

## U.S. rearms Somoza

On June 21, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance demanded before the Organization of American States that arms shipments to either Nicaragua's Somoza regime or its opposition Sandinista National Liberation Front be stopped. Now, persistent reports from the area indicate that the United States is itself massively engaged in re-arming the crumbling regime.

This seemingly contradictory policy—the increased arms support comes at a time the Carter Administration has two envoys in Nicaragua ostensibly negotiating Somoza's resignation—is geared to buy time for the formation of what the U.S. terms a Reconciliation government. Having made it clear that it will not work with the already constituted National Reconstruction government backed by the Sandinistas and including virtually all of Nicaragua's opposition forces, Washington is now trying to gain the time necessary to place a veneer of credibility over its projected Reconciliation government, which would include elements of Somoza's fascist Liberal Party and be backed by the National Guard.

By keeping the crumbling regime of Somoza afloat, in the face of almost complete opposition within Nicaragua, the Carter administration, ostensibly committed to human rights, is actively pursuing a policy it sup-

ported earlier this year in its silent aid to the genocidal Pol Pot regime in Cambodia.

By propping up the Guard with new firepower, the U.S. hopes to check or even reverse a succession of Sandinista victories. After a temporary retreat from Managua following several weeks of saturation bombing by the Guard, the Sandinistas have advanced and consolidated their positions in other parts of the country. Last week the Sandinistas took the guard garrisons in Matagalpa and Jinotepe, and began the battle for control of Nicaragua's third largest city, Granada. Reports from Mexico indicate that the five-man junta of the provisional government of National Reconstruction may soon establish itself on Nicaraguan soil in Rivas, the key southern city where Sandinista forces have consolidated control in the last few days.

The volume of arms the U.S. government is sending to keep Somoza in power was indicated in a communiqué issued July 3 by the new provisional government of National Reconstruction. The communiqué charged that a U.S. Army Hercules transport plane had landed in Managua July 2 to unload 400 air-to-ground rockets and 80 500-pound bombs, reportedly destined for use against Leon, Nicaragua's second largest city, which has been under Sandinista control for more than two

### 'The Sandinistas are Nicaragua's humanists'

*Father Ernesto Cardenal, a Trappist monk and poet well-known throughout Latin America, recently visited the United States from his home in Nicaragua. An interview with Father Cardenal printed in the June 30 New York Times is excerpted here:*

**Q:** Many people in the United States know you best as a poet and pacifist priest with a great following in the Spanish-speaking world. You recently declared yourself a Sandinista, a member of the Sandinista National Liberation Front; how do you reconcile your former belief in Gandhian nonviolence with armed revolutionary struggle?

**Cardenal:** In Nicaragua today, there is no recourse other than revolutionary violence. What is going on is the exact same thing that went on in Hitler's Germany. Every day in many places in the country young people are being assassinated for the crime of

being young. Somoza's National Guard—and not without reason—imagines that to be young is to be a revolutionary and a Sandinista. And what happens is that a boy leaves in the morning for work, or goes out at night to see his sweetheart, or goes to the corner for a drink, and he never returns home. He is captured by some military patrol. Other times these boys are pulled out of their homes and then their bodies show up in the morgue or in vacant lots by the side of the highway or in garbage bins. Their arms are broken; their eyes torn out; their tongue is cut and they are castrated.

The leader of Somoza's death battalion—the man responsible for these murders—was captured and tried by the Sandinistas. Before his death, he told how his security agents carried out these atrocious crimes. When asked how old were the eldest boys who had been killed, he said 13 or 14 years old. Against this, we realized there was no alternative other than armed struggle...

I am sure that Gandhi would agree with us

weeks. Eleven U.S. combat planes and an unspecified number of tanks were also delivered to Somoza a few days before, according to reports from the Provisional Government, through a "third party" country.

The Sandinistas accused Washington of being the "military oxygen" coming to Somoza by way of El Salvador, Guatemala and Israel in an attempt to bleed the revolutionary forces while they hurriedly try to create a basis for a "Somozismo without Somoza option." "Our people will not forget," the Sandinista communiqué stated, "each death, each wound, each house destroyed ... will be remembered by all Nicaraguans to settle account tomorrow with those responsible."

### Israeli role

The level of "covert" rearming of Somoza in fact has become so massive in the past week that all pretense of denying Somoza's resupply routes has been dropped. After months of a rigorous blackout in major U.S. papers on Israel's function as the key "middleman" in this arms traffic, the State Department this week tried to cover itself with the announcement that Washington had "asked" Israel to suspend further shipments to Somoza. Israel then proceeded to admit that "two trawlers" of weaponry were stopped on their way to Nicaragua.

According to intelligence sources in Washington, the Israelis, however, are "still pumping in war material to Somoza. Much of the equipment is arriving on ships owned by the Israeli-owned Maritime Fruit Company,

because he, himself said that non-violent means would not have been possible in Hitler's Germany.... We are making a revolution—yes, through armed struggle. But the Sandinista guerilla is a humanist, not a terrorist, as he is often maliciously portrayed in the international press.

**Q:** *What kind of relationship do you and the Sandinistas have with the Catholic Church?*

**Cardenal:** The Bishops, who believe in the traditional doctrine of the Church, have said that the Sandinistas' armed struggle is legitimate.... All of the Nicaraguan bishops have defended the armed struggle.

**Q:** *What about the Pope saying he was against violent revolution?*

**Cardenal:** ...It seems to me that when the Pope used the word "violent," he means terrorist violence. And the only terrorists in Nicaragua are the National Guard.

a spinoff of the former United Fruit Company United Brands) in the U.S. The same sources noted that most of Somoza's new light arms acquisitions are "NATO-type weapons," especially the Belgian-made FN assault rifle.

### China connection

Mexican Foreign Minister Castaneda announced this week that his government has indications that the "third parties" funneling weapons to Somoza are Israel, China and Brazil, traditional black marketeers in arms supplies.

Simultaneously, Latin American press and diplomatic circles denounced last week unprecedented U.S.-backed mercenary activity. The Sandinistas have issued a series of reports documenting the presence of thousands of mercenaries, including relics from the South Vietnamese Army and U.S. Special Forces veterans. Many of these hired troops are leading the door-to-door mop-up operations in the slums of eastern Managua, vacated by the Sandinistas last week, and are participating alongside the National Guard in the execution and mutilation of 13-year-olds.

In New York, U.S. Labor Party investigators learned that networks linked to the Alpha 66 Cuban exile terrorist group are circulating a letter soliciting funds and mercenary volunteers to aid Somoza. Sources report that this operation is claiming it already has 11,000 recruits. At the same time, a Cuban exile named Evelio Estrella, a candidate for one of New York's congressional seats, issued an appeal to all "veterans" of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba to come to Somoza's aid.

Other reports indicate that Shmuel Flatto-Sharon, the Israeli millionaire and Knesset member wanted by French authorities in connection with narcotics smuggling, has been organizing a unit of 2,000 mercenaries during the past two months through his U.S. contacts. Open advertisements were appearing in Arizona newspapers earlier this year calling for mercenaries to fight for Somoza, while similar activity has been reported in Texas. An "import-export" firm owned by one Warner Wagner, Jr.—who is registered at the U.S. Justice Department as a foreign agent—is reportedly involved in weapons and personnel procurement for Somoza, according to Mexico City daily *Uno Mas Uno*. Flatto-Sharon, not incidentally, is the owner of the Maritime Fruit Company, one of the primary arms conduits to the Nicaraguan National Guard.

Although these activities clearly violate the U.S. Neutrality Act, the Carter administration is turning a blind eye to the affair, much as it did when U.S. mercenaries were sent to Zimbabwe, Rhodesia. However, Washington is cracking down on sources of support for the new provisional government. Despite the massive evidence of recruiting on Somoza's behalf, the Justice Department this week chose the occasion of a

pro-Sandinista rally in Puerto Rico to warn the participants that any effort to solicit volunteers for the rebel cause would be a violation of law.

The climate for intervention continues to be built by a deliberate "Castro" scare media blitz about the Sandinistas. Leading the avalanche of press coverage this week was Robert Moss's "Nicaragua, A Second Cuba?" in the July 2 *Daily Telegraph*. Moss, a top operative of the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, clumsily tried to link the Sandinistas to various major terrorist operations from the Red Brigades to the Mexican Liga de Septiembre 23.

—Gretchen Small

## **Mexico's Castañeda: 'we oppose intervention'**

*In a speech delivered on June 21 to the meeting of the Organization of American States, Mexican Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda voiced the position of the Mexican government on the policy of genocide pursued by the Somoza regime in Nicaragua and all U.S. efforts to aid Somoza, through the OAS or otherwise. We reprint major portions of that address.*

What is happening (in Nicaragua) today has gone beyond the realm of respect for human rights. ... The systematic destruction of towns and cities, showing no mercy for the defenseless civilian population, has revived in our minds the image of the worst days of the Nazi fury.

... What we are witnessing approaches genocide; that is, the attempt to destroy that portion of the population—if not the population as a whole—which opposes the tyrannical, abusive domination of the illegal dictator and his Pretorian Guard.

Essential responsibility for what is occurring in Nicaragua falls upon the Somoza regime. The disgraceful dictatorship, in power for more than 40 years, and the ruthless exploitation of the population could have no result but rebellion.

The bloody repression of the popular uprising has destroyed Somoza's veneer of representation and legality. The people of Nicaragua have done nothing but exercise the sacred right of rebellion against tyranny, just as the Mexican people did 70 years ago. Now in Nicaragua, as then in Mexico, the people are making their revolution alone—through the bloodshed of their own children—spontaneously and massively.

... The armed rebellion of the people is the most genuine expression of the democratic will of a nation. ... The opposition to Somoza is total ... Any suggestion that what is happening in Nicaragua is the result of a conspiracy inspired and organized from outside would

not only be false, but an insult to the noble people who have launched a struggle without quarter to win their freedom.

... Certainly it is not up to the OAS or anyone else to tell them how they should constitute their government once they have defeated the dictator and ended the battle. ... That would be equivalent to imposing on the people of Nicaragua from the outside, conditions and limitations in their immanent right to self-determination. We all desire the cessation of violence and the rapid constitution of a stable and democratic government there; but clearly it would be paradoxical, if not cynical, as the end of the fighting nears, for us to try to impose on a people certain methods for the way they should practice democracy ... when for forty years this same people has not had the opportunity to practice democracy.

... What can the OAS do under these circumstances? What is essential is what it cannot do. The OAS cannot legally, politically or morally intervene in this purely internal affair of Nicaragua.

... For us, the worst and most serious intervention would be to try to impose a solution from outside to Nicaragua's purely internal problem; to try to impede its natural conclusion. We have no authority to decide how these people ought to organize their future. The people of Nicaragua are the only legitimate interpreters of what is best for them. In the best cases, governments imposed from outside are precarious and unpopular, and always offensive to the people which must suffer them.

Therefore, we are categorically opposed, for reasons of both principle and practice, to OAS intervention in any form in the internal struggle of Nicaragua and its political process. By the express instructions of the President of Mexico, we will oppose any attempt by the OAS ... to negotiate with the Somoza government on the conditions under which he should leave power, or with the opposition forces as to how they should accede to it.

This is a general and principled position. But in addition, our estimation is that such an attempt would have the effect in practice—although we are not accusing anyone of such an intent—of allowing the tyrant to retire while leaving in place the structure and base of his oppressive regime. Only the Nicaraguan people can decide if they want Somocismo without Somoza.

Mexico cannot gloss over a collective action that attempts to impose a government on these people ... which casts aside the popular will expressed with clarity and singular courage in Nicaragua's bloody fields and cities during these past months.

We nevertheless are open to collaboration with our sister republics on the continent in the honest search for a solution to restore the much-desired peace in Nicaragua without violating the principle of non-intervention.