



Witness for Peace Newsletter

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Witness for Peace Long-term Volunteer Dorothy Granada reads a statement prior to her arrest for blockading weapons shipments to Central America at a naval weapons station in Concord, California.

(photo by David Hartsough)

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About the WFP Newsletter

Witness for Peace welcomes you to our organization. We are especially grateful for those of you who have joined as new contributors and workers in our efforts for peace in Nicaragua. To receive the *Newsletter*, write to our office in Durham, North Carolina (*suggested donation* - \$25.00).

The *WFP Newsletter* is a nonprofit newspaper published six times a year with a circulation of 43,000. Its purpose is to provide an ongoing source of spiritual reflection, resource

sharing, organizational information and political analysis for the growing WFP network in the U.S. and in Nicaragua. In the spirit of the gathered religious community which forms the core of our work in WFP, we intend the *Newsletter* to be a participatory undertaking. All poetry, journal entries, articles, photos, sketches and reflections will be considered.

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Editorial

Dialogue with the contras

Seeing the Human Face of the Enemy: What Does it Mean?

Much as we like to write, we are turning the editorial space in this issue over to the readers. The following letters to the editor respond to the issue of dialogue with the contras that was raised in a guest article by Herb Walters in the June/July WFP Newsletter. The article, entitled "Contra Listening Project," drew from a series of interviews with contra foot soldiers in Honduras. It concluded that U.S. Central American activists concerned with reconciliation need to be engaged in some process where they would listen to the concerns of the contras who have been victimized by the war.

Dear WFP Newsletter,

Members and attendees of the Managua Friends Meeting, augmented by some long-term team members of Witness for Peace and the Mennonite Central Committee, wish to provide an addendum to the article by Herb Walters in the June/July issue of the *WFP Newsletter*.

The premise of this article is that the contras have not been given a human face. This contention may be applicable more to the way in which pro- or anti- Sandinista groups have operated in the U.S. than to the way in which the contras are treated by the Nicaraguan citizenry and the government. In Nicaragua, the contras are consistently identified as victims of a very unjust, immoral and illegal U.S. foreign policy. In the case of the Miskito Indians, they are seen as the victims of over-zealous Sandinista policy. Casualties on either side are grieved as collective losses.

The Nicaraguan government has consistently tried to give the contras a human face. They have kept open every avenue to peace through dialogue -- starting with the Manzanillo talks, then the Contadora Process, the Esquipulas Peace Accord, and, most recently, the direct talks with the contra leadership in Sapoa and Managua. The Nicaraguan government has also implemented historic grassroots campaigns to facilitate dialogue between family members split by the war.

During the recent 60-day cease fire (which was extended twice unilaterally by the Nicaraguan government), over one hundred spontaneous encounters took place between government soldiers and the contras. The meetings were often tense, but generally civil. Avid discussions occurred, articles were swapped, hand shakes and hugs were given, masses were attended and food and

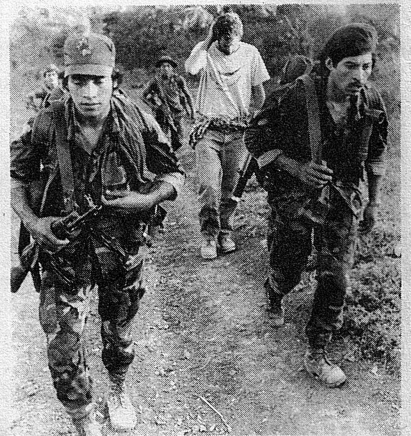
shelter were shared. These were personal, direct interchanges between human faces.

Also, capital punishment was abolished as a policy and practice after the revolutionary triumph over Somoza. Amnesty was granted to several thousand National Guardsmen, and the government has expressed its willingness to release many others still in prisons for atrocities committed. Since 1983, amnesty has been a standing offer to any and all contras who willingly lay down their arms and

operate within the political process, including the political opposition. Local peace commissions provide these people with safe conduct passes, which enable them to reintegrate into their communities and protect them from harassment. In the North Atlantic Autonomous Region, this nonviolent action has resulted in an almost total cessation of fighting.

The "Contra Listening Project" is directed at U.S. solidarity groups that have, perhaps inadvertently, demonized the contra. They could, very simply, follow the remarkable example set by the people of Nicaragua with whom they are in solidarity.

In our experience working with displaced and oppressed people not only in Nicaragua, but also in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, we have observed the phenomenon which takes place when a person or group is "listened to" by special interest groups (be they journalists, relief agencies or religious groups) in a controlled environment. Indigenous groups and peasants in particular are adept at self-preservation. In Central America they have learned to adapt to centuries of repression, exploitation and suppression to protect their ethnic cultures from genocide.



Richard Boren, WFP Long Term Team member kidnapped on March 2 with twelve Nicaraguans, is shown here being escorted by contra footsoldiers after his release eight days later. (photo by Paul Dix)

(continued from previous page)

When the Contra Listening Project presents the statements of contras without much critical comment, the statements are given currency. While the beliefs of contras are important realities, we feel that it is difficult for the average reader to be able to distinguish contras' beliefs from facts in a complex setting. Lack of any substantial challenge to these contra beliefs in the article only reinforces commonly held misperceptions of the Nicaraguan reality. In fact, everyone in Nicaragua does not have to carry arms, everything produced does not have to be sold to the government, everyone does not have to belong to the Sandinista party, the Sandinistas do not have a practice of killing detainees, and everyone who receives bank credits does not have to be a member of the militia.

In our analysis, contra foot soldiers do not represent an opposition force in a civil war context. They are victims of a war the U.S. government has decided to wage by utilizing mercenaries. The Nicaraguan campesino who joins the contras or is sequestered into the contras, would not, in our opinion, take up arms if the U.S. had not provided the "charms" of technology, such as jungle boots, flashlights, radios, and all kinds of explosives that are beyond most of their fantasy.

The article tends to rationalize the reasons given by individual contras for attaching themselves to armed conflict without any discussion of attempting to resolve the conflict through nonviolent methods. We are missing the self-evaluation of the contras that might lead to change and modification of their bellicose ideas. We are missing the opening up of the hearts and minds of these individuals on the issue of war, designed and paid for by the U.S. government. It is essential to put the entire contra war in its historic context and consider very seriously the role of the U.S. government in this conflict. In our efforts to give a human face to the contras, we must be very careful not to justify evil and not to diminish its consequences.

Managua Friends Meeting

Dear WFP Newsletter,

The long-term team currently working in Nicaragua would like to comment on the article "Contra Listening Project" by Herb Walters in the June/July issue of the *WFP Newsletter*. While we definitely agree with a basic premise of the project -- that communication between two sides in a conflict is a starting point for resolving that conflict -- the project designed and carried out by the Contra Listening Project addresses neither the realities nor the complexities of a Nicaragua torn apart by war.

Our encounters with contras have been painfully enlightening. Most of the contras we have met are in their mid-teens, uneducated and ignorant of what they are fighting for. The methodology employed by the Contra Listening Project -- spending one day in contra camps in Honduras and speaking to 26 contras -- leads to misleading conclusions that ultimately do not contribute to an improvement in communication between the contras and the rest of the Nicaraguan people. Nor do they lead to a deeper understanding of the situation by members of the U.S. peace and justice movement.

For example, the contras interviewed in the article state that

"everything must be sold to the government," "everyone is required to join the militia to get bank loans," and "the Sandinistas do not believe in God." These are believed by most contras, and it may explain why many are still fighting, but none of it is true. Richard Boren, a WFP volunteer who was kidnapped in March by the contras, says: "It is utterly impossible for a contra to say anything negative about the contras while still with them for fear of retaliation." To hear contra foot soldiers complain about alleged Sandinista abuses without clarifying the facts of the situation contributes little or nothing to a truthful understanding of the contras' situation.

We cannot talk of reconciliation without mentioning that it is the Nicaraguans themselves who are promoting reconciliation in the country. We WFP volunteers working in Nicaragua applaud this work. As U.S. citizens, we continue to demand that our government stop funding the contra aggression, and allow the already existing processes of reconciliation and "listening" to bring the Nicaraguan people to peace.

WFP Long-Term Volunteers in Nicaragua

Mardy Townsend, Kate Peters, Julie Knop, Sofey Saidi, Don Irish, Anne Sensenig, Rhett Doumitt, Richard Boren, Carrie Parker, Sharon Hostetler, Catherine Thomas, John Long, Sara Baker

Dear WFP Newsletter,

I would like to commend you for the excellent *June/July WFP Newsletter*. I am particularly pleased by a couple of items which suggested to me a capacity to stand apart from a purely apologist relation to the Sandinista government; the interviews with contra soldiers and the published letter by Charles Engelstein.

I have worked actively writing letters against contra aid and I affirm the ideals and, generally, the process of the Nicaraguan revolution. Yet I believe strongly that, for the sake of those ideals and the Nicaraguan people, prophetic groups like WFP must be prepared to speak for peace and against that which is contrary to the spirit of peace wherever it is found. Our model is that of the prophet Amos who would not shrink from denouncing transgressions of the beloved land as well as those of Edom or Moab.

We must never forget that, while revolutions are themselves powerful prophetic statements and can do great good, they are comprised of human beings who, like all of us, are neither infallible nor sinless. Revolutions, in fact, have special temptations toward self-idolatry and a notion that their pure intent, the sacrifices wrought on their behalf, and unique historical role exempt them from other moral considerations. The result, alas, has too often been the French Revolution turning into Bonapartism and the Russian Revolution into Stalinism. One would be no friend of Nicaragua, nor a genuine witness for peace, if one turned away from the prophetic obligation to decry any tendency in that direction, along with denouncing the manifold and still greater evils of the contras and their U.S. supporters.

Robert S. Ellwood, Director

School of Religion, University of Southern California

Veterans Peace Convoy Persists

After months of organizing and fundraising efforts that collected donations of nearly 310 tons of material aid for Nicaragua, the Veterans Peace Convoy arrived at the U.S. border town of Laredo, Texas for the inevitable confrontation with the Treasury Department and U.S. Customs. In the middle of a meal provided for the 108 veterans -- half the whom were from the Vietnam War with the other half veterans of the Korean War and WWII -- U.S. officials arrived to announce that the convoy would not be permitted to cross the border.

Paul Cox, one of the organizers of the Veterans Peace Convoy, was interviewed by Philip Maldari on KPFA, Pacifica Radio in Berkeley, CA.

Q: What specifically did the Customs officials say to you?

Cox: They said that our plan to take the trucks to Nicaragua and leave them was in violation of President Reagan's 1985 economic embargo of Nicaragua. They didn't have any problem with the food, clothing and medicines we were taking because that was easily definable as humanitarian aid. But before we could cross the border, they said, we would have to sign a declaration saying we would return the trucks within 30 days and that we would post a bond equal to the value of the trucks.

Q: What did the members of the convoy decide to do?

Cox: We had already looked into the legal ramifications of our convoy. It was within the bounds of the embargo. For example, in 1986, Oxfam America tried to take seeds, hoes and shovels to Nicaragua and was denied a permit because those items were deemed economic development assistance. So we asked organizations from around the country to raise money for rolled oats -- oatmeal.

The thirty-eight vehicles, most of which would be given to various schools and hospitals to transport people, were also humanitarian aid. One

spurious allegation the Treasury Department made was that the Sandinistas would use the trucks for military purposes. That's false. We provided the Treasury Department with names of the organizations to which these vehicles were going.

Q: After the officials said you couldn't go across the border, what did you do?

Cox: We negotiated for eight days with them. Mickey Leland, a Congressperson from Texas, came down to Laredo for three days to help us. After he could make no headway, it was clear that we were going to have to do something to stand up for our right to leave the country. On June 15, we approached the border and told them we were crossing. There was a standoff. They impounded four of our vehicles -- which they released about a week later. So we decided to take the struggle to its source -- the White House.

The main convoy took six days to get to Washington, D.C. I went with an advance party that drove day and night to do some preparatory lobbying in Congress and to set up press contacts.

Q: What happened in Washington, D.C.?

Cox: Mickey Leland introduced non-binding legislation in the House to pressure the Treasury Department to let the convoy go. We got 55 co-sponsors. Many Congresspeople expressed a great deal of support. We had a series of demonstrations with the convoy circling outside the White House. After eight days,



The Ben Linder truck, which led the Veterans Peace Convoy, shown at gate of the U.S. border. (photo by Hal Muskat)

the convoy returned to Laredo.

Q: Do you think the fact that you were vets helped with the support you got?

Cox: I think our theme: "Feed the Children, Not the War" was the most effective. We talked from our experience as vets. Having seen war first-hand, we realize that the real victims of wars are children.

Q: What did you do once you all got back to Laredo for the second time?

Cox: The convoy tried to cross the border again on July 9. As we approached the bridge to cross there was another long stand off with the Laredo police and Customs officials. It was really hot -- over 100 degrees. The police gave an order to disperse and we refused. We were not going to resist arrest, but we were not going to get out of our vehicles either. They maced people by spraying through slightly opened windows. They also broke windows to mace people. Three trucks were impounded. Eight veterans were maced, arrested and charged with blocking a thoroughfare and resisting arrest. They were released later that night.

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More News From WFP

Nonviolent Witness at Weapons Station Sets Example

by David Hartsough

On June 10, 1987, a sustained nonviolent vigil began at the train tracks near Concord, California which carry the munitions and bombs destined to kill our brothers and sisters in Central America. From the beginning, we have called our actions "Nuremberg Actions," and we do not see ourselves as breaking any law. Rather, we are doing "Civil Obedience" in an attempt to uphold international law and God's moral law.

The goal of our actions is that through our presence at the tracks, we seek to speak to the hearts and consciences of the American people. We can ask ourselves -- What good will it do to literally put our bodies in the way of these trains? Who is going to care if a few people get out on the tracks to pray and try to stop a death train? Or, we can see that we have a moral responsibility to



Actor Martin Sheen (center) and Nuremberg Actions co-founder Brian Willson (right) join with David Hartsough (left) on the train tracks to blockade a weapons delivery. (photo Nuremberg Actions)

act in the strongest nonviolent way we can to stop the killing of innocent men, women and children in Central America and other parts of the world. The choice is clear.

On August 21, 1987, Brian Willson, a Vietnam veteran and a co-founder of Nuremberg Actions, wrote an open letter to the Commander of the Concord Naval Weapons Station stating that beginning on September 1, he and many others would be fasting on the tracks. He said in the letter that the authorities would "have the choice of suspending movement of munitions, removing our bodies, or running over us."

The Navy chose to run over us, and, as the world knows, Brian's legs were crushed and severed and he was left with a gaping hole in his skull. I was standing right next to the tracks when it happened, madly waving at the train crew to stop the train. This was the most horrible experience of my life. The war had come home.

Since September 1, 1987 we have had people at the tracks 24 hours a day. Thousands have come to vigil, pray, fast, leaflet the workers and nonviolently block trains and trucks carrying bombs and munitions to the ships. We have blocked every train but one. Hundreds have been arrested in this sustained campaign. We now have about 45 groups -- from churches, synagogues and peace groups -- who come to the tracks one day a month to join in the vigil/blockade.

The successes of this witness are many. Fewer munitions trains and trucks are going to the piers to make their deliveries. Perhaps fewer people are dying as a result. We know of at least two munitions truck drivers who have quit their jobs because they couldn't in conscience continue their work. We know of Marines who have been touched by what we are trying to do and have refused orders to keep us off the tracks. And, we are building an example of a sustained nonviolent resistance community which will inspire others to develop similar actions at military facilities across the country.

A 19-minute video is available for \$15 from Nuremberg Actions, 65 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek, CA 94596 (415) 933-7850. David Hartsough, active in Nuremberg Actions since it began in June 1987, is on staff with the AFSC and is on the WFP Philosophy and Strategy Committee.

Report from the WFP Hotline

Contras Attack Bluefields Commuter Boat; Killing 2 and Injuring 27

On August 4, contras attacked the Mission of Peace, the daily commuter boat from Bluefields to Rama. Of the approximately 200 civilians aboard, two were killed and 27 injured. Among the injured was Lucius Walker, founding director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, an ecumenical social justice agency based in New York City. He had been in Bluefields with a delegation of nine other U.S. citizens on a study tour. The delegation was returning to Managua when contras attacked the boat with mortars and bullets.

The boat was defended by 15 Nicaraguan army soldiers. Soldiers ride the boat line daily since it was first attacked by contras in July 1985. According to Walker, the contras aimed much of their fire at the lower decks of the boat where civilians were located, rather than at the upper deck where the soldiers were stationed. Walker also said that a number of mortars were shot at the waterline of the boat, probably in an attempt to sink it. This was the fourth attack on the Bluefields express boat line since 1985 when one boat was burned to the waterline by the contras.

Family of Slain Technical Worker Ben Linder Sues Contra Leaders

On April 20 the family of Benjamin Linder sued the contra leaders responsible for his death. Linder was shot at point blank range by a contra ambush in El Cua, where he was working to bring light and electricity to rural mountain communities, on April 28, 1987. Two Nicaraguan co-workers were also murdered in the assassination.

Elisabeth Linder, Ben's mother, announced at a news conference that a \$50 million punitive and compensatory lawsuit against commanders of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) has been filed. "When our lawsuit goes to trial," she said, "the contra leaders will have to testify under oath about their role, and the role of the CIA, in ordering the mur-



der of civilians, targeting development workers and foreign volunteers, and executing prisoners."

All damages received from the suit will be used toward building Nicaraguan schools, hospitals and hydroelectric plants. "These are the very things the contras and the U.S. government have been destroying," said Elisabeth Linder.

The Linder family will speak in several cities in the U.S. this fall. For information, donations, or to order videotapes and other materials, contact: *The Ben Linder Justice Committee, 666 Broadway, 7th floor, New York, NY 10012 (212) 614-6465.*

U.S. Ambassador Expelled From Nicaragua Linked with Contras

In expelling U.S. Ambassador Richard Melton, the government of Nicaragua claims that he was meddling in Nicaraguan internal affairs and helping to direct and lead the political opposition there. Melton denies these charges. However, Melton is known to have been an intermediary between Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams and General John Singlaub during the time of the Iran-contra activities. He continued to be a strong contra supporter while serving as U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua. There are also allegations that he helped draft the statement for COSEP, the conservative Nicaraguan business group, that called for a new Nicaraguan government.

Customs Officials Ordered to Stop Harrassment

In March, a District Court judge issued a permanent injunction against U.S. Customs officials for reviewing, copying, and sending to the FBI written materials of travelers returning to this country, specifically from Nicaragua. Customs is still permitted to detain materials only if they "are intended and likely to produce imminent lawless action." Such materials could only be turned over to a U.S. Attorney and not the FBI.

While materials could possibly be held for court review consideration, they could not be copied. A Center for Constitutional Rights attorney stated, "This is an important affirmation that U.S. citizens are free to travel and to return with written materials, without fearing the scrutiny of Customs and the FBI on their return. Particularly given the FBI's demonstrated proclivity for monitoring opponents of the Reagan administration's foreign policy, this is an important and necessary safeguard."

Religious Leaders Address Concerns

Clergy and Laity Concerned (CALC) recently hosted the Fannie Lou Hamer Convention in Atlanta, Georgia on July 15-17. The convention, composed of representatives from more than 80 organizations, including WFP, adopted a platform and economic bill of rights that addressed over two dozen major issues linking domestic issues with U.S. foreign policy and human rights abuses.

The document stresses the need for more federal spending for basic human needs and less on wasteful, unnecessary military programs -- including foreign intervention and armaments spending.

According to the bill of rights, "It is through the provision of quality education, housing, health care, employment and a safe environment that our nation can gain international respect, preserve its security, and achieve its highest potential." Copies of the platform paper were distributed to all delegates at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. *For a copy of the paper, write Rev. Emory Searcy, CALC, 222 East Lake Drive, Decatur, Georgia 30030.*

Congress Passes More Contra Aid

On August 10, the Senate approved by a 49-47 vote a Democratic plan to provide \$27 million worth of food, clothing and medical supplies to the contras through March. An additional \$5 million in medical supplies will be distributed through the Nicaraguan Roman Catholic church to treat injured civilians.

Under the Democratic plan, \$16 million of previously approved military aid can be released to the contras only if the President requests it following a violation of non-aggression conditions placed by Congress on the Nicaraguan government. Even then, the release of the aid must be approved by votes in both the House and the Senate.

Health Care in Nicaragua an Urgent Concern

by Charles Scanlon,
WFP Long-term Volunteer

On a Sunday morning earlier this year, a WFP short-term delegation and I celebrated life, not only through a celebration of the Word with Santa Juanita Cooperative, but also through that day's national vaccination campaign. It was a gift to be able to help out in this cattle-ranching and sewing cooperative across the river from Bocana de Paiwas -- especially for Dr. Jimmy Doolittle, a Michigan physician who was a part of the delegation. And it was here that we met Alba Lucia Oporta Moran, a 23-year old nurse's aide who was distributing the measles and polio vaccines.

When Alba Lucia was fourteen, her family moved to Jorgito, a mountain village in the vast Bocana de Paiwas parish. The homes in Jorgito were scattered a half hour's walk apart and were situated each on their own hills. Alba Lucia's mother, Juana Moran, served as Catholic delegate of the Word and promoter of the new government's universal health care program there. Juana often travelled to Paiwas to request health supplies. The journey took two days by horseback.

It was hard to earn people's trust as the new health system was started. But the literacy campaign in 1980 touched everyone, and people were prepared to re-

"Alba Lucia works for health in a system which promises universal and inexpensive health care despite the ravages of the U.S. war and the trade embargo."

ceive other benefits from the new government. As the health brigadista of Paiwas in Jorgito, Juana Moran involved many people in the health programs.

Nevertheless, there were some people who couldn't accept the new programs. There were people who said the vaccines would cause communism. There were others, mainly those who had been members of Somoza's National Guard, who were being trained and organized in Honduras and Florida to fight a

war against the advances of a new society.

Not long after moving to Jorgito, Alba Lucia settled down with Eduardo Perez and the couple had a child. In July 1982, Juana Moran sent 18-year old Eduardo into Paiwas to get a thermos of vaccines for Jorgito. On his return, he was ambushed by the contras. They tortured, mutilated and killed him for the crime of carrying vaccines into the mountains. Juana Moran still keeps the carefully washed and folded shirt that Eduardo wore the day he was killed.

A few weeks after Eduardo's assassination, 17-year old Alba Lucia left Jorgito, planning to go to Esteli to learn tailoring. Instead, she stayed in Paiwas to work in its new health center. A year later her family joined her after the contras had massacred over 30 people, including women, children and religious workers, in the tiny community of Jorgito during a celebration marking the founding of a new pig cooperative there. Those who remained in the mountains watched their children die of measles and other preventable diseases as the contras prohibited any more vaccination campaigns in the mountains.

Early in 1986, Alba Lucia left for the city of Matagalpa to study nursing. She became a certified nurse's aid in 1987. She then returned to work in the war-torn Paiwas area to serve her community, and continues to work in the area despite being targeted for assassination by the contras because she is a health worker. She continues to work for health in a system which promises universal and inexpensive health care in spite of the ravages of a U.S.-supported war and trade embargo. She works in spite of, or perhaps because of, the loss of her husband, who was assassinated because he dared to bring health to the campesinos.



Alba Lucia at the Santa Juana Cooperative during the national vaccination campaign in Nicaragua.

(photo by Charles Scanlon)

New Generation of Nicaraguan Medical Students Focuses on Prevention

Nicaragua has two medical schools. The original school is in Leon and a new one was opened in Managua in 1982. A key theme for the education of medical students recently has been to educate communities in preventive measures.

Pablo Padilla, a campesino who worked as a health educator in the Rio San Juan area near the Costa Rican border from 1981 to 1985, entered medical school this year. He reflects on the changes in the way medicine is being practiced in Nicaragua: "In the early days of the revolution, the objective of medicine was very limited: it was to cure. The doctor sat at his desk and wrote out little bits of paper for illnesses. But by 1984 or '85 most of the doctors who were in it only for the money had left, and there

News Analysis

Why the Recent Crackdown in Nicaragua?

by Roger Burbach

What was really behind the Sandinistas' recent crackdown on U.S. diplomatic personnel and the opposition press is a fear that the Reagan administration has now embarked on a Chile-style destabilization campaign to topple them.

In the early 1970s, the United States began covertly financing the internal opposition to Chile's democratically elected President Salvador Allende, leading to his overthrow in September 1973. In the wake of contra failures and stalled peace talks, the White House hopes it can pull off a similar coup in Nicaragua.

Peter Marchetti, dean of the Jesuit-run Central American University in Nicaragua, spelled out the Sandinista view: "The Sandinistas did everything in their power to negotiate. The Reagan administration said, 'Let's stir up the opposition and not make peace.' And they did it by backing hard-line contra leader Enrique Bermudez, while instructing the U.S. Embassy to galvanize the internal opposition."

The Reagan administration intensified its collaboration with the internal political opposition in the early spring, when Congress blocked military aid to the contras and the Sandinistas opened up the country's political system as part of the Central American peace process.

The parallels between Chile in the early 1970s and Nicaragua today are many. Then, as now, the U.S. government played a central role in rallying the internal right-wing opposition. *El Mer-*

curio, the leading Chilean conservative newspaper, received direct CIA support. Today in Nicaragua U.S. support for *La Prensa*, the opposition newspaper, is even more open, channeled directly through the U.S.-funded National Endowment for Democracy.

Opposition trade unions are also getting U.S. help. In Chile it was the CIA-funded trucker's union that went on strike in 1972, badly weakening the Al-

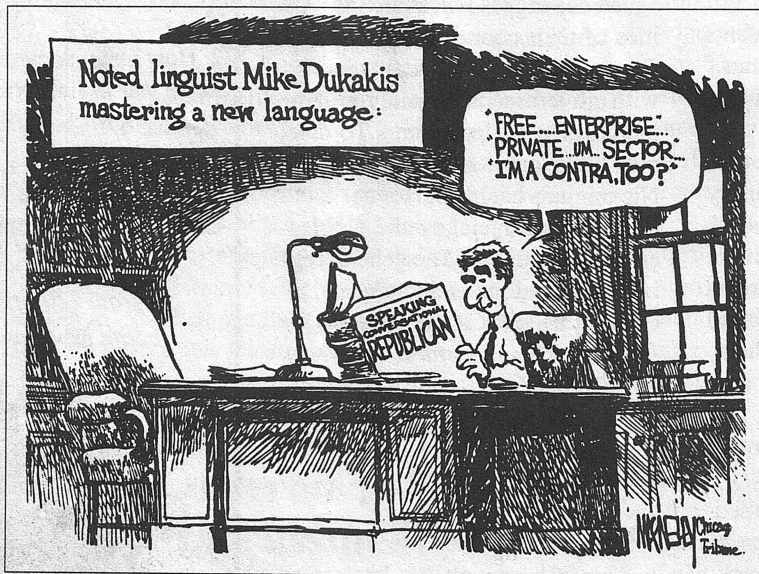
It's relatively easy for U.S. analysts to underestimate the dramatic impact the Allende overthrow had on Latin American public opinion, including that of top Sandinista leaders. Jaime Wheelock, a key member of the Sandinista National Directorate, lived in Chile during the Allende period. In recent months, President Daniel Ortega has declared on a number of occasions that "the Chilean experience will not repeat itself in Nicaragua."

For many Nicaraguans, the new U.S. political intervention comes at a time when hopes are high for peace and is an added affront to their national dignity. "It's an affront to the people who have lost sons and brothers in the U.S. contra war to have a newspaper like *La Prensa* echoing the propaganda of Ronald Reagan and the contras," says Peter Marchetti. "They couldn't put up with it anymore."

There is also a Central American dimension to the Sandinistas' tough stand against the United States. As

Stark notes, "The Sandinistas didn't want the U.S. to take over the Central American peace process. Secretary of State Schultz was trying to do just that with his trip to Central America at the end of June. U.S. ambassadors and diplomats have acted as pro consuls for the Central American nations for too long, and the Sandinistas were not willing to let the U.S. get away with it again."

President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, who has criticized the Sandinista decision to close down *La Prensa*, hasn't condemned the Sandinista expulsion of U.S. Ambassador Richard Melton. Costa Rica has had its own run-ins with U.S. ambassadors in the past few years. U.S. Ambassador Lewis Tambs hurriedly resigned his post in Costa Rica in late 1986 when Iran-contra scandal documents revealed that he had lied to the Costa Rican government about the contra operations he had helped organize on the Costa Rica / Nicaragua border.



lende government. In Managua, the strike earlier this year by a U.S.-backed union of construction workers was a major factor in rallying the right wing, which was in disarray. It was then that opposition political parties in Nicaragua, also funded by the United States, not only moved to support the construction union but began to collaborate more openly with the contras.

The parallels between Allende's Chile and Nicaragua today are not exact. In Chile key elements in the armed forces were secretly in sympathy with their opposition, whereas in Nicaragua the armed forces are tightly linked with the Sandinistas.

Nevertheless, notes Bob Stark, executive director of the Washington-based Policy Alternatives for the Caribbean and Central America, "The Sandinistas will never forget what happened in Chile. They're telling the United States, 'You can't do here what you did in Chile.'"

Roger Burbach is a Pacific News Service analyst and a political scientist who has worked in both Chile and Nicaragua. Roger directs the Berkeley-based Center for the Study of the Americas and is a lecturer in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. This appeared in the Oakland Tribune.