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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 24, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR FRED F. FIELDING

FROM: JOHN G. ROBERTS *JGR*

SUBJECT: White House Digest Entitled
"Sandinista Violations of Human Rights"

Attached is the draft White House Digest on "Sandinista Violations of Human Rights" that we discussed at this morning's staff meeting. The most prominent assertions are on page 2, where it is alleged that the FSLN Directorate arranged for two individuals to be shot "while attempting to escape" from prison and that the Chief and Deputy Chief of State Security decided to kill a leading private citizen. The attached draft memorandum for Baroody notes that the accuracy of these assertions must be adequately verified and that the assertions, as well as the entire draft, must be cleared by the National Security Council. As we discussed this morning, Bob Kimmitt is copied on the memorandum.

Paragraph 7 on page 9 presents a less serious problem. The first sentence of the paragraph states: "Since the rescue mission in Grenada and the fall of the Marxist-Leninist regime there, censorship [in Nicaragua] has been relaxed somewhat, but is still severe." The causal connection between the liberation of Grenada and press censorship in Nicaragua is neither apparent nor explained. I recommend noting that this is confusing in our memorandum to Baroody.

Attachment

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 24, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR MICHAEL E. BAROODY
DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
DIRECTOR, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

FROM: FRED F. FIELDING
COUNSEL TO THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: White House Digest Entitled
"Sandinista Violations of Human Rights"

Counsel's Office has reviewed the above-referenced draft White House Digest. The assertions that specific murders were arranged by the FSLN Directorate and the Chief and Deputy Chief of State Security, appearing on page 2, must be adequately verified, and, as with the draft as a whole, must be reviewed and approved by the National Security Council.

The first sentence of the seventh paragraph on page nine suggests a causal relationship between the liberation of Grenada and the relaxing of press censorship in Nicaragua, but the nature of that causal relationship is neither apparent nor explained. If there is such a causal relationship it should be explained; if not, the sentence should be rewritten so that one is not implied.

cc: Robert Kimmitt
National Security Council

FFF:JGR:aea 5/24/84
bcc: FFFielding/JGRoberts/Subj/Chron

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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bcc: FFFielding/JGRoberts/Subj/Chron

WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENCE TRACKING WORKSHEET

- O - OUTGOING
- H - INTERNAL
- I - INCOMING
Date Correspondence Received (YY/MM/DD) 1/1

John



Name of Correspondent: Richard Dorman

MI Mail Report User Codes: (A) _____ (B) _____ (C) _____

Subject: White House Digest Entitled "Sandinista Violations of Human Rights"

ROUTE TO:	ACTION	DISPOSITION	
Office/Agency (Staff Name)	Action Code	Tracking Date YY/MM/DD	Type of Response Code Completion Date YY/MM/DD
<u>CUHOW</u>	ORIGINATOR	<u>84 105/16</u>	_____ - <u>1 1</u>
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ACTION CODES:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A - Appropriate Action C - Comment/Recommendation D - Draft Response F - Furnish Fact Sheet to be used as Enclosure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I - Info Copy Only/No Action Necessary R - Direct Reply w/Copy S - For Signature X - Interim Reply |
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DISPOSITION CODES:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A - Answered B - Non-Special Referral | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C - Completed S - Suspended |
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WHITE HOUSE STAFFING MEMORANDUM

DATE: 5/16/84 ACTION/CONCURRENCE/COMMENT DUE BY: 5/23/84

SUBJECT: WHITE HOUSE DIGEST ENTITLED "SANDINISTA VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS"

	ACTION FYI			ACTION FYI	
VICE PRESIDENT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	McFARLANE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MEESE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	McMANUS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BAKER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MURPHY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DEAVER	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	OGLESBY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STOCKMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ROGERS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
DARMAN	<input type="checkbox"/> P	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SS	SPEAKES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FELDSTEIN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	SVAHN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FIELDING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	VERSTANDIG	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
FULLER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	WHITTLESEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HERRINGTON	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>BAROODY</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
HICKEY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JENKINS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REMARKS:

Please forward any comments directly to Mike Baroody, with a copy to my office, by close of business May 23. Thank you.

RESPONSE:

1984 MAY 16 PM 5:01

Richard G. Darman
Assistant to the President
Ext. 2702

SANDINISTA VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Miskitos and many other refugees-turned-guerrillas say that while Somoza was interested only in controlling Nicaragua's wealth, the Sandinistas want to control the minds of the people. (1)

When the Sandinistas marched triumphantly into Managua on July 19, 1979, they promised the cheering masses that the Nicaragua of tomorrow would enjoy unfettered political pluralism, a free, mixed economy, and true non-alignment.

But in the more than four years of Sandinista rule, the self-appointed guardians of Sandino's revolution have not only ignored their victory promises, but have systematically trampled on every aspect of human rights -- from the censorship of the press and the postponement of elections to the indefinite suspension of constitutional guarantees.

Individuals as well as institutions are targets of the ruling party, the FSLN (Sandinista Front for the Liberation of Nicaragua). The following incidents are not isolated events but reveal an official policy based on a true disregard for the rights of the individual, especially those considered threats to the revolution.

"Ajusticimientos"

In July 1979, under the guise of "ajusticimientos," or "acts of justice," the FSLN carried out a deliberate campaign of murder and revenge on individuals they had determined to be "informers and assassins" of the ousted regime of Anastasio Somoza.

Nicaraguan officials admitted to the summary executions of several hundred prisoners in the early days of the Revolution. (2) According to Jose Esteban Gonzalez, head of the Permanent Commission on Human Rights of Nicaragua, 2,000 Nicaraguans were executed in the first months of the new regime. (3)

"Shot While Attempting to Escape"

Franklin Montenegro and another man called Aguilera were junior National Guard officers who had been a part of Somoza's security apparatus. During the July 1979 bloodbath, Aguilera and Montenegro were imprisoned but not killed.

Later, the FSLN Directorate decided that the two should indeed be killed, even though the period of "ajusticimientos" had

passed. The Directorate arranged for Aguilera and Montenegro to be shot "while attempting to escape" during a supposed transfer from one prison to another.

The Attack on Private Enterprise

The murder of Jorge Salazar in November 1980 was the FSLN Directorate's first major act of repression directed against a representative of the private sector. The machinations culminating in Salazar's death were designed to goad the private sector into actively opposing the Sandinistas.

The FSLN wanted to keep them from forming an effective armed resistance, but at the same time, provoke them into some type of armed action which would justify Sandinista reprisals. This action, and the anticipated Sandinista response to it, would prevent the private sector from forming any political program to interfere with FSLN plans for the pluralist front being prepared for the 1985 elections.

Jose Maria Lau, aide to the Chief of State Security Lenin Cerna, was chosen to run this operation. In addition to Lau, Security selected several others to be placed in COSEP (Higher Council for Private Enterprise) and the democratic parties to act as provocateurs. Once infiltrated into their respective organizations, Lau and his collaborators found their targets were not really interested in armed opposition.

The democratic parties and the COSEP did, however, begin to aggressively speak out against the FSLN. The Directorate then decided it was time to give the Nicaraguan people a sign that the "burgesia" remained dangerous and could well take up arms against the revolution.

Salazar, president of the agro-industrialists and a very prominent man, was chosen as victim. A false arms transfer was staged by State Security and Salazar was killed in cold blood. Salazar's widow, Lucia, is now the human rights coordinator for the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, one of the groups that has taken up arms against the Sandinistas.

Mrs. Salazar, who lost a brother in Somoza's prisons before her husband was killed by the Sandinistas, had this to say about the Sandinistas and human rights:

"I would say that all human rights are violated in Nicaragua every single day and every single hour." (4)

The decision to kill Salazar was made by Cerna and Juan Jose Ubeda, Deputy Chief of State Security. According to the official version, Salazar was planning armed resistance to the FSLN. The net effect of his murder was to intimidate the private sector.

On October 20, 1981, COSEP published an open letter criticizing Humberto Ortega's statement that the Sandinista

government could "in a matter of hours," take over everything that "the bourgeoisie still possesses." The letter accused the government of egregious economic mismanagement, and the Sandinista doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, for the country's deepening economic crisis. (5)

The Sandinista government quickly reacted to this letter. By midnight the same day, state security forces arrested four COSEP leaders in their homes for "violation of the economic and social emergency law."

Three of those arrested were sentenced to seven months in jail on October 30. They were Enrique Dreyfus, President of COSEP, Benjamin Lanzas, President of the Chamber of Construction, and Gilberto Cuadra, President of the Federation of Nicaraguan Professionals.

Similar sentences were handed down to three other businessmen who fled into exile in Venezuela and the U.S. This left the private sector in Nicaragua leaderless, and with few anti-Sandinistas willing to assume such a risky role. Under continued international pressure, the Sandinistas finally released the COSEP leaders on 14 February, 1982.

Edgard Macias Gomez

The case of former Vice-Minister of Labor under the new FSLN regime, Edgard Macias Gomez, demonstrates the extreme pressure and propaganda methods used by the Nicaraguan State Security Service (SDGSE) in their efforts to denigrate the character of an individual.

When appointed Vice Minister of Labor, Macias was already President of the Popular Social Christian Party (PPSC), one of the political parties which formed the coalition known as Frente Patriotico (FP). The FP follows the Sandinista line. Macias saw his party losing more and more of its independence to the FSLN party.

To devote his full efforts to countering this influence, Macias resigned his official position as Vice Minister of Labor in the spring of 1982. He now represented a threat to FSLN dominance of the FP and consequently to the assurance that the FSLN party would prevail in the 1985 "election process."

To destroy Macias, his character and credibility, using controlled media, the FSLN mounted an intense defamation campaign against both him and his wife. The pressure became so great that the Macias' had to leave Nicaragua.

Religious Persecution

The Sandinistas have also targeted Nicaragua's Catholic Church. Their intention is to neutralize growing opposition both from the Catholic hierarchy and from rank and file Catholics by splitting the Church.

The Sandinistas have tried to create a so-called Popular Church and portray it as the friend of the people, casting the legitimate Church in the role of enemy, especially of the poor. (6)

The Sandinista policy toward the Catholic Church was set in September 1979 and is summarized in the 72 Hour Document, which resulted from an extraordinary meeting held from 21-23 September, 1979. The FSLN Directorate and top level cadre participated.

According to the Document, the Catholic Church is to be treated cordially, "following a cautious policy designed to neutralize conservative elements, develop close ties with sympathetic elements and stimulate the revolutionary sectors." (7)

Nicaraguan priests and bishops have opposed the transformation of the Catholic Church into a branch of the Sandinista government. They have been subjected to threats, mob violence, and physical abuse. In one particularly appalling incident, Father Bismark Carballo, spokesman for Archbishop Obando y Bravo, was forced to strip and paraded in front of government television cameras.

These acts of intimidation against priests and faithful loyal to the Pope and their Bishops not only violate international standards of behavior, but the Sandinistas own law as well. Article 19 of the Statute on the Rights and Guarantees of Nicaraguans provides that "even in cases of emergency," freedom of thought, conscience and religion cannot be suspended. (8)

The Sandinistas also succeeded in disrupting the Pope's Mass in Managua last March. The front seats in the square where Mass was held were reserved for Sandinistas armed with microphones who repeatedly interrupted the Pontiff.

While the Pope was blessing the Consecrated Host, Sandinista activists began to make speeches from the altar. When a group of five or six Catholics tried to climb the stairs to help the Pope, Lenin Cerna, head of State Security, threatened them with a machine gun. (9)

The Pope's Mass and the Sandinistas' attempt to portray John Paul as the enemy of the revolution was the turning point in European support for the Sandinista regime, according to some observers. Heavily Catholic countries such as Spain and Italy began to rethink their diplomatic support for Sandinismo. (10)

This persecution has not been limited to Catholics. Members of the Moravian Church of the Atlantic Coast have had their religion and culture systematically attacked. Clergy and civic and church leaders have been jailed, exiled or otherwise harassed. Protestant churches have been burned or seized for use as Sandinista military barracks.

At the general triennial synod of the Nicaraguan Moravian Church in 1983, two Sandinista military commanders attended and interfered with the business of the church. They warned against the election of certain pastors to high church office. They had already closed down the Moravian Biblical Institute, adversely affecting the education and training of Moravian clergy.

Nicaragua's small Jewish community has also been the subject of persecution. Disguised as attacks on former Somoza supporters, the efforts are more likely related to the FSLN's long relationship with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Anti-Semitic rhetoric, the attempt to set fire to the main door of the Managua synagogue (while the faithful were inside) and the subsequent confiscation of this synagogue (the only one in the city) indicate that the actions that drove most of the Jewish community into exile were not mere anti-capitalism. Rather, it was an attack on a small, and therefore vulnerable, community that represented opposition to Sandinista totalitarianism.

Torture

According to Miguel Bolanos Hunter, a former State Security agent who defected last summer, Sandinista Security officials make use of KGB methods of psychological torture. Jails where interrogations are carried on are constructed for this type of human rights violation. Their layouts have been brought from Cuba and are based on KGB models. Bolanos also charges that the interrogators are Cuban-trained. (11)

The relatively sophisticated methods of torture used to extract information are used in addition to more traditional forms of physical mistreatment used to intimidate or simply eliminate enemies.

For example, prisoners reportedly were kept in cramped dark cells and fed at irregular intervals to disorient them. They are also ordered to use only their prison number and not their name, and are subjected to threats.

These methods are sometimes used against the regime's political opponents. There is no shortage of political prisoners in Sandinista Nicaragua. A March 1981 New York Times article charged that the Sandinistas were holding 4,170 political prisoners. (12)

Torture is not merely psychological. During 1983, the Permanent Commission on Human Rights compiled data on 102 instances of physical abuse and torture. One detained Nicaraguan stated that security forces kept him naked in a cold cell with a ceiling so low that he could not stand upright. He said he was pressured into signing a document obliging him to inform on his friends and neighbors.

Reportedly, security forces physically abused and threatened alleged guerrillas, subversives and political suspects., Nicaraguans who fled to Costa Rica and Honduras reported incidents of rape, torture, and the murder of children by the Sandinista Popular Army and security forces.

Interior Minister Tomas Borge, head of the regime's secret police, admitted that many cases of physical abuse and a few of killing of detained persons by security forces occurred, but he claimed that the Government was working to resolve the problem.

Prudencio Baltodano

One of the most shocking stories to come out of Sandinista Nicaragua in recent weeks is that of Prudencio Baltodano, a Pentacostal preacher and a victim of Sandinista torture. In February 1984, Baltodano, with one other man and about 40 women and children, fled the scene of a battle between Sandinista troops and anti-government forces of ARDE.

The group was captured by Sandinista soldiers. Baltodano and the other man were separated from the others and beaten. Upon learning the names of their captives, the soldiers accused Baltodano of recruiting people to fight against the government. They tied him to a tree and told him: "You still don't know what we do to evangelical pastors. We are Communists and don't believe in God."

While tied up, Baltodano was hit in the forehead with a rifle butt, had his throat cut with a bayonet and had both ears cut off. The Sandinista soldiers left him to bleed to death. Baltodano survived, however, and is now in the U.S. bearing witness to what happened to him. He asserts that his experience is by no means unique and he has seen the bodies of other people mutilated even more brutally. (13)

Tipitapa

Recent reporting from a variety of sources indicates that the FSLN has violated the human rights of political prisoners. In the early morning hours of 11 October 1983, violence broke out at the Modelo prison called Tipitapa, a "model" prison approximately 24 kilometers (15 miles) from Managua.

The confrontation resulted in the deaths of several political prisoners (only political prisoners are incarcerated at Modelo).

Accounts differ as to what caused the prison guards to open fire on the prisoners and how many were killed.

The fact that neither the Sandinistas nor the government Human Rights Commission in Managua was willing to make a clarifying statement indicates the whole affair was being covered up. Four days after the event, and after denying both foreign journalists and independent human rights agencies access to the prison, the Sandinistas announced that nothing at all happened at Tipitapa.

Persecutions of the Indians

Some of the most severe examples of Sandinista repression have been committed against Managua's large Indian population, especially the Miskito, Rama and Sumo Indian groups that inhabit the steamy Atlantic Coast. The recent flight of over 1,000 Indians, led by a Roman Catholic Bishop, highlights their plight. Just this past April, hundreds more Miskito Indians escaped into Honduras.

These Indians have been subjected to religious persecution, destruction of their crops, and forced relocation, causing many thousands to flee across the border into Honduras. (14) Those unable or unwilling to leave their ancient homelands are subjected to heavy-handed attempts, occasionally including rape and murder, to bring Sandinista totalitarianism to the traditionally autonomous Indian population.

Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home or Correspondence

The Nicaraguan government has developed an elaborate and effective security/intelligence network employing both government security service organs and a variety of Sandinista organizations, such as the Sandinista Defense Committees, modeled on the notorious Cuban Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, to ferret out dissidents and real or alleged subversives.

These organizations tolerate everyday grumbling about inflation, commodity scarcities, and non-sensitive government policies. However, individuals who openly criticize the "revolutionary process" or its leadership are frequently subjected to pressure ranging from public ridicule and defacement of his home by Sandinista mobs to loss of employment and even detention.

The Sandinista Defense Committees, or CDSs, organized in most neighborhoods throughout the country, serve as a network of informers and as an instrument of political intimidation. Members are exhorted to be alert for signs of subversive ideas and to seek out dissidents to convert them into Sandinista supporters.

Participation is supposed to be voluntary in the Defense Committees and in Committee activities such as political education meetings and "Revolutionary Vigilance," a program in which Committee members stand watch over their neighborhood during hours of darkness.

However, the Sandinistas employ many methods to entice or pressure individuals into joining the Defense Committees, including Committee control over the distribution of ration cards for the purchase of subsidized basic products such as rice, beans and soap. A Nicaraguan citizen reported the following in March 1983:

"We all have to join [the CDSs]. If you don't, they call you a contra, their term for a counterevolutionary, and you don't get an identification card to buy basic foods at cheap prices." (15)

This constitutes not only a method of inflicting punishment without trial, but an attack on freedom of speech and freedom of association. The system also invites abuse, since the accusation of "counterrevolutionary" can be used to settle private scores having nothing to do with politics.

Linked to the Defense Committees are the "turbas divinas" (literally, "divine mobs"). Sometimes "turbas" composed of scores of Sandinista supporters demonstrated in front of the homes or offices of opposition figures, chanting slogans and threats and defacing buildings with pro-government graffiti. The mobs rarely resorted to violence against persons, but in some instances scuffles occurred and minor injuries resulted.

While the government takes no responsibility for the actions of the mobs, it regards them as "legitimate expressions of the popular will" and does not interfere to protect the rights of those against whom they are demonstrating. There is little doubt that the government targets those persons against whom it wants the mobs to demonstrate.

The State of Emergency suspended the legal requirement for a search warrant. Police and State Security officials regularly enter and search private residences. The government opens private mail, and officials meticulously inspect the baggage and personal effects of both arriving and departing international travelers and confiscate any items or literature, including newspapers from neighboring countries, alleged to be subversive.

Nicaraguans are also being urged to spy on one another. One Sandinista leader publicly urged the Defense Committees to take action against anyone heard listening to a foreign radio news broadcast. There have been some reports that teachers in public schools have asked children to spy on their parents and report suspicious activity. (16)

Trade Union Freedoms

The Sandinistas have been working steadily since they took power in 1979 to bring all independent trade unions under their control. Both the Christian Democratic oriented National Workers Central (CTN) and the independent Confederation of Labor Unity (CUS) have been subject to repeated harassment, arrests, and threats.

In June the government packed the convention of the Steve-dores' Union in Corinto to prevent it from switching its affiliation from the Sandinista Workers Central (SWC) to the CUS. Leaders of this union, which supported the 1979 revolution, have been forced to flee the country and others have been arrested. Other members of the union have been fired because of their desire to disaffiliate from the SWC.

Freedom of the Press

Although the Sandinista regime's capricious censors relaxed their censorship of La Prensa for a short period beginning in August, all mechanisms of censorship remain in place for both the print and broadcast media. This means that even stricter censorship can be reimposed at any time. In fact, since the beginning of this year La Prensa has refused to publish five times because up to so many of its articles have been censored.

Until recently, news items on arrests of opposition figures, expropriations, and any criticism of government policy have not been permitted, and editorial commentary is rarely approved. In late October a Church communique on the mob attacks against the Church was censored.

According to the Inter-American Press Association, which includes newspapers in Canada, the United States and Latin America, the most serious case of press censorship in the hemisphere "continues to be Nicaragua, where the independent newspaper La Prensa is the chief victim." (17)

La Prensa is now the only independent source of print news in Nicaragua. Every line of type in La Prensa must be submitted to government censors before it can be published. The editors of the paper report that between January and October 1983 the government censored over 50% of their stories on current national and international events.

Since the rescue mission in Grenada and the fall of the Marxist-Leninist regime there, censorship has been relaxed somewhat, but is still severe. Censorship is capricious and unpredictable.

During 1983, the government censored articles about an attack on the house of a former government junta member, a letter from the Catholic Bishops criticizing the proposed military draft

law, a letter to the government from 12 U.S. Congressmen, and items on Afghanistan, Managua firemen, and street repairs.

Among items frequently censored are not only political commentary, but also straightforward reports of Nicaragua's bad economic situation. This kind of censorship seems to reflect the totalitarian assumption that everything that takes place in the country is (or ought to be) the responsibility of the government. Therefore, criticism of anything that happens is a criticism of the government.

Even without censorship, La Prensa's readership is largely confined to Managua. The people who live in much of the rest of Nicaragua depend on radio for information.

Since March 1982 the Sandinistas have enforced censorship of independent radio stations by demanding the contents of daily programs before transmission, and in June government censors prohibited Radio Mundial, one of Nicaragua's oldest and most respected radio stations, from carrying any news from the Voice of America.

The station responded by stopping all news broadcasts, leaving pro-FSLN Radio Noticias as the last "independent" news station in Nicaragua. Radio Mundial has suffered continuing harassment since then. The relaxation of censorship in recent weeks has not reached Radio Mundial or any of the other radio stations.

The 1985 "Electoral Process"

The numerous human rights violations of the Sandinistas since their ascension to power in 1979 might be somewhat more tolerable if the people of Nicaragua could look forward to ousting those guilty through the electoral process. Sadly, they will probably not have this opportunity.

As Eduardo Rivas, legal counsel for the independent Human Rights Commission in Nicaragua, put it recently: "The Sandinistas take two steps closer to complete Marxist dictatorship, and then they ease up one step for publicity purposes." (18)

The Sandinista record has been one of consistently trying to eliminate, intimidate or co-opt any potential source of opposition. The examples of Sandinista behavior toward labor unions, COSEP, the Churches, the press, and the Indians demonstrate this clearly.

Given this record, it is not surprising that Sandinista leaders have said the purpose of elections is to ratify the "revolution."

There are many obstacles to free and fair elections: media access, the exclusion of the leadership of the armed opposition

from participation, the continuation of press censorship, the State of Emergency, the special tribunals, continued Sandinista intimidation of the opposition, and Sandinista access to state institutions and resources for partisan political purposes.

A Sandinista victory would convey greater international legitimacy to the Sandinistas. Therefore, it is important for the FSLN that the process itself and the victory the Sandinistas hope for be perceived as truly democratic.

The political parties law, promulgated on September 16, 1983, requires that all parties competing for power support and defend the Sandinista revolution in consolidating its "political, economic and social conquests." The legal status of opposition parties can be revoked if this restriction is not met.

The body that will make such a decision, and in fact will have the greatest say in the implementation of the political parties law, is called the National Council of Political Parties. This will be dominated by the Sandinistas.

Against this stacked deck, the Sandinistas treat their belated recognition that, perhaps in theory, another political party may dislodge the FSLN, as a major concession.

The law also commits the government to allowing outdoor meetings and rallies by political parties. These activities, however, are allowed "in accordance with legislation in effect at the time." (19) This means that if the current State of Emergency is not lifted, meetings and rallies can still be restricted, as they are now.

Conclusion

The revolution that toppled the Somoza regime and brought the Sandinistas to power reflected the hopes of the Nicaraguan people that democracy would come to their country.

An essential part of any regime wishing to call itself democratic is respect for fundamental human rights. For the Communist leadership of Nicaragua, such respect is incompatible with their Marxist-Leninist principles. Consequently, they have succeeded in surpassing even the Somoza regime in the flagrant disregard for fundamental human rights.

The Permanent Commission on Human Rights in Nicaragua has been reporting on the human rights situation in Nicaragua since 1977 but its leaders find international human rights organizations much less interested in their reports of abuses under the Sandinistas than those under Somoza.

Few Americans would be willing to live under a government that:

- restricted their practice of religion,

- encouraged their friends and neighbors to spy on them,
- impeded the formation of free labor unions,
- rationed all basic food items regardless of availability
- required internal passports to move about the country
- banned short wave radios
- and censored the news they would read and hear.

Yet over four years after promising free elections and political pluralism, this is the type of government the Sandinistas have inflicted on the people of Nicaragua.

Footnotes

1. Ted Thomas, "Nicaraguans' fight for freedom gets John Paul II's firm support." Washington Times April 13, 1983 p. 7A
2. New York Times March 5, 1981 p. A2
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