater control over government on regional and local issues. It was expected that through daily life, work, family, schools, and popular organizations the individual would become an active participant in a project of national development, self-determination, and, if necessary, defense of the revolution itself.

In 1984, the Sandinistas chose the electoral route to

legitimize and institutionalize their domestic and international position. Aware of the inevitable criticisms from Washington of a Soviet-styled sham election, an electoral law was carefully crafted to guarantee a secret ballot, fair access, and procedural honesty.[5]

The Reagan administration attempted to portray this election as fraudulent by claiming that legitimate opposition groups, in particular the Democratic Coordinating Committee (*Coordinadora Democratica*—CD), had been excluded from the electoral process. However, available evidence refutes this claim. While it is true that the CD did abstain from the 1984 election (Arturo Cruz, the CD candidate, refused to register as a contender), six opposition parties (i.e., the Democratic Conservative Party, the Independent Liberal Party, the Popular Social Christian Party, the Communist Party of Nicaragua, the Nicaraguan Socialist Party, and the Marxist-Leninist Popular Action Movement) did field candidates.

According to a "Summary of Findings" of the 1984 Nicaraguan election published by the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), "the record shows that both before and during the campaign, the Sandinistas made major concessions to opposition forces on nearly all points of contention."[6] The LASA finding further contends that in the six months preceding the election, "...the behavior of U.S. officials...was clearly interventionist, apparently designed to delegitimize the Nicaraguan electoral process by making sure that the FSLN had no externally credible opposition to run against."[7]

After Daniel Ortega was elected president of Nicaragua with sixty-seven percent of the vote in the controversial election, the restoration of democracy remained a stated goal of the Reagan administration's policy. In keeping with this position, in an August 1986 interview with the Mexican newspaper, *Excelsior*, President Reagan acknowledged that if the Sandinistas refused to accept democracy voluntarily, then it might indeed be necessary to bring democracy to Nicaragua by armed force. In this scenario, perhaps the "only alternative" for the *contras* would be "to have their way and take over."[8]

The Reagan administration's justification of the restoration of democracy in Nicaragua was self-serving. By redefining the United States' vital interests in Latin America to include the restoration of democracy in Nicaragua, the administration could aggressively pursue its ultimate objective. If a case could be made that democracy in the Western Hemisphere was threatened by the very existence of a Sandinista government—either elected or otherwise, either with a constitution or without one—then the administration might build the needed consensus in the U.S. Congress as well as in domestic public opinion to support the political, economic, and military costs involved in a campaign of destabilization intended to topple the Sandinista regime.

A CAMPAIGN OF DESTABILIZATION

A Policy of Economic Aggression

To discourage other would-be aspirants in Latin America from adopting the Sandinistas' revolutionary experience as their role model, the Reagan administration sought to thoroughly discredit the viability of that experience through a campaign of destabilization aimed directly at the Nicaraguan economy. A policy of economic aggression was carefully chosen to wreck the Sandinistas' progressive mixed economic system, to disrupt agricultural, industrial, and social welfare programs, and to stimulate domestic unrest among the Nicaraguan people with their government.

The Sandinistas' development strategy was built around four key sectors: 1) a private sector; 2) a state sector based primarily upon expropriated Somoza family properties; 3) a sector of peasants and artisans; and 4) a cooperative production sector. The foundation of their economic program rested on the delicate balance between the public and private sectors. Although the state controlled natural resources, foreign trade, and the financial system, it relied heavily on the private sector to reactivate Nicaragua's anemic economy.

While the Reagan administration consistently claimed that the Sandinistas' Nicaragua was a totalitarian communist state, the following table indicates that after the revolution Nicaragua's economy remained predominantly in private hands.

Table 3.1[9]

Balance of Public and Private Ownership in 1980

	Public	Private
Agriculture	19.1%	80.9%
Manufacturing Industry	25.0%	75.0%
Construction	70.0%	30.0%
Mining	99.0%	1.0%
Services	54.7%	45.3%
Gross Domestic Product Total	40.8%	59.2%

Source: *Comite de Coordinacion Economica, Ministerio de Planificacion* in *Datos Basicos sobre Nicaragua* (Managua, SENAPEP), p. 14.

Fully aware of the Sandinistas' precarious economic condition, the administration's policy of economic aggression aimed to eliminate Nicaragua's access to traditional markets for its export production economy as well as its usual sources of hard currency credits so essential to finance exports and key imports.

Efforts to discourage private U.S. investment, to halt U.S. bilateral assistance, and to pressure private U.S. banks to stop their loans to Nicaragua by downgrading Nicaragua's credit rating from "substandard" to "doubtful" were not sufficient. Quite the contrary, the curtailment of multilateral assistance was a pivotal element of the United States' hostile strategy. From 1981 onward, the Reagan administration used its clout in the World Bank (WB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to block a series of loans to Nicaragua.[10]

It is evident that the application of such power by the Reagan administration within these institutions was highly

effective. As a measure of the success of this aggressive economic policy, Booth cites its effect on WB funds in particular:

> ...As an example of the new, hard-nosed policy of the multinational lenders, the World Bank's case stands out: It had lent the Somoza regime $56 million during the final stages of the 1979 war yet forced the Sandinista government to *repay* a total of $29 million between 1980 and 1982.[11]

Whereas Nicaragua received $179 million in development funds from the WB and the IDB in 1979,[12] these funds were subsequently reduced to a mere trickle. By 1984 more than $200 million in development assistance to the Sandinista government had been blocked.[13]

Then, too, the familiar tactic of the trade embargo was not forgotten by the Reagan team. In May of 1983 Nicaragua's sugar quota was reduced by ninety percent, resulting in $23 million in lost revenues. Two years later the embargo was extended. The administration charged that the Sandinistas' aggressive behavior of supporting insurgency movements in Central America had continued unabated and thereby posed a threat to the Panama Canal, to neighboring countries, and to the security of the United States.

Claiming that to do so would severely compromise its intelligence-gathering capabilities in Central America, the administration offered little concrete proof for public consumption to substantiate the charge of aggressive behavior. Hiding behind this shield, the administration consistently

asserted that the Salvadoran insurgents were heavily dependent upon Nicaragua and Cuba for weapons and logistical support. However, while the available evidence did, indeed, suggest that the Salvadoran insurgents received some food, medical supplies, communication equipment, and an occasional flow of arms from Nicaragua and Cuba, that evidence also suggested that the success of their struggle was certainly not contingent upon such external support.[14]

Nonetheless, the administration's policy of aggression was firmly grounded in allegations of this nature. On May 1, 1985, President Reagan invoked the International Emergency Economic Powers Act. This executive order aimed to further cripple the Nicaraguan economy by prohibiting entry to U.S. markets of all Nicaraguan commodities such as bananas and coffee, denying landing rights to Nicaraguan airlines, curtailing U.S. shipments of goods to Nicaragua, and refusing permission for American ships to call at Nicaraguan ports.[15]

However, the punitive trade embargoes were not particularly effective. Following the revolution, the Sandinistas had moved quickly to diversify their trading partners. Although remaining overwhelmingly dependent on the United States and other capitalist countries for critical imports of chemicals, spare parts, and raw materials, the Sandinistas had begun to trade increasingly with the socialist bloc countries. In 1977, only one percent of Nicaragua's exports were received by the socialist bloc, and, in turn, Nicaragua imported less than one percent of their exports. By 1983, however, these

export-import figures rose to thirteen percent and seventeen percent respectively.[16]

Immediately after the revolution, material aid from the Soviet Union was not especially noteworthy. However, as the Reagan administration implemented its policy of economic aggression, the Soviet Union increased its assistance to the Sandinista government. When the $9.6 million concessionary wheat sales arrangement was cancelled in 1981, the Soviet Union donated more than twenty thousand tons of wheat to the grain starved nation—a gesture facilitated incidentally when the grain embargo, imposed by Reagan's predecessor, was lifted. In 1981, the Soviet Union provided $50 million in concessionary trade credits to the Sandinistas. By 1983, the Soviet Union had committed $215.9 million in trade credits.[17]

While undeniably successful in its efforts to curtail institutional lending to the Sandinista government, the Reagan administration's attempts to deprive the Sandinistas of international economic assistance were disappointing. In 1981, assistance from Mexico and Venezuela helped to fill the void created when the Reagan administration decided: (1) to withhold the remaining $15 million of the emergency aid package which had been suspended by the outgoing Carter administration, (2) to suspend $81 million in additional credits, and (3) to cancel the wheat sales agreement. Together, assistance from Mexico and Venezuela comprised roughly half of the $687 million in new aid commitments for Nicaragua in that year.

The generosity of the Western European nations in the early 1980s suggested that they did not perceive the Sandinista regime as a major security threat to the vital interests of their NATO ally; their own political experience allowed for amicable coexistence with differing socioeconomic systems. In their view, Washington had reacted to the regime emotionally and ideologically. And, rather than cooperating with Washington's policy of hostility, the Western Europeans offered economic assistance to enhance the prospects for stability and security in the region.

By 1983, the Western European nations more than doubled their assistance to Nicaragua as their commitment rose to twenty percent of the total. Moreover, whereas the socialist bloc provided an average of seventeen percent of total foreign assistance between 1980 and 1981, their assistance rose sharply in the 1982-1983 period to forty-two percent.[18]

As Booth notes, the Sandinistas turned to every conceivable source to ease the burden of the administration's efforts to isolate Nicaragua from Western assistance. "...the credit crunch had both damaged Nicaragua's financial independence and converted the country into an important new client for socialist lenders."[19]

A Policy of Military Aggression

While the administration aggressively pursued various alternative economic avenues to destabilize the Sandinista government, the *contra* forces comprised a critical component

of a policy of military aggression. Although anti-Sandinista exiles and ex-Somocista National Guard members had begun to form opposition rebel bands after the downfall of Somoza in the hopes of reclaiming power in Nicaragua, it was not until 1981 that these groups began to display some semblance of a united force.

Before Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency, his emissary, Vernon Walters, travelled to Central America and indicated to these exile groups that the prospect of U.S. support for their cause would be greatly enhanced if they could somehow present a united front.[20] By September of 1981, in response to the promise of aid, these anti-Sandinista fighters formed the *Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguense* (Nicaraguan Democratic Force—FDN).

The formation of the FDN was followed in December, 1981, by the signing of a Presidential Finding which authorized the CIA to assemble and to train an exile army which was initially limited to a 500-man commando force. Argentina was expected to train an additional 1000-man interdiction force. While the finding had authorized a small fighting force, by 1982 this U.S. creation had grown to four thousand men and by 1983 their ranks would swell to seven thousand. Later, in an effort to demonstrate to Congress that the FDN possessed a viable political leadership and, therefore, warranted congressional support and funding, the Reagan team would entice Adolfo Calero (in 1983), Alfonso Rebelo (in 1984), and Arturo Cruz (1984-1985) to join the FDN.

In Costa Rica, a smaller opposition group was formed under the command of Eden Pastora, a former Sandinista commandante and hero of the 1979 revolution. This group was known as *Alianza Revolutionaria Democratica* (Democratic Revolutionary Alliance—ARDE). However, ARDE collapsed in 1984 amidst internal disagreements over strategy and Pastora's obdurate refusal to form an alliance with the CIA-controlled FDN and its ex-National Guard members.

Beginning in 1982, the *contras* carefully selected their targets (i.e., food stocks, warehouses, pipelines, oil supplies, transportation systems) to cripple the Nicaraguan economic infrastructure. In March, the U.S.-supported *contras* attacked two bridges on the Negro and Coco Rivers in Nicaragua near the Honduran border. The Sandinistas responded to this military aggression on March 15, 1982, by declaring a state of emergency.

Before long, Congress grew increasingly skeptical of the Reagan administration's real intentions *vis-a-vis* the Sandinista government and, in mid-1982, enacted the Boland Amendment. This amendment forbade the provision by the United States government of military equipment, training, advice, or other support for military activities intended for the purpose of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government or provoking an armed exchange between Nicaragua and Honduras. From 1981 through 1984, the United States financed the *contra* operation with more than $100 million.[21]

The creation of a proxy army, however, represented only

one facet of the administration's policy of military aggression. The Reagan team also initiated a massive undertaking of regional militarization in Central America of unprecedented proportions. The essential physical infrastructure of this campaign of destabilization was established in Honduras. As Philip Shepherd notes,

> ...Reagan policymakers viewed Honduras as a perfect staging base between El Salvador and Nicaragua, and they began the forward deployment of U.S. troops and equipment to assist possible U.S. military intervention in the region's troubles.[22]

To pave the way for this "possible direct U.S. military intervention," U.S. military forces streamed into Honduras under the aegis of proposed joint military exercises which began in October 1981 with the Halcon Vista joint U.S.-Honduran military maneuvers. By 1983, these "training maneuvers" mushroomed into "Big Pine II" which lasted seven months. Additional maneuvers were planned by the Pentagon through 1988 which, in effect, would allow the U.S. military to maintain a virtual continuous show of force in the region designed explicitly to intimidate Managua.

The administration's Central American policy underwent a fundamental change in 1983 which shaped the direction of that policy for the remainder of the administration's first term in office and extended well into its second term. By 1983, the policy had failed to produce expected results in El Salvador as well as in Nicaragua, and with little to show for its

efforts, the administration found resistance to its policy in Congress as well as in domestic public opinion.

Upon entering the White House in 1981, officials within the Reagan administration identified El Salvador as the first target of their crusade against international communism. Yet, despite the escalation of U.S. involvement and financial assistance to defeat the Salvadoran insurgents, the civil war in El Salvador dragged on indecisively. To make matters even worse, the *contras* had not only failed to win a military victory, to seize any sizeable territory, or to stir-up a mass uprising, they had also failed politically to engender any significant domestic support for their cause within Nicaragua. Two years into the Reagan administration's second term in office this situation had not changed.

In the absence of any measurable success, the influence of Latin American specialists within the State Department over the development of U.S.-Central American policy waned. Policy control was increasingly dominated by White House favorites in the NSC such as William Casey and Constantine Menges (CIA), Jeane Kirkpatrick (UN), William Clark (National Security Adviser), and Nestor Sanchez and Fred Ikle (DOD).[23]

In 1983, in the wake of the Falkland-Malvinas war in which the Reagan administration allied itself with Great Britain, Argentina withdrew its support of the *contras*. Later, following a July 8 NSC meeting, the CIA began to assume direct control of the *contra* operation and to engineer sabotage operations consistent with the administration's goal of

crippling the Nicaraguan economic infrastructure.[24] One such operation was the attack on the oil storage facilities at Corinto on October 11, 1983. But, the CIA-orchestrated operation would earn congressional as well as widespread international condemnation in 1984 for its direct role in mining the Nicaraguan ports of Sandino, Corinto, and El Bluff.

The mandate of Southern Command (Southcom), which was headquartered in Panama under the leadership of General Paul Gorman, was also expanded in 1983 to oversee the development of the increasingly sophisticated military infrastructure in Honduras. Permanent U.S. military personnel assigned to Honduras, while roughly two dozen in 1980, expanded to five hundred by 1984.

Southcom's task in Honduras called for the renovation and/or construction of numerous air and ground facilities, a command and logistics center, and radar installations. More than $100 million was invested in the construction of this infrastructure.[25] U.S. military bases sprang up in San Lorenzo, Palmerola, and Puerto Castilla where the Regional Military Training Center for Salvadoran and Honduran soldiers was located.

A review of U.S. military assistance budgeted for Central American countries in the 1980s is indicative of the Reagan administration's attempt to militarily isolate Managua from its neighbors. In 1980, military assistance to Honduras was a relatively meager $4 million. However, by 1984, this figure had risen to $77.5 million. Military assistance to Costa Rica

was non-existent in 1980, yet $9.2 million was slated by Congress for Fiscal Year 1984 reflecting the administration's consistent efforts to erode Costa Rica's stated position of neutrality in the conflict.

Assistance to Panama rose from a mere $0.3 million in 1980 to $15.5 million in 1984. While no military assistance was budgeted for Guatemala between 1980 and 1984 (a situation attributable to that country's egregious human rights record), Congress appropriated $0.3 million and $10.3 million specifically for International Military Education Training for Fiscal Years 1985 and 1986 respectively. Not surprisingly, the increase in U.S. military assistance to El Salvador was especially dramatic during this period. In 1980, assistance to El Salvador totalled a mere $6.0 million, however, in 1984 U.S. military assistance skyrocketed to $196.5 million.[26]

THE "SPIRAL OF ARMS AND HOSTILITY"

The "spiral of arms and hostility"[27] was set in motion as the Sandinistas, confronted with the Reagan administration's dual track policy of economic and military aggression, embarked upon a program of military expansion. However, the Sandinistas insisted that their military build-up was defensive, and as Lars Schoultz argues:

> ...Looking first at history [the United States has invaded Nicaragua fourteen times] and then at statements...made by U.S. policymakers, any rational Nicaraguan would begin to fear an armed invasion of some sort....Nicaragua has

prepared to defend itself against a U.S. or U.S.-sponsored invasion.[28]

In addition to the threat of invasion by the United States' proxy army and/or direct U.S. intervention, the expansion of the neighboring Honduran military was viewed by the Sandinistas as having ominous portent. 1981 brought Honduras increased U.S. security assistance, the delivery of British tanks and American helicopters. Furthermore, the modernization of the Honduran armed forces pointedly addressed the issue of their compatibility with U.S. and U.S.-supplied forces in the region. With its acquisition of French Mirage jets, the build-up of the Honduran air force was of the utmost concern to the Sandinistas because, for all intents and purposes, Nicaragua possessed no tactical air capacity.

Faced with destabilization and/or extermination, the Sandinistas not surprisingly chose to substantially augment the size of their armed forces. In 1983, the Sandinistas initiated a military reorganization which emphasized an infantry-heavy military base. An unpopular military draft law, which affected males as young as sixteen, was passed in response to the escalation of the *contra* attacks. The Sandinista Popular Army (EPS) was reorganized into twelve multi-objective, motorized infantry battalions, including two or three armored brigades, and several field artillery and anti-aircraft battalions. By 1985, the EPS forces had expanded from twenty-five thousand to forty thousand. An

additional fifteen to twenty thousand formed the active-duty militia forces.[29]

And, the Sandinistas looked toward their Eastern bloc allies for military aid to cope with the threat. According to Department of Defense figures, Eastern bloc assistance amounted to a scant $12 million during the final two years of Carter's term—$5 million in 1979 and $7 million in 1980. However, as the Reagan administration pursued its policy of hostility, Soviet military assistance escalated dramatically. In 1981, Soviet military assistance totalled $45 million and, in 1982, as the covert war became operational Soviet assistance rose to $100 million. The Department of Defense estimates that $100 million was received by the Soviets in 1983 and $250 million in 1984.[30]

Gradually the Sandinistas upgraded their military arsenal with the acquisition of one hundred or more T-54 and T-55 tanks, thirty to sixty Soviet PT-76 light amphibious tanks, ten Soviet MI-24 helicopter gunships, heavy artillery, armored personnel carriers, and SAM missiles. Yet, as Dennis Gilbert suggests, even the acquisition of the more sophisticated weapons in their arsenal reflected the defensive character of the Sandinistas' intent. The advanced anti-aircraft missiles and MI-24 helicopters were not obtained until 1983 or 1984, "...by which time the American-supported *contra* forces had caused thousands of deaths and millions of dollars in physical damage" and, despite the Nicaraguan military expansion, "...the country had accumulated little capacity to fight

outside its own borders."[31]

Notwithstanding the Sandinistas' numerical superiority, the Sandinistas' armed forces were strikingly vulnerable because combat jets and bombers, necessary to provide air cover for ground troops, were conspicuously absent from their military arsenal. Without this equipment their offensive capabilities were severely constrained, yet these realities were deliberately ignored by the administration to facilitate the continuation of the Reagan policies of aggression. According to Lt. Col. Edward L. King (Ret.), a member of a 1984 Congressional fact-finding mission sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Services Committee,

> ...the U.S. has embraced a "worst case" intelligence analysis that overestimates the strength and offensive threat posed by the Nicaragaun Sandinista Popular Army (EPS)....Built upon a guerrilla army, the Sandinista armed forces are defensive in organization and positioning and do not have the organizational, command, staff, logistical or control experience to fight an offensive combined-arms war."[32]

King observed that, for the most part, the field artillery and anti-aircraft battalions were equipped with older model Soviet 85, 122, and 152mm artillery, while the regional military bat-talions were rudimentarily trained and equipped with older model rifles, machine guns, and the like.[33]

The Sandinistas' military build-up was publicly touted by the Reagan administration as incontrovertible proof of the their aggressive intentions against their Central American

neighbors. However, given the increased levels of assistance being offered their neighbors by the Reagan administration, a rather convincing argument was set forth by administration critics that Nicaragua's military build-up was rationally motivated.

As already mentioned in this chapter, Honduras was considered crucial to the development of the military infrastructure of Reagan's Central American policies. The following table indicates the price the Reagan administration was willing to pay for the "perfect staging base" for any intended interventionist activity in Central America.

Table 3.2[34]

U.S. MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO HONDURAS, 1946-1984
(U.S. Fiscal Years-Millions of Dollars)

	1946-1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	Supplemental 1984*	Proposed 1985*
Military								
Military Assistance Program	5.6	0	0	11.0	27.5	40.0	37.5	61.3
Credit Financing	12.5	3.5	8.4	19.0	9.0	0	0	0
International Military Education Training	8.5	0.4	0.5	1.3	0.8	1.0	0	1.2
Economic								
Security Support Funds	2.4	0	0	36.8	53.0	40.0	72.5	75.0
Economic								
Agency for International Development	213.8	45.8	25.7	31.2	35.1	32.0	7.3	45.0
TOTALS	271.8	49.7	34.6	99.3	125.4	113.0	118.0	182.5

*These figures represent Reagan administration requests as of April 1984.

Source: Central American Historical Institute, Georgetown University, "U.S.-Honduran Relations: A Background Briefing Packet," Washington, D.C., May 1984, from U.S. Agency for International Development, *Congressional Presentation: Latin American and Caribbean, 1985/86, 1984/85, 1983/84,* Annex III.

The figures of U.S. military and economic assistance to El Salvador during this period are similarly startling.

Table 3.3[35]

U.S. MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO EL SALVADOR[1]
(U.S. Fiscal Years-Millions of Dollars)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985[2]	1986[3]
Military Assistance	6.0	35.5	82.0	81.3	196.5	128.2	132.6
Economic Support Funds	9.1	44.9	115.2	140.0	210.5	195.0	210.0
Economic Assistance	48.7	68.7	67.2	91.1	120.65	131.1	140.8
TOTALS	63.8	149.1	264.4	312.4	527.65	454.3	483.4

Sources: U.S. State Department and Congressional documents; NARMIC/American Friends Service Committee, 1985, *INVASION: A Guide to the U.S. Military Presence in Central America.*

[1]FY 1985 and 1986 military assistance to El Salvador was supplemented by an estimated $6 million each year in Commercial Sales. Commerical Sales in the region generally run less than $1 million to any country in a fiscal year.

[2]FY 1985 figures are those appropriated by the US Congress. Each year since 1981 actual spending in the region has outstripped the funds Congress initially approved, as a result of presidential authority, military supplementals and reprogramming, and the Caribbean Basin initiative; it is impossible to project accurately the cost of US policy for FY 1985.

[3]Reagan Administration Foreign Aid requests.

As Martin Diskin and Kenneth E. Sharpe observe, "by 1985, U.S. aid had financed the expansion of the Salvadoran army and security forces from 12,000 in 1980 to over 42,000."[36]

Even Costa Rica was included in the Reagan administration's militarization strategy. If tensions were to explode in widespread regional conflict, standardization and interchangeability of weaponry within the various Latin American

armed forces would provide a significant advantage to Nicaragua's opponents. Increased levels of U.S. military assistance and special training forces addressed this concern.

While having no desire to become a pawn of the U.S. policy of hostility in Central America, *contra* activity and tensions along its border with Nicaragua severely strained Costa Rica's ability to resist Washington's pressure for militarization. Then, too, Costa Rica's deterioriating economic condition undoubtedly compelled a certain deference to Washington's regional initiatives. The following table details the level of U.S. economic and military assistance to Costa Rica during the years of the Reagan administration. Table 3.4[37]

U.S. MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO COSTA RICA
(U.S. Fiscal Years-Millions of Dollars)

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985[1]	1986[2]
Military Assistance	0.0	0.03	2.1	2.6	9.2	9.2	2.725
Economic Support Funds	0.0	0.0	90.0	157.0	130.0	160.0	150.0
Economic Assistance	14.0	13.3	30.6	55.4	47.9	48.0	37.35
TOTALS	14.0	13.33	122.7	215.0	187.1	217.2	190.075

Sources: U.S. State Department and Congressional documents; NARMIC/American Friends Service Committee, 1985, *INVASION: A Guide to the U.S. Military Presence in Central America.*

[1]Note 2 of Table 3.3.

[2]Reagan Administration Foreign Aid requests.

As indicated above, U.S. security assistance to Costa Rica was renewed in 1981 (after a thirteen year hiatus). Such assistance was not intended to upgrade an army, but Costa

Rica's Guard force. In 1985, twenty-four U.S. Army Special Forces advisers arrived in Costa Rica to conduct counter-insurgency training.[38] Not only was the military training to be uniform and professional, M-16 automatic rifles, grenade launchers, 80mm mortars, M-60 machine guns and other combat weapons were to become standard gear for the Guard.[39]

Given the escalating level of militarization of the region, informed observers of the Central American conflict suggested that the Sandinistas' military expansion program was not purposively designed to enhance Nicaragua's offensive capabilities but rather was "primarily defense-oriented."[40] From their perspective, the Nicaraguan military build-up was a rational response to the increased levels of military assistance the United States had provided their neighbors.

While there was little evidence that the Sandinistas planned to launch a sophisticated offensive attack against their neighbors, U.S. intelligence reports claimed that the Sandinistas could launch a tank assault through the Choluteca Province near the Honduran border using their T-54/T-55 Soviet tanks. However, the rugged terrain between San Lorenzo and Tegucigalpa was poorly suited to large-scale tank movement and ideally suited to protect well-equipped and entrenched anti-tank infantry units.[41] Under these circumstances, it was extraordinarily unlikely that the Sandinistas would be willing to gamble on the outcome of an offensive assault.

A more pressing concern for the Sandinistas was the need to conserve available resources to defend themselves against

the Reagan administration's policy of hostility. The physical damage inflicted upon the Nicaraguan economic infrastructure by the CIA-directed *contra* operations, coupled with the effect of U.S. economic sanctions, exacted a heavy toll on the FSLN government. Translated into economic and human terms, during the Reagan administration's first term in office, the *contra* war caused $550 million in war damage and lost production, the forced displacement of 150,000 Nicaraguans, and more than 8,000 military and civilian deaths.[42] The damage sustained by Nicaragua's export production economy (i.e., coffee, tobacco, livestock, lumber, fishing, and mining) resulted in balance-of-payment deficits and the further erosion of the nation's foreign exchange account so vital for the purchase of production materials and foreign imports.

As the guerrilla war intensified, the Sandinistas were forced to divert budgeted developmental assistance to their military budget. In 1980, the Sandinistas allocated roughly eighteen percent of the national budget for military spending and fifty percent to health and education. By 1985, more than fifty percent of the national budget and forty percent of Nicaragua's productive output was diverted to the war effort and less than twenty percent was allocated to the health and education ministries.[43]

A MILITARY PRESCRIPTION VS. A NEGOTIATED PEACE SETTLEMENT: WAGING WAR ON THE HOME-FRONT

By 1983, the Reagan administration's strategy of low-intensity attrition warfare encountered increasing opposition both in Congress as well as in the public at large. Public opinion polls conducted in 1983 indicated that about sixty percent of the American people opposed the President's Central American policies.[44] Nor did they support the sending of U.S. military personnel into the region; they feared that such a course of action could lead the country into war.

Table 3.5[45]

COVERT PARAMILITARY ACTION AGAINST NICARAGUA

- Should the United States be giving assistance to the guerrilla forces now opposing the Marxist government in Nicaragua? (Gallup/*Newsweek*)
- As you may know, the United States, through the CIA, is supporting the rebels. Would you say you approve or disapprove of the United States being involved in trying to overthrow the government of Nicaragua? (ABC/*Washington Post*)
- The Reagan Administration says the United States should help people in Nicaragua who are trying to overthrow the pro-Soviet government there. Other people say that even if our country doesn't like the government in Nicaragua, we should not help to overthrow it. Do you think we should help the people trying to overthrow the government or not? (CBS/*New York Times*)
- Do you favor or oppose the United States arming and supporting the rebels in Nicaragua who are trying to overthrow the Sandinista government in that country? (Harris)
- Do you think the CIA should support an invasion of Nicaragua to overthrow the leftist Sandinista government there, or don't you think the CIA should do that? (*Los Angeles Times*)

Table 3.5 continued

	1984		1983							
	Jan (ABC/ WP)	Jan (H)	Nov (ABC/ WP)	Sep (H)	Aug (ABC/	Aug (H)	Jun (CBS/ NYT)	May (ABC/ WP)	May (G/N)*	Apr (LAT)
Favor	23%	24%	30%	24%	20%	23%	23%	13%	25%	10%
Oppose	55	60	48	60	62	66	53	78	56	62
Not Sure	22	16	22	16	17	11	24	10	19	28

*Informed respondents only.

Source: ABC/*Washington Post* Poll, January 1984, November, 1983, August 1983, May 1983; The Harris Survey, January 19, 1984, September 8, 1983, August 22, 1983; CBS/*New York Times* Poll, June 1983; *Newsweek*, May 9, 1983; *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1983.

The hardening of the administration's policy of hostility had mocked efforts to achieve a negotiated peace settlement from 1981 through 1983. There had been the failed August 1981 Enders' initiative. The newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas Enders, had presented the Sandinistas with the United States' non-negotiable terms for any peace initiative. Specifically, the United States expected the Sandinistas to cease giving refuge to the leaders of the Salvadoran insurgents and to freeze their acquisition of heavy weaponry.

According to LeoGrande, however, the Enders' proposal was couched in "...imperial language certain to irritate the nationalism of the Sandinista leadership."[46] In view of the United States' traditional imperialistic posturing toward Nicaragua, the Sandinistas' extreme sensitivity to the imperious tone of the Enders' proposal was understandable.

Subsequently, in February 1982, Mexican President Jose Lopez-Portillo had offered to mediate discussions not only between the United States and Nicaragua but also between the United States and Cuba. However, preferring bilateral talks in a U.S.-controlled forum, Washington did not warmly embrace Portillo's offer.

In April, following the arrival in Managua of Anthony Quainton, the newly installed U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua, the Reagan administration added to its list of non-negotiable items. The Sandinistas were: (1) to reduce the size of its armed forces, (2) to accept regional verification of its airports and borders, (3) to pledge not to support insurgency movements abroad, (4) to refrain from interference in neighboring affairs, and (5) to pursue democratic pluralism (presumably in a fashion consistent with the United States' conception of democracy). As the United States' position was intransigent, no accord was forthcoming.[47]

Yet another initiative was proposed in September. Mexico, Venezuela, and Panama offered to intercede and to arrange bilateral talks between Nicaragua and both the United States and Honduras. However, their offer was spurned by Washington.

Aware that a continuation of Reagan's policy of militarization in Honduras and El Salvador threatened their very existence, the Sandinistas were receptive to negotiation. What they were not prepared to negotiate, however, was their sovereignty and legitimacy. Nonetheless, the administration's

response to each of these initiatives suggested that such a concession offered the only satisfactory resolution to the conflict.

A remarkably convenient logic was employed by Washington to reject each of these proposals; namely, the Sandinistas were notoriously insincere, manipulative and untrustworthy. Given this assessment of their character, the conclusion could be drawn that any agreement by the Sandinistas to accept the conditions of a negotiated settlement was meaningless from the outset. Such a stance offered little maneuverability.

The prevalence of this position reflected a victory by the administration hard-liners over the conservative pragmatists in the rollback versus containment debate. Whereas containment advocates argued that U.S. security interests would not necessarily be compromised by a negotiated settlement, rollback enthusiasts automatically treated the very existence of the Sandinista government as a threat to those interests. While containment required that the Reagan administration recognize the sovereignty and legitimacy of the Sandinista government, rollback unequivocally rejected any acceptance of the leftist regime in Managua and readily endorsed a military solution to remove the Sandinistas from power.

From the rollback perspective then, the Latin American initiatives were viewed as an obstruction to the Reagan administration's preferred military agenda. And, as the White House favorites were repeatedly successful in stalling non-

U.S. initiated peace proposals, 1982 ended without any prospect for a negotiated peace settlement near at hand.

By employing an expanded definition of the vital interests of the United States in the region, the Reagan administration constructed a rigid, uncompromising policy of aggression explicitly designed to topple the Sandinista government. However, the entire region, not just Nicaragua, suffered from the destabilizing effects of its policy of hostility. As Washington's unilateral initiatives merely exacerbated existing tensions, the regional actors challenged Washington's definition of hemispheric security and sought a collective regional settlement to the conflict.

Although the administration hard-liners resented their interference, the Latin Americans were obstinate in their refusal to abandon efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. In January 1983, the Contadora peace initiative was begun by Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, and Panama. Having set themselves an aggressive agenda, the Contadora nations initiated a series of multilateral meetings.

Contadora was an opportunity to defuse regional tensions before they exploded into a full-scale war. While the Reagan administration pursued a military option to remove them from power, Contadora welcomed the Sandinistas to the negotiation table. Unlike the Reagan administration, Contadora acknowledged the Sandinistas' sovereignty, and this recognition signalled that Nicaragua's security concerns would be discussed and negotiated along with those of its neighbors.

In May, they accepted Contadora's invitation. The alternative to negotiation was the continuation of Reagan's policies of aggression.

In July, the Sandinistas proposed their own six-point peace plan which specifically called for: (1) a non-aggression pact between Honduras and Nicaragua; (2) the suspension of the flow of arms to opponents in the Salvadoran conflict; (3) the cessation of sponsorship of any regional force attempting to remove a regional government; (4) the recognition of the right to self-determination and non-intervention; (5) an end to policies of economic discrimination in the region; and (6) an agreement to prohibit foreign military bases and military exercises in the region.[48]

The Sandinistas proposed additional concessions in August. If the United States would cease its militarization of Honduras, they, in turn, would refuse any further Soviet military assistance and expel all Cuban military advisers from Nicaragua.

By September, the Central American nations, without exception, agreed to sign the twenty-one point "Document of Objectives." This proposal established conditions for such controversial issues as mutual disarmament, the reduction of foreign military advisers in the region, and border supervision, as well as a pledge by the signatories to hold honest and regular elections.[49]

Four draft treaties were presented by Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto in October, the terms of which

prohibited the use of Nicaraguan territory as a foreign military base and called for an end to all support for all subversive activity in the region. Clearly, the Sandinistas were amenable to compromise and concession, but they had no intention of voluntarily removing themselves from power.

As with previous initiatives, each of these four treaties were summarily dismissed by the State Department as insincere and propagandistic. "In a characteristic anti-Sandinista stance," as Max Azicri observes, "Washington, San Salvador, and Tegucigalpa ignored and/or rejected the Nicaraguan proposal."[50]

Although the United States was not an active Contadora participant, U.S. allies involved in the process questioned the timing of the withdrawal of foreign military advisers from the region and the closing of military bases and pressed for more stringent verification procedures on arms and troop reduction.

Terry Karl provides the following damning account of the Reagan administration's response to the various Latin American proposed peace initiatives in 1983:

> ...Immediately following the formation of Contadora in January 1983, with its publicly proclaimed platform of nonintervention and disarmament, the United States initiated the Big Pine I exercises in Honduras, which brought the first mass landing of U.S. troops to the area. In July, when the presidents of Mexico, Venezuela, Panama, and Colombia met in Cancun to call for a prohibition on the installation of foreign bases in the region, the Reagan administration began the construction of eight bases in Honduras and launched five thousand new U.S.

> troops into that country through Big Pine II. In September 1983, when the twenty-one point Contadora peace plan was unveiled, explicitly calling for a policy of nonaggression in the Caribbean Basin and the rejection of force in international relations, the Reagan administration attempted to revitalize CONDECA, a Central American military alliance. In October, it invaded Grenada.[51]

By manipulating its Central American allies and continuing the militarization of Honduras and El Salvador, the Reagan administration blocked each alternative for a peaceful resolution that had been proposed in 1983. Despite the Sandinistas' conciliatory overtures, the administration preserved the momentum of its policies of hostility and effectively derailed the Contadora process.

More of the same was planned for 1984. In fact, in 1984 the administration hoped to build the necessary consensus for its military agenda and to permanently scuttle a negotiated settlement.

Reluctant to cede control to the Latin Americans and to dispel the impression that his administration preferred a military prescription to a negotiated peace settlement, President Reagan had appointed the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America in July 1983. The Commission was chaired by Henry Kissinger, and presumably its "bipartisan" nature was expected to be certified by the appointment of twelve representatives from the Democratic as well as the Republican Party.[52]

Of the appointees, though, only Carlos Diaz-Alejandro, a Yale University Economics Professor, and Henry Cisneros, Mayor of San Antonio, Texas, could be judged liberals. In

addition, Diaz-Alejandro and Cisneros were the only two Hispanics appointed to the Commission.

When William D. Rogers, one of the eleven Senior Counsellors[53] appointed to the Commission, was interviewed by Patricia Bodnar in August 1986, he readily conceded that the Commission was not constituted by Latin American specialists. In fact, in that interview Rogers states that the Commission members "...were as uninformed as the average newspaper-reading American. They were appallingly ignorant of the realities of Central America."[54]

While absent this expertise, the Commission was expected to examine the extent and nature of U.S. national and security concerns in Central America. Guided by the recognition of these interests, the Commission was specifically directed by President Reagan to propose "a long-term United States policy that will best respond to the challenges of social, economic, and democratic development in the region, and to internal and external threats to its security and stability."[55] Moreover, the Commission was to advise on the "means of building a national consensus on a comprehensive United States policy for the region."[56] The Commission's report was due to be released in January 1984.

The report was essentially a vindication of Reagan's policies. Admittedly, the Commission did concede that there were certain indigenous causes of the conflicts in the region; however, as the following excerpts suggest, the bulk of the problem was attributed to Soviet-Cuban influence in Central

America.

> ...Whatever the social and economic conditions that invited insurgency in the region, outside intervention is what gives the conflict its present character...
>
> ...Without such support from Cuba, Nicaragua and the Soviet Union, neither in El Salvador nor elsewhere in Central America would such an insurgency pose so severe a threat to the government...With the victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, the levels of violence and counter-violence in Central America rapidly increased, engulfing the region...[57]
>
> ...The use of Nicaragua as a base for Soviet and Cuban efforts to penetrate the rest of the Central American isthmus...gives the conflict there a major strategic dimension. This direct involvement of aggressive external forces makes it a challenge to the system of hemispheric security, and quite specifically, to the security interests of the United States.[58]

References to Nicaragua as a "base" for Soviet and Cuban military operations underscored the Commission's acceptance of the administration's policy of militarization. Such language stressed the East-West rivalry and alluded to the necessity of maintaining the existing global balance of power. This rhetorical commitment intentionally obscured the reality of Soviet-Cuban involvement in Nicaragua and deliberately portrayed the Nicaraguan conflict as a major threat to the United States' interests in Latin America.

As Bodnar argues, Reagan policymakers viewed the report as an "...opportunity to clarify and move the country in the direction of their policy goals" and to achieve the "hoped-for national consensus."[59] In sum, as the policy of aggression levelled against the Sandinista government continued at full throttle, the report was expected to "...provide the cover

necessary for the Administration to further consolidate its real agenda of militarization."[40]

In the interim, however, the Sandinistas took a few steps in consolidating their internal position in 1984. Among other concessions, prior censorship was eased, state of emergency restrictions imposed in March 1982 were relaxed, bans on labor strikes were removed, and talks were held with domestic critics. Moreover, in an attempt to deflect criticism and pressure, especially from the Reagan administration, the election timetable was advanced.

As noted earlier, on November 4, 1984, Daniel Ortega was elected president of Nicaragua and Sergio Ramirez was elected vice president. With roughly three-fourths of eligible voters going to the polls, the Ortega-Ramirez ticket received over sixty percent of the vote.

By mid-1984, the administration's policy of aggression had run into a congressional roadblock. Congress was unable to ignore the CIA's direct participation in the mining of the Nicaraguan harbors, the CIA's writing and dissemination of a *contra* handbook with references to neutralizing Sandinistas and creating martyrs for the *contra* cause, or several air and sea bombing raids aimed at strategic Nicaraguan targets.

This sabotage activity was totally consistent with the administration's escalating campaign of aggression which was aimed at destabilizing the Nicaraguan economy. By mining the harbors, the administration hoped to choke off Nicaragua's oil imports as well as the export of its cotton and coffee.

On April 9, 1984 the Nicaraguan government launched a legal assault against the United States government in the International Court of Justice at The Hague, more commonly known as the World Court. Specifically, the Nicaraguan government accused the United States of "...using military force and interfering with the sovereign territorial integrity and political independence of Nicaragua."[61]

However, aware of the likelihood of an unfavorable disposition of the case by the fifteen-member body, the administration had announced on April 6 that it would not recognize jurisdiction of the Court over any Central American matter for a period of two years.[62] Jeane Kirkpatrick, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations at the time, labelled Nicaragua an aggressor nation and justified U.S. actions on the grounds of collective self-defense. Kirkpatrick claimed that the Nicaraguan government's decision to take the case to the World Court was "blatantly propagandistic" and "a cynical effort to influence world opinion and votes in Congress."[63]

The Sandinistas were indeed successful in courting world opinion and votes in Congress. The Reagan administration was widely condemned by the international community for its actions, and many on Capitol Hill felt betrayed by the administration's failure to inform the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence about the CIA's direct role in the mining of the harbors.

Funding for the *contras* was allowed to expire. In June, the House refused to join with the Republican-controlled

Senate in approving a presidential request for an additional $21 million in *contra* assistance.

Stung by the congressional rebuff, and mindful of the domestic political considerations of an election year, the administration sought to soften its public profile on the Nicaraguan issue. Accordingly, the administration engaged in a series of bilateral talks with Nicaragua which were held in Manzanillo, Mexico. While an attempt to build a minimal policy consensus, the Manzanillo talks underscored the schizophrenic nature of the Reagan policy team which had been torn between the rollback enthusiasts in the White House and the containment advocates in the State Department.

The Sandinista delegation, led by Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Hugo Tinoco, approached the bargaining table with substantive proposals that addressed major U.S. security concerns, most notably, the size and strength of Nicaragua's military force, the withdrawal of foreign military advisers from the region, and a pledge not to support regional subversion. The last proposal was clearly intended to signal their willingness to satisfy Washington's concerns of any FSLN-assistance to the leftist insurgents in El Salvador.

Specifically, the Sandinista delegation agreed that all foreign military advisers would be expelled from Nicaraguan territory, but their offer was contingent upon the simultaneous cessation of U.S. support for the *contra* movement. The United States' counterproposal suggested that the Sandinista government proceed with a gradual phase-out of their foreign

advisers and, in return, the United States would give further consideration to withdrawing U.S. military advisers from the region—hardly an equitable arrangement.

While the Manzanillo talks offered some maneuvering space, there were issues that both parties considered non-negotiable. The United States insisted that the Sandinistas acknowledge the *contra* movement as a legitimate political opponent and engage in a national dialogue with the *contra* leadership. The U.S. delegation also continued to press for internal political reforms in the Nicaraguan government. In sum, the United States refused to abandon its insistence that the Sandinistas agree to fundamental structural change in their revolutionary government.

However, on these issues the Sandinistas were intractable. They were unwilling to compromise their stated position on self-determination and anti-imperialism by lending legitimacy to any U.S. effort either to dictate structural change in their government or to compel dialogue with an opponent who had sought to overthrow their government.

The last of the Manzanillo meetings took place in December. The United States broke off discussions in January alleging Nicaraguan insincerity, and the Reagan team began to wage an aggressive campaign to revive *contra* funding. Clearly, the domestic political considerations of an election year no longer influenced the administration's policy position.

While Secretary of State George Schultz felt that the Manzanillo talks provided a viable framework for a political

settlement to the Nicaraguan issue without jeopardizing U.S. security interests in the region, the administration hard-liners emerged victorious.[64] The rationale behind the intransigent stance of the White House hard-liners was painfully obvious. If the conditions conducive to a peaceful settlement to the Nicaraguan issue could be eliminated, then military force would be recognized as the only true viable alternative to settle the conflict.

There was a significant advantage to the pursuit of a military agenda. If this route were followed, rather than negotiation or containment, emphasis could be given to eliminating the Sandinistas entirely. Thus, the acceptance of the reality of a leftist government in Managua need not be a concern in Washington. From this perspective, rollback far outweighed the benefits of containment.

The formation of the United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO), in March 1985, occurred against this backdrop of anti-Sandinista rhetoric and was intended to quiet the storm of criticism from domestic opponents of the Reagan administration's policies. No doubt congressional support for covert funding of the "secret" war against the Sandinista government had worn thin. If, however, UNO could be perceived by members of Congress as a democratic coalition or a viable government in-exile, Congress might then relent and provide overt funding for the *contra* cause.

It should be noted that UNO was created at the behest of the Reagan administration. This U.S.-creation was meant to

spruce-up the image of a divided *contra* leadership which consistently operated without any clear sense of purpose, direction, cohesion, or unity. UNO represented the administration's best efforts to create an illusion of unity between the Sandinistas' civilian and military opposition, the reality of which had been notably absent since 1981.

However, this illusion of unity was marred from the outset as the leaders of UNO were divided over strategy. Closely aligned with the most conservative *contra* elements, which included ex-Somocista National Guard members, Adolfo Calero headed the FDN, the *contras'* military wing. The *contras'* political contingent was led by Alfonso Robelo and Arturo Cruz. Unlike Calero and his supporters who sought the overthrow of the Sandinistas, Cruz and Robelo were more amenable to negotiation with the Sandinistas.

While Congress did subsequently renew funding of the *contras,* UNO was not the impetus of that funding. The administration was successful, in part, due to Daniel Ortega's visit to Moscow in May 1985.

Since assuming power in 1979, Sandinista delegations had travelled frequently to the Soviet Union to negotiate various agreements. Daniel Ortega had visited Moscow on numerous occasions. In May 1982, he had met with Leonid Brezhnev, in May 1983 with Yuri Andropov, and in February 1984 with Konstantin Chernenko. As had been the case with previously scheduled visits, Nicaragua's critical economic situation set the agenda for Ortega's meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in

1985.

The damage inflicted upon the oil storage facilities at Corinto, coupled with other instances of U.S. sabotage activities, had seriously exacerbated an already difficult economic situation. During this particular trip, Ortega successfully negotiated an agreement with the Soviet Union which provided for nearly ninety percent of Nicaragua's petroleum needs.[45]

While the May 1985 trip may have been the equivalent of Ortega's "annual visit" and annual request for increased Soviet support, the timing of this trip was crucial. Only days before, Congress had denied President Reagan's request for renewed military assistance for the rebel movement. But, unwilling to appear "soft on communism," the resolve of congressional critics of the Reagan administration's policies quickly weakened.

In June, while refusing to give military aid, Congress authorized $27 million in "humanitarian" aid, a direct reaction to Ortega's Moscow trip. As such assistance is generally given only to civilians and noncombatants, the label "humanitarian" was suspect, and the U.S. national security establishment flouted international law by giving assistance to facilitate a group involved in combat with the Sandinista government.

In March, 1986, as the administration's request for $100 million in new *contra* military funding was being debated in Congress, the Sandinistas, once again, facilitated the admin-

istration's task. On March 20, the House of Representatives voted on Reagan's aid package where it was defeated by a 222-210 vote; it was subsequently endorsed in the Republican-controlled Senate by an equally narrow 53-47 margin. A new round of voting was scheduled for April 15 in the House.

However, following the vote, the Sandinistas launched a military foray into neighboring Honduras to launch an attack against the main *contra* training camp located about ten miles within the border. As Honduras provided sanctuary to the *contras*, cross-border incidents were fairly routine. Indeed, *contra* tactics were deliberately calculated to lure the Sandinistas' military forces across the Honduran border.

If the Sandinistas crossed the border in hot-pursuit, the Reagan administration could sound the familiar refrains of Sandinista aggression and national security threats. Past experience had taught the administration that when the conflict could be presented in crisis proportions, Congress was generally more receptive to requests for additional *contra* funding and support. In this instance, while Honduran officials preferred to treat the incident little differently from those which occurred regularly along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border, Congress authorized an emergency $20 million aid package for Honduras along with U.S. helicopters and crews to transport Honduran soldiers to the border zone.

Debate over the $100 million military funding package continued for months, but it was eventually passed in August when Congress displayed an unwillingness to halt the *contra*

war. While $100 million was voted in overt funds for the *contras*, access was made available to $400 million in *sub rosa* CIA funds. An additional $300 million was authorized for a Kissingeresque plan to aid other Central American governments —a continuation of the administration's strategy to isolate the Sandinistas.[64]

The Sandinistas had not failed to recognize the opportunity presented to them by Capitol Hill's predictability. What at first glance might appear to be incredibly poor timing on Daniel Ortega's part might rather be an exquisitely fine-tuned sense of timing purposely intended to create a war-inspired solidarity among the Nicaraguan people.

When Ortega travelled to Moscow in 1985, Congress yielded to administration pressure for increased *contra* support. When the Sandinistas' attacked the main *contra* training camp in Honduras in March, 1986, they received a guarantee of $100 million worth of continued U.S.-supported aggression.

By authorizing increased funding of an already unpopular *contra* war, Congress reinforced the image of a superpower aggressor waging war against a weaker nation. At the same time, Congress permitted the Sandinistas to maintain domestic support for their government and to insure continued support from a large segment of the international community already opposed to the U.S. policy of hostility.

When Congress authorized the $100 million for the *contra* movement, Senator James Sasser (D-TN) offered an interesting scenario of the administration's plans for the money. This

scenario envisioned the *contras* launching an invasion into a northern corner of Nicaragua, seizing a remote and uncontested area, and then declaring themselves the provisional government of Nicaragua. The United States would then grant recognition to the provisional government. For their part, the Sandinistas would launch a full-scale assault to remove the *contras*. If the *contras* proved incapable of defending themselves, as they were sure to do, then the United States would send in the marines. When asked where he had gotten this impression, Senator Sasser candidly responded that Elliot Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, had indicated that the State Department favored the "provisional government ploy as a means of legitimizing the *contras*."[67]

Such a scenario was entirely consistent with the Reagan administration's history of undermining the various diplomatic initiatives that had been proposed to resolve the conflict. The Sandinistas had not been an obstacle to negotiation despite the intense militarization of the region which threatened to destroy them. Time and again, the Sandinistas had indicated that they were fully aware geopolitical realities demanded the acknowledgement and respect of the security concerns of their Central American neighbors and the United States. They had offered to send home all foreign military advisers and to prohibit the use of Nicaraguan territory as a foreign military base. Such a conciliatory posture was intended to address these security concerns.

However, negotiation was never the answer for the Reagan

administration, because the Sandinistas adamantly refused to relinquish their right to self-determination. Thus, while negotiation would protect core U.S. security concerns, negotiation would not provide Washington with the means to attain its narrow definition of security objectives; namely, overthrowing a revolutionary regime.

The provisional government ploy thus afforded the Reagan administration the opportunity to directly intervene to remove the Sandinistas from power and to install a *contra* government. Since the *contras* would undoubtedly be as indebted to Washington as had been the Somoza dictatorship, their behavior would be predictably pro-United States. And, if this could be accomplished on Reagan's watch, a leftist government in Managua would not be an issue for his successor.

However, despite the resumption of funding, the *contras* failed to make any progress toward their goal. After five years of funding, the *contras* had yet to score a military victory, to seize any territory, or to attract significant support for their cause within Nicaragua. Quite the contrary, the death, destruction, and economic hardship caused by the U.S.-financed *contras* generated widespread hatred of the *contra* cause within Nicaragua. And, with the Contadora peace process effectively derailed by the administration, no substantive progress was made toward a peaceful resolution to the conflict in either 1985 or 1986.

Central America was the victim of militarization and seething tensions as the Reagan administration and the

Sandinista government reacted to each other. While the Sandinistas were receptive to negotiation, they were not responsive to Washington's demands; they refused to yield on the issue of self-determination.

A "no second Cuba" doctrine was central to the administration's Central American policy. Clearly, a narrow view of national security prohibited any accommodation with the leftist government in Managua. Consequently, an action-reaction phenomenon was well established, and opportunities to peacefully resolve the conflict were repeatedly thwarted.

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As of this writing (in 1987), the Reagan administration's *contra* policy is in disarray. On October 5, 1986, a C-123 cargo plane loaded with guns, ammunition, and miscellaneous supplies for *contras* in southern Nicaragua was shot down by a small Sandinista anti-aircraft patrol. Subsequent revelations that the plane was owned by an American company, manned by American citizens, and operated from the Ilopango Air Force Base in El Salvador reinvigorated criticism of the administration's policies and sparked an investigation not only of private assistance to the *contras* but also of the nature and extent of official U.S. involvement in the *contra* supply operations.

The administration's position was further compromised the following month when President Reagan and his Attorney General Edwin Meese made public certain details of its failed Iran arms-for-hostages policy and the subsequent diversion of funds

to the *contras*. Currently, congressional and independent inquiries are investigating, at a minimum, the diversion of funds to the *contras* from the Iran arms sales; what knowledge, if any, President Reagan had of that diversion; the funding of the *contras* via private networks; and the possibility that U.S. laws (i.e., the Arms Control Export Act, the Neutrality Act, the Boland Amendment) may have been violated in assisting the *contra* war effort.

During the October 1984-October 1986 period, the Federal Government was prohibited by Congress from providing direct military aid to the *contras*. Despite this congressional prohibition, however, there is evidence which suggests that the *contras* were indeed receiving military assistance. Of particular concern is the extent of involvement by administration officials in the circumvention of this restriction.

Federal investigators have focused their attention on the private networking operation and have critically examined the connection between conservative fund-raiser Carl R. Channell of the National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty and former National Security Council aide, Lieut. Col. Oliver L. North, who was dismissed following disclosure of the Iran-*contra* affair. While a spokesman for the National Endowment claimed that a $2 million fund labelled "TOYS" was used to purchase gifts for the rebels' families, investigators were concerned that this fund was actually intended for the purchase of weapons and ammunition in violation of the congressional restrictions. On April 29 Channell pleaded guilty to

the charge that he had conspired to violate tax laws by using tax-deductible contributions to illegally arm the *contras*.[68]

Moreover, the divisions which plagued UNO's leadership from its inception, ruptured the umbrella organization in 1987. Arturo Cruz, widely recognized as a key to continued congressional support for *contra* funding, announced his resignation on March 9. His decision was prompted, in part, by his inability to reconcile differences with Adolfo Calero, head of the CIA-backed FDN.

Among the reasons given for his departure was his concern that he had failed to convince rebel leaders to include a broader range of political exiles among the leadership and to reorganize the rebel army under civilian control. Unable to persuade fellow *contra* leaders to accept reforms, Cruz criticized the United States for failing to insist on needed reforms and accused "certain factions" of the U.S. government of not acting "decisively to avoid supporting hegemonistic currents" within the *contra* movement.[69]

Cruz's resignation was quickly followed by Alfonso Robelo's announcement on April 13 that he intended to resign from UNO which, in effect, would leave the umbrella organization without any recognized moderate leadership. Robelo's relationship with Calero had also been marred by friction. He had shared Cruz's conviction that a political settlement could be negotiated with the Sandinista government to resolve their differences.

His announcement occurred as UNO was in the midst of

restructuring its organization to include an expanded seven-man directorate. The new organization, the Nicaraguan Democratic Resistance, was expected to be dominated by Calero and his top lieutenant Col. Enrique Bermudez in the FDN, the largest rebel army.

Clearly the emphasis on a military solution to the conflict had not been abandoned and, according to Robelo, the Reagan administration's efforts to secure additional *contra* funding were linked to a military solution. In a *Newsweek* interview, Robelo commented, "they're putting all the responsibility for winning aid in the future on military operations."[70]

These developments, not to mention those which might yet come to light during the ongoing investigations, certainly complicate the administration's task. However, thus far, the Reagan administration has been extraordinarily successful and equally resourceful in securing funding for the *contra* cause. Recognizing that the *contra* aid is in trouble with even moderate Republicans, the administration has decided to postpone a request for an additional $105 million. However, the decision to postpone is not a signal that the administration intends to abandon either the *contras* or its present policies.

Since 1981, the Reagan administration has sent a very clear signal that containment of the Sandinistas is recognized as an unsatisfactory resolution to the Nicaraguan conflict. From the perspective of the administration's rollback enthusiasts, accommodation with the leftist regime in Managua would

be tantamount to an admission of, and what is worse, the acceptance of, the loss of U.S. influence and power in Latin America. According to this view, only a rollback scenario can restore that lost prestige.

The administration's hostile rhetoric which denounces the Sandinista-Soviet alignment is consistent with efforts to elevate the Central American conflict to a crisis situation in which U.S. national interests can be perceived as threatened by Moscow. However, this rhetoric ignores the conciliatory tone the Sandinistas have assumed since 1983, when the Contadora nations began their effort to avert the threat of full-scale war in Central America.

While the Sandinistas are prepared to recognize the legitimate security interests of the United States and their Central American neighbors, they are not willing to transfer power to the *contra* leadership at Washington's insistence. However, their refusal to remove themselves from power should not be confused with aggression.

As the record clearly indicates, the United States' interests in the Western Hemisphere need not be threatened by negotiation with a leftist government. By abandoning the preferred military prescription, not only could regional tensions improve but also the Reagan administration could take a giant step toward guaranteeing the continued influence of the United States in the region. While the Reagan administration has stated its preference for a military solution to the conflict as a device to maintain control in the region, the

present policy of aggression has only alienated friends and foes alike.

Contadora and similar proposals represent more than Latin American peace initiatives. They also represent the aspirations of Latin American nations to work in cooperation with, not in subservience to, the United States. The recognition of these aspirations and the United States' willingness to pursue legitimate diplomatic and political alternatives consistent with the achievement of its national and security interests rather than the familiar military prescriptions to resolve regional conflicts may yet prove to be much more conducive to securing those interests in Latin America. These issues will be addressed in the next and final chapter.

NOTES

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[3]William M. LeoGrande, "The United States and Nicaragua," in *NICARAGUA The First Five Years*, ed. Thomas W. Walker (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), p. 432.

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[12]LeoGrande, "The United States and Nicaragua," p. 434.

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[22]Philip L. Shepherd, "Honduras," p. 130.

[23]Mary B. Vanderlaan, *Revolution and Foreign Policy in NICARAGUA* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1986), p. 160.

[24]LeoGrande, "The United States and Nicaragua," pp. 434-435.

[25]Shepherd, "Honduras," p. 133.

[26]Vanderlaan, *Revolution and Foreign Policy in NICARAGUA*, pp. 176-181.

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[30]Cole Blasier, "The Soviet Union," in *Confronting Revolution*, p. 268.

[31]Gilbert, "Nicaragua," p. 116.

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[34]Shepherd, "Honduras," p. 132.

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[36]Martin Diskin and Kenneth E. Sharpe, "El Salvador," in *Confronting Revolution*, p. 78.

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[47]Vanderlaan, *Revolution and Foreign Policy in NICARAGUA*, p. 142.

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[49]Gilbert, "Nicaragua," p. 119.

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[52]Members of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America: Chairman, Henry A. Kissinger; Executive Director, Harry W. Schlaudeman; Nicholas F. Brady; Henry G. Cisneros;

William P. Clements, Jr.; Carlos F. Diaz-Alejandro; Wilson S. Johnson; Lane Kirkland; Richard M. Scammon; John Silber; Potter Stewart; Robert S. Strauss; and William B. Walsh.

[53]Senior Counsellors appointed to the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America: Jeane Kirkpatrick; Winston Lord; William D. Rogers; Daniel K. Inouye; Pete V. Domenici; Lloyd Bentsen; Charles McC. Mathias; William S. Broomfield; Jack F. Kemp; James C. Wright; and Michael D. Barnes.

[54]Patricia Bodnar, *THE KISSINGER COMMISSION: BUILDING A CONSENSUS or WINDOW DRESSING FOR AN EXISTING POLICY*, Chapter 3, p. 7 of M.S. Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1987.

[55]*Report of the National Bibpartisan Commission on Central America* (1984), Cover page.

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[58]Ibid., pp. 126-127.

[59]Bodnar, *THE KISSINGER COMMISSION*, Chapter 2, pp. 54-55.

[60]Ibid., Chapter 2, p. 59.

[61]"UN court opens deliberations on Nicaragua case," *The Boston Globe*, 18 April 1984.

[62]Ibid. In June 1986 the International Court of Justice handed down its ruling in the case of the mining of the Nicaraguan harbors. By a 12-3 margin the Court rejected the United States' justification of collective self-defense and found the United States guilty of violating international law.

[63]"Kirkpatrick denounces Nicaragua court move," *The Boston Globe*, 13 April 1984.

[64]Gilbert, "Nicaragua," p. 120; Vanderlaan, *Revolution and Foreign Policy in NICARAGUA*, p. 162.

[65]Cole Blasier, "Soviet Union," p. 266.

[66]"Contra-aid chill," *The Boston Globe*, 17 August 1986.

[67]Mary McGrory, "Warnings go unheeded in Senate vote on contra aid," *The Boston Globe*, 15 August 1986.

[68]Richard L. Berke, "Investigators Say Group Raised $2

Million for Contra Arms Aid," *New York Times*, 9 April 1987; Michael Kranish, "Fund-raiser pleads guilty on contra aid: Implicates North in conspiracy," *The Boston Globe* 30 April 1987.

[69]Sandra Dibble and Alfonso Chardy, "Key contra leader quits US-backed rebel organization," *The Boston Globe*, 10 March 1987.

[70]"Robelo Calls It Quits: A snag in Reagan's contra strategy?" *Newsweek*, 20 April 1987.

CHAPTER FOUR:

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Chapter Four concludes this analysis by proposing an alternative approach to national security in which negotiation and diplomacy supersede destabilization and confrontation. While a revolutionary departure from the United States' preferred policy approach toward Latin America, this proposal suggests that such an alternative approach could significantly enhance the achievement of the true national and security interests of the United States as well as of its Latin American neighbors.

This study has examined the escalation of events in the U.S.-Nicaraguan conflict in the 1980s and the consequent militarization of Central America. For the most part, U.S.-Sandinista relations have been characterized by tension, suspicion, animosity, and resentment. Washington has rejected the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the ideologically divergent political and economic system in Managua. However, thus far, the Sandinistas have managed to survive the years of U.S.-sponsored aggression.

Why has Washington responded so negatively to the Sandinistas' leftist government? Are vital interests of the United States threatened by their revolutionary experiment?

As discussed in Chapter One, the assertion of U.S. control and influence over hemispheric affairs has always been central to the United States' approach toward the region.

U.S. policymakers have traditionally identified the nation's core interests in Latin America with regional stability and the exclusion of any foreign intervention from the region. In keeping with this position, Latin American revolutionary activity has been opposed because it invites foreign intervention and, thus, threatens this control and influence.

Soviet expansionism has been the major preoccupation of U.S. policymakers since World War II. Concerned with maintaining the prevailing global balance of power, they have viewed Soviet expansionism as an intolerable situation.

Washington has never quite recovered from the loss of Cuba to the Soviet Union and, given Latin America's geographic proximity to the United States, has been resolutely determined to prevent the occurrence of "another Cuba" and the introduction of Soviet forward military bases and offensive military capabilities in Latin America. The various arguments against a Soviet presence in Latin America were presented in Chapter One. Counterarguments were also discussed which suggested that unless the Soviet Union is prepared to fight a general war with the United States, sea lane interdiction and the intrusion of Soviet military forces in the region are unlikely. Moscow recognizes the limits of U.S. tolerance.

However, the Sandinistas have been recognized by Washington as the "instruments of Soviet global strategy."[1] This, then, is the prism through which the U.S.-Nicaraguan conflict must be viewed. Washington's rivalry with the Soviet Union fuels the Central American conflict.

The issue is not the establishment of Soviet military bases, the withdrawal of foreign military advisers from Nicaragua, or the subversion of regional governments. If these were the primary concerns of U.S. policymakers, they could have been negotiated to a satisfactory resolution long ago through Contadora or through other collective Latin American-proposed peace initiatives.

The negotiation record in the U.S.-Nicaraguan conflict was reconstructed in Chapter Three. In view of the intense militarization of the region which threatens their revolutionary experiment, the Sandinistas have offered substantive proposals which recognize the security concerns of the United States and their Central American neighbors. As that reconstruction also reveals, each of these peace initiatives has been rejected by the Reagan administration.

Only the removal of the Sandinistas is viewed as a satisfactory resolution to the conflict. The concern of U.S. policymakers is not the existence of the Sandinista government *per se*, but rather that the Sandinistas have elected to pursue an independent foreign policy based upon self-determination, non-alignment, and anti-imperialism. Policymakers view this independence as a threat to the United States' influence in the region. In sum, the administration's anti-Sandinista stance is an attempt to reassert control over Latin American affairs. This goes far beyond what the defense of the United States' core vital interests requires.

Historically, the United States has viewed Latin America

as its subordinate and continues to fashion its Latin American policies based upon this misconception. However, as the discussion in Chapter One maintains, times have changed. Since the late 1960s, there has been an ongoing transformation in the multipolar international system which has affected not only the United States' previously unchallenged position in the world political economy but also has influenced Latin America's integration into that system.

Under such changing circumstances, the United States cannot continue to impose its will in the region without rousing resistance and resentment from its Latin American neighbors as well as from others in the international community. In time, such a situation may indeed prove to be inimical to the United States' core national and security interests.

Defensive considerations, threats to U.S. influence and power in the region, and continued access to Latin American trade and resources constitute the United States' legitimate core interests in the region. These core economic and security interests have often been attained with little concern for the aspirations and needs of the regional actors involved. Traditionally, Washington has defended its interests by unilateral initiatives which only offered temporary remedies for complex and sensitive regional issues. In short, in pursuit of its core interests in the region the United States has traditionally behaved as a superpower hegemon. Not surprisingly, this arrogant behavior has left an

imprint on the region and ultimately has weakened the United States' position of influence in the region.

In the case of the Sandinista government, in particular, thus far the Reagan policies of militarization and hostility have been counterproductive to the United States' interests. These policies have invited the very foreign penetration which the administration has inveighed against since 1981.

The Reagan administration has conveniently adopted a "worst case" assessment of Soviet intentions toward the region. By placing the Sandinistas in the Soviet camp, the administration attempts to evoke fears of a major security threat. While this "worst case" assessment does not conform to reality, it does factor nicely into the global balance of power equation which guides the Reagan policies in Central America.

However, the Reagan administration has created a vexing problem for itself by portraying the Nicaraguan conflict as a part of the East-West rivalry and, hence, as a major threat to the United States. By so doing, the administration has narrowed the available choices to deal with the situation. Fearful that accommodation with the Sandinista regime will make the United States look weak and vulnerable, the Reagan administration has consistently rejected negotiation to resolve the conflict. By rejecting negotiation, the administration leaves itself with one option: invasion. However, without a legitimate justification for the use of direct military intervention to remove the Sandinistas,

invasion would be similarly counterproductive to the United States' core interests in Latin America.

Cooperation is the key to the continued influence of the United States in Latin America and to the defense of its core interests in the region. Removal of the Sandinistas can assure the United States neither of these objectives, yet cooperation can. The Sandinistas have indicated time and again that they are prepared to acknowledge legitimate security concerns of the United States and other regional countries and are prepared to recognize the United States' historical influence in Latin America—they are not suicidal. They are prepared to be flexible and responsive, but they are not prepared to be subservient.

On the other hand, the United States has never been shy about using force to secure its objectives in Latin America. Indeed, it is the exercise of its domineering will that has created the very predicament in which the United States presently finds itself in Central America.

In its pursuit of national security the United States has often found itself aligned with repressive dictatorships in Latin America similar to that of Anastasio Somoza Garcia and his two sons, Luis and Anastasio Somoza Debayle, in Nicaragua. What benefits accrue to the United States from an association with such authoritarian leaders? In the case of the Somozas' Nicaragua, a realistic appraisal of the relationship suggests that successive United States governments repeatedly exercised nearsighted judgment in their support of the dictatorship.

Ultimately, these successive administrations sacrificed long-term national interests and influence in the region in exchange for short-term security considerations; namely, a controllable ally, who was heavily dependent upon the United States to maintain power, temporarily offered stability and a pro-U.S./anti-communist government along its southern flank.

The consequences of the United States' relationship with the Somoza dynasty are indicative of the confusion and chaos invited by a fundamentally flawed foreign policy and warrant serious consideration of the United States' approach to the resolution of regional issues which directly or indirectly affect its national and security interests. First and foremost, is an ideological commitment to anti-communist regimes an adequate or sufficient foundation upon which to construct a viable foreign policy when such regimes evince little or no regard for preserving the integrity of democratic principles? Does a blind allegiance to anti-communist regimes, regimes which chronically ignore the basic democratic values that the United States avowedly champions, enhance the long-term interests of this nation? How can the United States argue about the extent of democracy in Nicaragua today after having been unconcerned with the authoritarianism of the Somozas for more than forty years?

For decades the United States has intervened on the side of stability in Latin America fearing that an end to the *status quo*, an end to the hegemony of oligarchic rule in the region, would invite communist revolution and thus threaten to

undermine the United States' dominant position in the region. The United States has frequently opted for military prescriptions instead of diplomacy and compromise to resolve regional conflicts which were perceived as inimical to its national and security interests.

However, the defense of vital interests requires more than brute force. It also requires collaboration and cooperation. If the United States intends to maintain its influence in the region, its Latin American foreign policy should not be structured primarily within a rigid security framework which denies the possibility of accommodation with those who envision a different political and economic system.

While the United States can express a preference for pluralist, democratic governments in Latin America, the times are irrevocably gone when the United States can install a government to its liking in the region without engendering worldwide condemnation for such action. The erosion of the United States' dominant position in the world political economy has affected the manner in which its geopolitical objectives in the region can be achieved. Blunt policy instruments are no longer appropriate. "Gunboat diplomacy" does not enhance the stature of the United States among the Latin American republics (or among its allies in Western Europe and elsewhere); such an approach only dredges up unsavory memories of past transgressions in Latin American affairs by the United States.

As Richard McCall contends:

> ...the Reagan policies ignore changes in the international system which have markedly diminished the ability of the United States to control events. Power to control, or even to dictate, internal political processes within Latin American nations has been weakened irreversibly by the natural historical processes of growth, the integration of nation-states on the continent, and the release of pent-up political, social, and economic aspirations...[2]

Undaunted by the changing nature of the region, and ignoring the impact which the fundamental political, economic, and social changes in Latin American society have had on U.S.-Latin American relations, the United States' foreign policy toward the region remains essentially unchanged. Its Latin American policy remains firmly grounded in the belief that the U.S.-Latin American relationship demands a political stability grounded more on staunch anti-communism and defense against all forms of Soviet intervention far short of the establishment of Soviet military bases rather than social justice.

However, if the long-term interests of the United States are to be served, if the fundamental American values of personal liberty, equality of opportunity, and rule of law are to be promoted and enhanced in Latin America, then it is incumbent upon the United States to pursue a foreign policy which not only gives deserved recognition to the importance of security and defense but also acknowledges the need to consistently promote and defend human rights in other countries, to help to improve the standard of living in less developed countries, and to encourage meaningful reform. If the United States seeks the enhancement of democratic forms of government

in the Western Hemisphere, its Latin American policies should not serve to perpetuate the intolerable conditions of brutality, oppression, and corruption which, by the late 1970s, had succeeded in uniting the Nicaraguan people in a broad, multi-class coalition in a concerted effort to eradicate the tyranny of the Somoza dictatorship.

Repressive and unrepresentative governments which characteristically have ruled by suppressing, excluding, or eliminating their opposition eventually succumb to the passions and hostilities unleashed by people no longer resigned to the inevitability of a corrupt and oppressive system. The collapse of the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua is not the exception. In time, such regimes must collapse. The United States derives no long-term benefit from being on the side of repression and stability versus that of social change and justice. Such an association can only be detrimental to the United States' position of influence in the region and to its core interests of preventing the establishment of foreign military bases in the region and maintaining access to Latin American trade and markets.

Frequent alignment with repressive regimes in Latin America has severely damaged the credibility of the United States' image as a defender of democratic values. Once these regimes are toppled by the opposition, more often than not, the former victims of repression remember a United States which not only had demonstrated a preference for political stability to social change but also had appeared to be a

willing partner in a conspiracy to sustain the regime which was overthrown. Not surprisingly, as has been the case in Nicaragua since the triumph of the 1979 revolution, haunted by this negative image, the United States' influence in shaping the new regime is sharply curtailed.

Critics of the United States' current Central American policy fear that an obsession with communism not only has blinded the Reagan administration and others to the possibility of accommodation with leftist regimes in Latin America but also has been counterproductive to the United States' national and security interests by heightening tensions and hostilities in the region. The Reagan administration's support of the counterrevolutionary insurgents based in Honduras has prompted the Sandinistas to ready their defenses for what appears to them to be the inevitable: a U.S. or U.S.-sponsored invasion. Soviet and Cuban influence in the Nicaragua has expanded in response to the United States' policy of hostility.

Confronted with the Reagan policies of aggression, the Sandinistas have resolved to defend their revolution, to solidify their position, and to resist efforts to forcibly remove them from power. Accordingly, they have vastly expanded their military establishment and have relied increasingly upon Soviet and Cuban allies for material support and military advisers.

However, the Sandinistas insist that their military build-up is in self-defense. Given the massive military

build-up occurring in neighboring Honduras under the patronage of the Reagan administration, the Sandinistas' actions may indeed be warranted and defensive in nature. Since 1981 the Reagan White House has engaged in a policy of intimidation, destabilization, and isolation against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. In so doing, it has violated both international and domestic U.S. laws by the strategies it has employed.

Undeniably, to help fend off this aggression, the Soviet bloc has responded to the perceived threats of intervention by supplying the Sandinista government with equipment and advisers. On the other hand, the Soviet Union has made no guarantees of Nicaraguan security, and there is no indication that a forward military base for the Soviet Union is being created in Nicaragua. Nor have the Sandinistas denied that the existence of such a forward base or the presence of offensive military capabilities in Nicaragua would constitute a legitimate security concern of the United States and others. Nor has there been any threat to U.S. access to markets and trade in the region. This is true even of Nicaragua which wants to trade with the United States.

Then, too, the Sandinistas have realized that the Soviet Union has no intention of subsidizing their revolution as it has done in Cuba. They have learned a critical lesson from their Cuban role model: the price of isolation from the West is an exorbitant price to pay to assert their independence, and if allowed to continue unchecked, such a stance could

detrimentally affect further social and economic development.

With their revolution under siege, the Sandinistas have been mindful of the limitations associated with exclusive dependency on the Soviet bloc. Aware that such dependency only lent credence to Washington's claims of Managua's Soviet alignment and cast doubt on their commitment to non-alignment and self-determination, the Sandinistas have diversified their international relations in an attempt to provide a balance in their East-West ties.

Successful diversification has required the Sandinista government to display considerable sensitivity to the security concerns of their Central American neighbors and to calm the growing concern both in Central America as well as in Western Europe about their true intentions for political development. For their part, Western European leaders have been reluctant to see Central America become a pawn in an expanding East-West conflict which could adversely affect Washington's commitment to their own security needs if the United States somehow becomes involved in a prolonged exercise to overthrow the Sandinista government.

In the hopes of promoting social justice, political pluralism, and a negotiated settlement to the Central American conflict, the Latin Americans and many in Western Europe have challenged the U.S.-Nicaraguan policy. Evidently, Washington's aversion to leftist movements has not been widely shared among its allies. Unlike the Reagan administration which seeks a military solution to the conflict, they have opted for

a spirit of cooperation and a recognition of mutual interests to influence the outcome of events. They see a variety of ways to curb the potential security threat to the region presented by Nicaragua as well as by the arms build-up in El Salvador and Honduras as a result of the Reagan policies of militarization.

Thus far, Washington's dread of communism has led to a reliance upon military commitments to the virtual exclusion of a negotiated diplomatic solution. However, those who must live with the tensions and destruction wrought by the United States' support of the *contras* have repeatedly demonstrated their preference for dialogue to weapons. But, the stalled Contadora process which was begun in January 1983 by Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, and Colombia (later joined by a support group comprised of Brazil, Peru, Argentina, and Uruguay) is representative of the Latin Americans' mediation efforts and the Reagan administration's reception of such unwelcomed activity.

More recently, President Oscar Arias Sanchez of Costa Rica has presented a peace proposal for consideration. This option has attracted congressional support as a viable alternative to the present *contra* policy. While the Arias' initiative does not call for the overthrow of the Sandinista government, it deserves consideration by the Reagan administration and not circumvention and subversion as has been done repeatedly with the Contadora process and with earlier Central American initiatives. These regional initiatives represent

appropriate alternatives consistent with the achievement of the United States' interests in the region.

Specifically, the Costa Rican peace proposal calls for: (1) the cessation of hostilities in El Salvador and Nicaragua; (2) the termination of all foreign aid to insurgents once the five Central American presidents have signed the declaration; (3) the establishment of a "committee of security" to control and to verify compliance with the declaration's conditions; (4) the issuance of a general amnesty to all Central American insurgents within sixty days of the signing of the document; (5) the commencement of dialogue between the various governments and nonbelligerent political opponents. In addition, political parties would be allowed to operate unhindered and would be guaranteed access to an uncensored press; and (6) the commencement in 1988 of "free, pluralistic and honest" elections with simultaneous elections for delegates to a proposed regional parliament.[3]

In the fallout of the arms transfers to Iran, the subsequent revelations of the possible diversion of funds to the *contras* generated from the arms sales, and UNO's leadership squabbles and resignations, Congress has urged the Reagan administration to be become more involved in the peace process. It remains to be seen whether the administration will choose to do so or, once again, choose circumvention and subversion.

From the Reagan administration's perspective, there is no room for competing ideologies in Latin America. However,

given the changing realities of the international system and Latin America's integration into that system, accommodation with ideologically divergent regimes in Latin America, such as the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, may be necessary and not optional.

Successful partnerships are built upon trust, cooperation, a recognition of mutual interests, and respect for divergent viewpoints. In the long-run, accommodation may be more effective than confrontation in maintaining the United States' influence in the region and protecting its national and security interests. It may also be more effective in curbing any efforts of Soviet expansionism in the region.

NOTES

[1]George Schultz in Address to the National Committee of American Foreign Policy, New York, October 2, 1985. Quoted in Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 133.

[2]Richard McCall, "From Monroe to Reagan: An Overview of U.S.-Latin American Relations," in *FROM GUNBOATS TO DIPLOMACY New U.S. Policies for Latin America*, ed. Richard Newfarmer (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 32.

[3]"Main points of Costa Rican president's peace initiative," *The Boston Globe*, 15 March 1987.

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