

Nicaragua's Relations with the Communist Party States During 1984

by
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The facts are there for everyone to see, striking a contrast as remarkable as it is unquestionable. While the United States takes extreme aggressive actions of every type against Nicaragua, the USSR government and people do their best to ease our suffering and support this process that favors the poor.

*Radio Sandino (Managua)**

INTRODUCTION

With relations between the revolutionary leadership of Nicaragua and the socialist states rapidly developing, it would seem timely to update the author's treatment of the 1979-83 period presented in the Winter 1985 issue of the *Quarterly*. The purpose is to catalogue and analyze agreements and transactions between Nicaragua and the Communist states from the end of 1983 through 1984, to demonstrate that assistance from the socialist countries has continued to increase, in contrast to that of the developed capitalist countries, and to trace, chronologically, developments in relations between the FSLN government of Nicaragua and each of the COMECON states. Commencing with the Cuban role in 1984, the relationship between Nicaragua and the USSR, the East Europeans, and the Asian Communist regimes will be considered. The "MiGs crisis" was the most threatening development in Nicaraguan-U.S. relations during 1984 and it too merits close attention for what it reveals about U.S. concerns and Nicaraguan intentions. The developing dependency of Nicaragua upon Communist trade, aid and military supplies seemed to be contradicted by the holding of general elections in November 1984. A constitution is being written now by an elected "constituent" Assembly. And yet, the Sandinistas appear to be fashioning a Marxist-Leninist state. Three questions need to be answered. Is the contradiction one of appearances only, or is there a clear intent on the part of the FSLN Directorate and the Ortega brothers to prepare the way for a "second Cuba"? What do "legally" active Nicaraguan opposition leaders (as opposed to those of the Democratic Coordinator who did not register for the elections) conclude from the burgeoning Soviet/Cuban role? And, finally, how did Washington perceive these developments and what was its reaction?

If United States assistance to El Salvador is contrasted with that of the Communist states to revolutionary Nicaragua, the disparities are striking, but not in the direction the uninitiated might predict. While between 1979 and 1983 U.S. economic aid to El Salvador totalled \$607.1 million, the trade, aid and donations (leaving aside the considerable arms

transfers) of the Communist states to Nicaragua totalled at least \$1,216.45 million.¹ Despite this, Nicaragua's economic problems remain so serious and U.S. hostility so threatening that dependency on the Communist Party states is deepening. To appreciate the difficulty of stimulating economic growth in anti-capitalist Nicaragua, it is sufficient to note that a confidential report prepared in April 1984 recommended that the prices of food and fuel be raised since export earnings for the year were forecast at just \$461 million while imports would total \$940 million. In spring 1985 the Sandinista regime removed state subsidies on essential foods to combat scarcity and the black market. Unpaid loans from "friendly countries" then amounted to two billion dollars (half of that for oil), and admitted defense expenditures accounted for about 25 percent of the total budget.² For 1985 defense costs were projected at 40 percent. In addition, Sandinist estimates of the material damage caused by U.S.-sponsored *contra* attacks (just those between May 1981 and October 1983) varied between 204 million and one billion dollars.³

In response to the economic crisis and the hostility of the United States, FSLN dependence, both short- and long-range, on the Soviet bloc states has been growing, especially since the Reagan administration launched the *contra* war in early 1982. As that cruel conflict continued throughout 1984, both the USSR and East Germany were caring for the Nicaraguan wounded who were transported on special Aeroflot flights. Given the extent of the regime's growing ties and trade with the Soviet bloc it was not surprising that the FSLN should send a delegation to the meeting of eleven Latin American communist parties held in Buenos Aires in August 1984,⁴ or that the role of the Communist states in Nicaraguan domestic affairs has led Cardinal Obando y Bravo, the anti-Somoza Archbishop of Managua, to declare that "Nicaragua is suffering ideological aggressions from Soviet and Cuban imperialism."⁵

During the political campaign of August 8 to November 3, 1984, participating opposition candidates attempted to capitalize on the FSLN's Communist bloc ties. Democratic Conservative Party (PDC) presidential candidate Dr. Clemente Guido charged that "the Sandinist Government claims to be neutral but they have really sided with the socialist bloc."⁶ On September 16, Independence Day, Guido complained that the current government was "full of foreigners" who interfered in internal political affairs but, contrary to law, were "not expelled from the country."⁷ Even the Popular Social Christian Party criticized "the Marxist-Leninist agrarian reform" implemented by the FSLN, arguing that the resulting pressure brought to bear upon the small and medium producers, using the official organizations ATC and UNAG (affiliated with its Cuban counterpart), had had as its intention the destruction of the independent farmers' organization UPANIC.⁸ Given these tendencies, and the U.S.-*contra* military effort against the regime, it is strikingly curious that U.S. officials lack even rough estimates of the numbers of bloc state diplomats in Managua embassies.⁹

THE ROLE OF CUBA

According to Commander Bayardo Arce, speaking before a group of Nicaraguan and Cuban officials in early January 1984, "In four and

one half years ... Cuba has sent 2,000 teachers each year and a total of 1,500 doctors ... has ... lent assistance in the mining, fishing, forestry and sugar industries, road construction, food production and other areas, including military affairs," and he concluded, "our principled friendship with Cuba is not for sale."¹⁰ The role of Cuban training for teachers and doctors remained pronounced throughout 1984. Commander Luis Carrion, speaking in February to Nicaraguans departing for teachers' training in Cuba, recalled the difficult conditions under which Cuban internationalist teachers worked in Nicaragua.¹¹ Shortly thereafter, a brigade of 1,600 teachers (986 women and 614 men, all 18 years old) left Managua for outlying regions with the task of teaching *campesino* children to read and write. This "Fiftieth Anniversary Education Brigade" had been trained in Cuba.¹² In that same month, 1,500 more Cuban rural school teachers began arriving. They were to form 36 brigades and operate in areas not affected by *contra* attacks.¹³ Large numbers of Nicaraguan students were still being trained in Cuba as well; September 26 saw Sergio Ramirez and Fernando Cardenal welcome 386 students upon their return.¹⁴

In late November, however, the two countries suddenly announced an end to the use of Cuban teachers in the primary schools. About 5,000 Cuban teachers had been employed in rural areas every year to make up for Nicaragua's lack of personnel. The Managua announcement came, probably, because of the growing exposure of the Cubans to *contra* attacks.¹⁵ Given the fact that promised Cuban departures in December 1983 simply resulted in a rotation of teachers, developments must be awaited before asserting that the program has really ended.

The role of Cuban doctors remained vital throughout 1984. In July, 80 Cuban doctors marked the end of a three-year stay by holding a joint symposium with Nicaraguan specialists on research carried out over the previous year. Investigations were undertaken in fields such as infant mortality, nutrition, surgery and internal medicine. In addition, the Cubans taught classes at medical schools in Managua and Leon and provided health services to communities throughout the country, including many in war zones.¹⁶

Relations between the FSLN leadership and Fidel Castro remained extremely cordial. Following the death of Yuri Andropov, for instance, Commander Daniel Ortega, coordinator of the governing junta, returned from the funeral with Castro, stopping off to visit Felipe Gonzalez in Spain, where the two visitors held a joint press conference. Upon reaching Havana, Ortega remained for a time as the guest of the Cuban leader.¹⁷

At home, on the war front, the Cuban role was evident as well. A lieutenant interviewed by reporters near San Fernando pointed out three armed Cuban advisers he said were accompanying FSLN troops in battle against the *contras*. "Western sources" (possibly the U.S. political attache, who has used this sobriquet) claimed that "2,000 Cuban advisers" were operating in Nicaragua, with an FSLN army of 60,000 and reserves of 50,000,¹⁸ both groups largely trained by Cuban advisers. U.S.

intelligence asserted that two Cuban generals were in Nicaragua in May working with both the FSLN and the Salvadoran FMLN.¹⁹ In December Lino Hernandez, head of the legal department of the independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights, commented that "young draftees receive both military training and political indoctrination in Marxism from Cuban military advisers."²⁰ In view of mounting U.S. hostility (and an upcoming congressional vote to terminate funding for the *contras*), the FSLN government announced in February 1985 that 100 Cuban military advisers would soon depart and, indeed, they did leave on May 2, 1985.²¹ This limited concession failed to impress Washington, however.

The head of the U.S. Southern Command, General Paul Gorman, summed up the Cuban and Soviet military role in July 1984, from the viewpoint of United States intelligence. (See Table A.) During the last three years more than 2,500 military advisers have labored to speed military preparedness and to establish an internal security system similar to that of Cuba; they have altered the arms balance in the region with more than 100 tanks, an equal number of armored attack vehicles for transporting personnel, 50 pieces of heavy artillery, numerous multiple rocket launchers, anti-aircraft and anti-tank cannon; pilots have been trained in high-performance jets; Cubans and others have installed radar and constructed air bases. Further, Gorman warned, the construction of the air base at Punta Huete would soon permit the supply of Soviet combat aircraft, though it remained unclear whether Cubans were actually working on the new air field.²²

The extensive Cuban/Soviet role arose as an issue in the electoral contest which began in Nicaragua on August 8, 1984. The campaign witnessed a noteworthy claim by Mauricio Diaz, candidate of the Popular Social Christian Party (PPSC), that if elected, his "primary concern would not be the survival of the state" but "the preservation of human life." The PPSC criticized "heavy Cuban influence" in Nicaragua and Diaz denounced the *commandantes* for wearing uniforms similar to Cuban military garb. He considered the ubiquitous block committees (CDS's) were imitations of similar organizations in Cuba and charged that the FSLN exercised excessive control through the mass organizations and the state security apparatus.²³ Virgilio Godoy, the candidate of the Independent Liberal Party (PLI), assured the public that if he were elected the war would end since the regime would no longer attract external hostility.

Evidence of a more sinister connection between certain leaders of the Nicaraguan regime and the Cuban state surfaced in Miami in July. A grand jury indicted eleven individuals, including Federico Vaughan, an official of the Nicaraguan Interior Ministry, on charges of smuggling cocaine to South Florida. The investigation resulted in hearings in the U.S. Senate on the "Cuban connection," and in administration assurances to the media that the CIA possessed evidence linking Tomas Borge and Humberto Ortega to the drug ring. U.S. officials claimed that the action was adopted in September 1981 when Raul Castro visited Humberto Ortega in Managua. According to a former Sandinist diplomat, Antonio

Farach, smugglers were allowed safe haven in Nicaragua and an airport assigned to the Interior Ministry was utilized for drug transfers.²⁴ The Miami investigation dovetails with recent revelations concerning Cuban involvement in the drug trade, using Colombian and Bolivian connections. In mid-October the U.S. Customs Service confirmed that it had been investigating, for the previous year, charges that fugitive Robert Vesco, then resident in Cuba, was helping the Nicaraguan government finance cocaine shipments to Belgium and Miami. On one occasion he evidently arranged a \$20 million line of credit. Customs believed that the operation was continuing.²⁵

In matters of war and peace, the Cuban role in Central America seemed to have moderated by late October. A short-term policy shift may have been adopted in light of the inevitability of the Reagan reelection, the lessons of Grenada, the deepening economic and international difficulties of the FSLN, and Fidel Castro's long-standing conviction that if Reagan were to take belligerent steps against Cuba, they would occur early in the second term. As the future of the rebellions in Central America became cloudy, Cuba seemed to be opting for a softening of its policies. Could Cuba's security be enhanced by "freezing the status quo"? By seeking, above all, international acceptance of the FSLN regime, Cuba could hope to consolidate the remaining new revolutionary government in the region without risking a broader war.²⁶ The desire was made all the more evident by Fidel Castro's unannounced attendance at Daniel Ortega's inauguration on January 9, 1985, the only significant head of state to attend. On no previous occasion during his quarter-century rule had Castro favored an elected official with his presence at that official's inauguration.

THE SOVIET ROLE

While interviews with Soviet and Nicaraguan trade officials have indicated that Soviet commerce with Nicaragua is on soft terms, Ambassador Schliapnikov has denied this. Outgoing U.S. Ambassador Anthony Quainton also maintained, in April 1984, that, for goods received, the Soviets demanded of Nicaragua downpayment in hard currency with payments commencing immediately; often, he asserted, this applied to arms transfers as well.²⁷ Trade officials have indicated, however, that financing is for ten to twelve years at between 2-1/2 and 5 percent with grace periods, on occasion, of five years. If this is the case, it should not be surprising that trade is growing rapidly. (See Table B.) In 1983 the USSR delivered 87,787 long tons of cargo to Nicaragua, an increase of 71,114 long tons (or 527 percent) over 1981. Soviet trade took on strategic importance in January 1984 when the USSR began delivery, to the Pacific ports of Nicaragua, of aviation fuel, kerosene and crude oil.²⁸ Nicaragua's failure to make payment for discounted Venezuelan and Mexican crude as well as Costa Rican electrical energy²⁹ prompted those countries to cut-off supplies, a deficit perhaps balanced by the Soviet Union. By March 1984 the Soviets were providing 25 percent of Nicaragua's oil needs,³⁰ and this would grow rapidly throughout the year. In contrast to the 1960 case of the U.S.-owned oil refineries in

Cuba, the Esso installation in Managua did not refuse to process Soviet crude which arrived by pipeline from Puerto Sandino.

In February 1984, just as Nicaraguans were learning of the death of Soviet chief Yuri Andropov, a program of scientific, technical and cultural cooperation between the USSR and Nicaragua was signed in Managua, the third such agreement since 1980. Ambassador Schliapnikov took the opportunity to remind those present that the pact illustrated Soviet solidarity, "especially at a time when the aggressions against [Nicaraguan] territory are sharpening."³¹ Commander Daniel Ortega received the news of Andropov's death during a ceremony inaugurating a new hospital in Rivas and requested of the "more than 50,000" in attendance a minute of silence. The Nicaraguan government declared three days of national mourning in memory of the Soviet leader.³² Ortega would head the Nicaraguan delegation to Andropov's funeral in Moscow. In his entourage would be Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto and Rene Nunez, the Secretary of the FSLN's National Directorate. Commander Bayardo Arce, coordinator of the FSLN Political Commission, sent his condolences to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR.³³ Daniel Ortega left for the February 14 funeral on the 11th and, while in Moscow, met with the new Soviet Communist Party Secretary, Konstantin Chernenko, "to discuss the Central American situation and world peace."³⁴

Ortega's visit to the USSR was followed one month later by that of another Nicaraguan delegation, headed by Commander Henry Ruiz, the Planning Minister. On this occasion, Julio Lopez, representing the Sandinist Assembly — the collegial body of party cadres — and Lorenzo Gutierrez, Vice Minister of Agriculture, went along.³⁵ The Planning Minister went to Moscow to sign agreements with Soviet leaders "regarding economic and cultural matters."³⁶ Ruiz, the only FSLN leader who speaks Russian and is familiar with the Soviet Union from his two years at Patrice Lumumba University, signed a series of agreements for increased Soviet aid.³⁷ Among these were contracts for the construction of an oil well (if oil should be located), the expansion of the textile industry and the development of a more advanced communications system.³⁸ Ruiz commented in Moscow, "By destroying our storage of oil in Puerto Sandino, the U.S. imperialists forced us to request help — now, we will reconstruct the same storage deposits and build a pipeline that will extend all the way from the port to Managua."³⁹ While the delegation was still at work on the agreements, a *contra* mine, originally imported by the government of El Salvador and deployed off Corinto with CIA assistance, struck a Soviet freighter, injuring five sailors. Nevertheless, the ship unloaded its cargo of 250,000 barrels of crude (30,000 tons) without difficulty.⁴⁰

Soviet aid was clearly expanding during 1984 but its exact dimensions were difficult to assess. Stephen Kinzer attempted to ascertain the details in March with limited success. "Western diplomats" (possibly the U.S. political attache) placed USSR economic aid in the \$100 to \$150 million range, speculating that the volume was at least 25 percent above that of 1983. Soviet oil shipments were believed, though probably

erroneously, to be intended for emergency needs only without long-range commitments. (Since the Soviets/Bulgarians hope to make Nicaragua energy independent by 1990, it can be assumed they intend to assist her fuel needs until that time.) The Embassy of the USSR would not comment, referring the press to Moscow, and the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry simply refused to respond. "Western diplomats" also reported that Soviet arms shipments were arriving every three months; these were said, in fact, to be the most important aspect of Soviet aid. Certainly it has been evident since 1982 that most of Nicaragua's military equipment is of USSR origin. As for Soviet civilians, they were to be found "sprinkled throughout the Nicaraguan bureaucracy," with a few on the faculty of the National University; ironically, one taught English. According to Kinzer, no Soviet military advisers were known to exist. The largest group of Russians was said to be located at Friendship Hospital in Chinandega, an emergency facility soon to be replaced with a permanent structure.⁴¹

By August it was apparent that Nicaraguan dependence on Soviet oil had expanded considerably as Mexican shipments of crude dropped off. Though Rafael Solis, secretary of the Council of State, referred to this as "part of an effort to diversify petroleum resources," it was clear that the Soviets had displaced Mexico as Nicaragua's principle oil supplier. About 60 percent of oil imports were now from the USSR, "according to two sources in Managua who asked to remain anonymous." Curiously, Daniel Ortega refused to acknowledge this, insisting that Mexico would still provide "between 70-80 percent of oil needs in 1984," a claim that found no support in Mexican government circles. In fact, "sources with access to the Nicaraguan figures" asserted that while the Soviets had provided 1,000,000 barrels during the first six months of the year, Mexican shipments had totalled just 484,000 barrels. Moreover, an official forecast showed the Soviets supplying "more than 65 percent of crude and petroleum products for all of 1984."⁴²

The reasons for the frequent official visits to Moscow in 1984 were evident then. A third FSLN delegation departed for Moscow in late March, headed by the Minister of Defense, Commander Humberto Ortega. The group also planned to visit the Democratic Republic of Korea.⁴³ Ortega was still in the USSR on April 12 when he met with his Soviet counterpart "on matters of mutual interest." Also on hand were high-ranking Soviet armed forces officials and the Nicaraguan ambassador to the Soviet Union.⁴⁴ On April 15 Ortega returned to Managua from Moscow and North Korea, proclaiming that the visits had been "fruitful and positive," having encountered "increased political, moral and material solidarity with Nicaragua."⁴⁵

Perhaps the most important aspect of Soviet-Nicaraguan collaboration for the welfare of the people of Nicaragua was the determination of the USSR to continue donating wheat in large quantities, as it had done since the initiation of the U.S. boycott in April 1981. Nicaragua required 58,000 tons during 1983, 37,000 of which (or roughly 64 percent) were donated by the USSR.⁴⁶ The arrival of such shipments during 1984 was

given considerable publicity by the presence at Corinto of a junta member, together with the Soviet ambassador, for the occasion. Orators never failed to contrast the self-sacrificing attitude of the Soviet government and people with that of the hostile and vindictive United States. The wheat was purchased in Canada by the USSR for transfer to Nicaragua, whose monthly requirement was roughly 5,000 tons. In May-June 1984 shipments totalling 10,000 tons arrived, greeted by Ambassador Schliapnikov and Dr. Sergio Ramirez.⁴⁷ With the arrival of 7,000 tons in early July the total of "food and wheat given by the Soviet Union" in this year came to 30,000 tons.⁴⁸ An additional 5,000 tons arrived in mid-July, greeted on this occasion by Schliapnikov and junta member Rafael Cordoba Rivas, who announced that yet another shipment would arrive shortly.⁴⁹ The fact that the USSR was expending hard currency to provide the bread that the Nicaraguans required reveals the determination of the Soviets to sustain the revolution economically.

Such principled solidarity has led the FSLN to hope for greater Soviet aid. A fourth high-level delegation left for Moscow in mid-June 1984, headed by Daniel Ortega and including Miguel D'Escoto, Henry Ruiz, and, once again, Julio Lopez, a representative of the FSLN's Department of International Relations. The main objective announced for the visit was to hold conversations with "leaders of the Communist Party and of the Soviet government."⁵⁰ The Nicaraguans were met at the airport by members of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and immediately announced that they would travel to Bulgaria and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) when their "working-visit" to the USSR was completed.⁵¹ On June 18 Ortega and his delegation met with Party General Secretary Chernenko at the Kremlin. Foreign Minister D'Escoto also met with his counterpart, Andrei Gromyko. The joint declaration that followed stated that "ties between Nicaragua and the Soviet Union are based on equality, mutual respect, non-interference and friendly cooperation." The two sides had "discussed bilateral affairs and the development of economic and trade relations."⁵² From his Moscow platform Ortega called on the U.S. "to assume a more responsible attitude toward dialogue."⁵³

Why did Ortega visit Moscow in June 1984? According to "Western diplomats" he went to request more economic aid. Little information was available, however, since the Soviet press remained silent and the Nicaraguans cancelled their news conference, without providing an explanation. The fact that the visits to the Eastern European states were announced only after arriving led to speculation that Ortega had obtained limited arms and aid, then continued his shopping excursion in quest of more. In April Humberto Ortega had spoken with Marshal Ustinov; in June Daniel Ortega would confer with Chernenko. The leader of the delegation told TASS he was grateful for "humanitarian aid, material and political support." Ortega also met with Geider A. Aliyev, a First Deputy Prime Minister, visited a collective farm, and, no doubt, briefed his hosts on his meeting with Secretary Shultz at Managua's Sandino Airport on June 1.⁵⁴

The annual spring and summer visits of the FSLN leadership to Moscow, plus fraternal relations between the Nicaraguan party and the Soviet Communist Party, indicated that very special ties were developing. Sandinist long-range hopes for their relationship with the USSR may have been revealed in a secret speech delivered by Bayardo Arce to the Partido Socialista de Nicaragua (PSN) in spring 1984. The PSN was the pro-Moscow Communist party until the FSLN victory, at which time, curiously enough, it claimed to have become "independent" of international ties.⁵⁵ It appears that a future marriage of convenience with the FSLN is contemplated. Stressing that the elections had the purpose of convincing world opinion that Nicaragua was pluralist, Arce, the head of the official commission overseeing the exercise, confided to his listeners that the elections would in no way jeopardize the Sandinist commitment to socialist revolution or "our strategic relations with the USSR."⁵⁶

THE EAST EUROPEAN ROLE

FSLN relations with the East European Communist Party states were enhanced, no doubt, by official hostility to Polish Solidarity.⁵⁷ Such a posture by the *commandantes* could only redound to their benefit with the regimes of Eastern Europe. In September 1983 the Junta (JGRN) signed an agreement with COMECON, obtaining the status of observer, and Nicaraguan representatives attended the 37th session of COMECON held in East Berlin.⁵⁸

The agreement was actualized when COMECON Vice Minister Angel Chauchev visited Managua with a delegation in February 1984. Chauchev promised that "COMECON will do everything possible to provide bilateral and multilateral assistance to Nicaragua," and he stated that "the mission came with the goal of organizing scientific, technical and cultural cooperation between COMECON and Nicaragua. To that end it carried out working sessions with representatives of various state institutions."⁵⁹ Nicaragua thus became one of "over 90" African, Asian and Latin American states to receive assistance from COMECON.⁶⁰ As late as March 9 the delegation was still meeting with government officials, including Minister of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform Jaime Wheelock, "to determine the needs of the Nicaraguan economy."⁶¹ In November Planning Minister Ruiz led a delegation to Havana to attend the 39th session of COMECON. Ruiz asserted that, through COMECON, Nicaragua had opened new markets for its exports: "We've found understanding about our needs for economic development and our desire to offer our people a better future."⁶² During his stay in Havana, Ruiz met with Prime Minister of the GDR Willi Stroph and the two reaffirmed the cooperation between their countries.

Quite apart from COMECON, concrete assistance from the Eastern European states continued in 1984. During February both Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria provided material aid. A Czech Vice Foreign Minister accompanied 16 tons of medical supplies and 36 pre-fabricated houses.⁶³ Bulgarian assistance in promoting the production of tobacco included part of the financing for the newly important crop. The

“National Tobacco Project” was launched in 1983 with the incorporation of a Bulgarian-Nicaraguan joint venture that has already realized seven million dollars in exports in its first year. Bulgaria assured purchase of the entire crop at international prices.⁶⁴

In addition, Nicaragua received donations of considerable importance from bloc states in July-August 1984. From Czechoslovakia came “defense material” worth 50,000 cordobas, while the Czech journalists’ union provided the Sandinist Children’s Association (ANS) with a mobile dental clinic.⁶⁵ The signing of an agreement that guarantees an ongoing exchange with Poland highlighted the September visit of Foreign Minister Stefan Gleszowski to Managua. Gleszowski, who was invited by Miguel D’Escoto, reported that the pact encompassed cooperation in pharmacology, medicine and agriculture, amounting to some \$500,000. The Polish minister invited the head of Nicaragua’s Fishing Institute, Alfredo Alaniz, to accompany Foreign Minister D’Escoto on a forthcoming trip to Poland to take advantage of Polish expertise in the fishing industry.⁶⁶ A donation from the GDR arrived on October 22, consisting of clothes, shoes, baby food, flashlights and household goods, designated for families in war zones. In addition, the GDR Committee in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People sent 100,000 primary textbooks for the Ministry of Education.⁶⁷ Frantisek Stafa, mayor of Prague, arrived in Nicaragua on November 4 to sign a collaboration agreement with the municipal government of Managua. Stafa said that the pact was aimed at helping the capital solve its most pressing problems, and he suggested that each of the socialist capitals should be doing its share for Managua.⁶⁸

Perhaps the most significant contribution arrived at the end of November when the Yugoslav people sent \$106 million worth of food. Ambassador Ivan Kojic took the occasion to state that “each one of these grains represents the days of peace that we wish for the Nicaraguan people.”⁶⁹ And in early December Laszlo Varga, secretary general of the Hungarian Pioneers Union, arrived, bringing donated toys and powdered milk, and announced that the youth of his country would construct two specialized centers, one for war orphans and another for handicapped children.⁷⁰

The nationalized Nicaraguan mining industry has benefitted from a combination of Eastern and Western European assistance. It was announced in 1984 that since 1979 Bulgaria, Sweden, and the Soviet Union have invested \$34 million in projects aimed at developing ore reserves and rehabilitating mines.⁷¹ Yet this was only one of the several areas of the economy in which East European assistance has been crucial.

Nicaraguan delegations visited various East European states, as noted, usually after stopping first in Moscow. Minister of Planning Ruiz was in the GDR in March 1984, then continued on to Prague, where he was greeted by Party General Secretary Gustav Husak, who pledged bilateral cooperation.⁷² A delegation composed of members of the Revolutionary Patriotic Front (FPR) — the “dialogue” of minor parties with the FSLN that existed prior to the launching of the electoral

campaign — toured Hungary in June, at the invitation of the Popular Front of Hungary, then moved on to the GDR.⁷³

By far the most important tour was headed by Daniel Ortega in June 1984. When he arrived in East Berlin Bayardo Arce had just left, *en route* to Western Europe to meet with “government officials and leaders of socialist and communist parties.”⁷⁴ Ortega came to the GDR on June 20 at the invitation of State Council President Erich Honecker, following a four-day working visit to the USSR.⁷⁵ Rather incautiously, Ortega joined Honecker in praising “the Warsaw Treaty countries’ consistent, constructive policies for peace.” Ortega then journeyed to Bulgaria on June 21. The Nicaraguans were in Poland by June 23, where Carlos Jose Guadamuz, Director of the radio station “La Voz de Nicaragua,” stated that “in all the countries visited the ... delegation has been met by a deep understanding of the Revolution, of the problems faced by Nicaragua, and was offered unconditional aid in repelling the attacks of the Reagan administration.” Guadamuz noted that “the objectives of the official visits ... have been accomplished.”⁷⁶ Next on their itinerary would be Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia.

In Budapest on June 25 Ortega met with Janos Kadar, then continued to Romania, invited by President Nicolae Ceausescu.⁷⁷ The Nicaraguans arrived in Prague on June 27 and were greeted by Prime Minister Lubomir Strougal. Ortega would also meet with President Gustav Husak.⁷⁸ In Prague the *commandante* told a news conference that “U.S.-Nicaraguan talks in Manzanillo, Mexico were due more to the Reagan administration’s reelection campaign than a peace process.”⁷⁹ As he prepared to return to Managua, Ortega asserted that his trip strengthened relations between Nicaragua and the Socialist bloc but he said nothing about the acquisition of MiGs or other weapons. Upon arriving in Managua on June 30 the Junta Coordinator claimed success for his visit to seven Communist party states without revealing details of any agreements that were signed.⁸⁰

As a result of these and past official tours, trade between Nicaragua and the Communist states would continue to expand. During 1983 exports to these states grew by 84.3 percent over the figure for 1982. Sales to Bulgaria, for example, increased 78.8 percent in 1983, and exports to the GDR and Czechoslovakia grew in roughly the same proportion. As this occurred, Nicaraguan sales to Latin America were declining by 10.4 percent during 1983, and Nicaraguan exports to the U.S. fell by 60.5 percent, from \$243 million in 1982 to \$147 million in 1983.⁸¹

The travels of the *commandantes* resumed in August 1984, taking them to the GDR again, as well as to Libya, Ethiopia, Hungary and Poland. Jaime Wheelock left for the GDR on August 23 with a high-level delegation “to exchange experience and information about different agricultural cooperative projects being carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture there.”⁸² He then journeyed to Yugoslavia. Upon his return Wheelock reported that while in the GDR he had signed “important agro-technical agreements,” having “received the solidarity of the Yugoslavian people and government.”⁸³

The travels of Commander Tomas Borge often seem more ceremonial and frequently include radical Arab states. On August 28, Borge departed for Libya, Ethiopia, and Hungary, "to take part in the celebrations of these countries' independence."⁸⁴ During Borge's appearance at Libya's 15th anniversary celebration Colonel Khadafy asserted that Libyans were "fighting, arming and backing" Nicaragua against the U.S. in a war "on the United States' own ground [sic]."⁸⁵ The eldest *commandante* next visited Bulgaria and Ethiopia to take part in events marking the anniversaries of, as the Nicaraguan official media put it, "the establishment of popular governments in those countries." On September 18, after an official five-day visit to Poland, Borge departed for the GDR.⁸⁶

In October Commander Luis Carrion visited the GDR, Bulgaria and Algeria. The invitation to East Berlin was extended by the official Unified Socialist Party. Carrion noted that his purpose in attending the 35th anniversary of the GDR's founding was to explain to government officials Daniel Ortega's remarks in the United Nations concerning a planned U.S. aggression and, in addition, to clarify the current status of the Contadora process. A third purpose was "possibly" to sign "new bilateral cooperation agreements" with the GDR. Carrion's visits to Bulgaria and Algeria were brief with nothing reported concerning results.⁸⁷ On November 18 Planning Minister Ruiz headed another delegation to the GDR to meet with the German counterparts of a recently created "joint commission to discuss bilateral trade issues and economic cooperation."⁸⁸

The trade and aid projects of Eastern European regimes with Nicaragua complemented those of the USSR and Cuba. Taken as a whole, relations with eleven Communist Party states were serving as effective substitutes for dwindling commerce with the U.S. and the West, including Latin America.

THE ROLE OF ASIAN COMMUNIST PARTY STATES

The People's Republic of China has maintained commercial relations with Nicaragua since 1979, purchasing a major part of the annual cotton crop — amounting to one-third in 1984. China has extended no aid, however.⁸⁹ Vietnam, on the other hand, has been a staunch supporter of the FSLN government. In response to a call on March 13 from the Sandinists for arms and military supplies, the Vietnamese offered military aid for the defense of Nicaragua against an expected U.S. invasion. On March 22 Vietnam reaffirmed its "indestructible combative solidarity for the defense and the national construction of [our] brother people of Nicaragua," and Hanoi promised to become "the number one defender" of the Nicaraguan regime.⁹⁰ On November 25 the Vietnamese Minister of Justice, Phan Hiem, arrived in Managua. He immediately pointed to "the similarity between the tasks of judicial systems in Vietnam and Nicaragua ... attempting to construct new legal frameworks in the face of threats from the United States."⁹¹

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has also contributed to

the Sandinist revolution, probably with arms. When Defense Minister Humberto Ortega arrived in Pyongyang in mid-April 1984, his delegation was greeted by "the General of the Korean Army" and other military and government authorities. News releases in Nicaragua said nothing of what was accomplished on this visit⁹² but, given the alleged North Korean connections of the Salvadoran and Honduran guerrilla faction known as the Central American Workers' Party, it may be assumed that such contacts were of more than passing interest. One result may have been the arrival, in the North Korean port of Hungnam in spring 1985, of a shipment of arms destined for Nicaragua. U.S. intelligence sources said the shipment consisted of weapons captured by Iran in its war with Iraq, including 9,000 AK-47s, ammunition, land mines and other small arms.⁹³

THE MiGs AND THE U.S. RESPONSE

The U.S. administration has been preoccupied since 1981 with the thought that the FSLN might obtain MiGs or supersonic military aircraft. Both civil and military leaders of Nicaragua often indicated during 1984 that a quest for such aircraft was still underway. Early in 1984, however, the *commandantes* refused to comment on rumors that Nicaragua was actively considering obtaining MiGs or French Mirages. On June 7, U.S. media reported that a "Latin American statesman" was told during 1983 that some ten MiGs had been delivered to Havana for shipment to Managua. When queried, the Cuban Minister of Foreign Relations denied holding such planes for Nicaragua.⁹⁴ On June 10, 1984, however, Daniel Ortega admitted the possibility of using modern combat planes, citing the need to counter the air support the U.S. had provided the *contras* in Honduras and Costa Rica. Ortega said that Nicaragua would buy Soviet MiGs or French fighters, for which pilots were receiving training.⁹⁵ On June 16 Daniel Ortega, in explaining his forthcoming trip to the USSR, stated that one purpose was "to discuss the possibility of purchasing Soviet MiG fighters in order to confront the air support given to *contras* by the U.S." He commented that "Nicaraguan pilots would soon finish their training and be ready to pilot modern jet fighters, independent of their manufacture." Ortega noted that inquiries concerning fighter aircraft were well underway and that "the only thing that has slowed us is the lack of qualified personnel to fly them." Once this problem was overcome, he observed, the way would be cleared to purchase the aircraft.⁹⁶

The Reagan administration responded publicly in late June. Despite the cut-off of *contra* funding which it had suffered in May, the U.S. government warned Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Soviet Union that Washington would not tolerate the deployment of advanced combat aircraft or Cuban troops in Nicaragua. There was no indication of what measures might be taken in such cases, but a ranking Pentagon official had stated in 1983 that air strikes against Nicaraguan airfields were "a valid option." There seemed to be conviction in Washington in June that the Sandinists would resort instead to deploying more modern anti-aircraft weapons.⁹⁷

However, on July 2, Daniel Ortega seemed to scotch such notions by announcing, upon his return from Eastern Europe, that "Soviet MiG combat aircraft should arrive in Nicaragua within the next months." Once again he attributed the delay to the training of pilots.⁹⁸ In mid-August Sergio Ramirez, a Junta member and vice presidential candidate for the FSLN, asserted while campaigning that Nicaragua would purchase either MiG or Mirage aircraft, "faced with the threat of a U.S. invasion."⁹⁹ Yet again in mid-August the U.S. declared that no "advanced performance aircraft" should be based in Nicaragua, defining these planes as "MiG or Mirage types and aircraft with air-to-ground and air-to-air missile capability." As if in reply, Nicaraguan Air Force chief Raul Venerio, when asked if Nicaragua needed MiGs, responded: "On a personal level, I hope they come." And once again there were reports, this time from Nicaraguan defectors, that MiGs were in Cuba awaiting delivery to Nicaragua following the November elections.¹⁰⁰

In Washington a "ranking official" pointed out that "It's up to the Soviet Union. If they want to aggravate relations, and want to use Nicaraguan territory to do it, they will have to calculate what the reaction would be." Such a confrontation could actually strengthen the President's hand in Central America, he noted, as "It would raise the issue of Nicaragua as a Soviet military base ... it would be portrayed in Washington ... as an opening wedge for [the] introduction of more sophisticated aircraft."¹⁰¹ In spite of this, on August 31, Commander of the Popular Sandinist Army, asserted that "Nicaragua will purchase modern combat planes in order to improve our defense capacity against U.S. aggressions."¹⁰²

By September the acquisition seemed assured as Defense Minister Humberto Ortega spoke of MiGs as a future component of the revolution's defenses and reporters were taken on a tour of the nearly completed airfield at Punta Huete, fourteen miles north of Managua. Humberto Ortega stated on September 15 that the planes should arrive early in 1985, the only delay having been caused by lack of an adequate base. Punta Huete, though incomplete (lacking a control tower, for instance), would nonetheless be operational throughout 1985, he explained. Several dozen pilots would be ready and the aircraft were to come from the USSR. Ortega denied that the Soviets were hesitant to provide MiG-21s which, he confirmed, Nicaragua had been actively seeking. The military chief conceded, however, that Moscow had yet to decide whether to supply the aircraft and Nicaragua might have to settle for something less powerful than the MiG-21. But, he said, it was "probable" that the fighter planes would come from the USSR. Their purpose would be defense against the *contras* and "pirates" — CIA speed boats — operating off the coasts.¹⁰³

There the matter stood when, on September 17, the Reagan administration announced that the President would discuss "the Soviet role in Central America" with Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on September 28, and Vice President Bush asserted on NBC-TV that delivery of advanced combat planes to Nicaragua would be "destabilizing."¹⁰⁴ In response on September 19, Humberto Ortega protested that

“Nicaragua has the right to an adequate air force in order to defend itself against the aggressions carried out against our national territory.” He reiterated his contention that the acquisition by Nicaragua of MiG-21 planes “in no way represents a threat to the United States.” Ortega now justified the acquisition in light of “the upcoming attacks planned by the Reagan administration,” noting that the U.S. had recently “resumed air attacks and carried out increased reconnaissance missions in violation of Nicaraguan airspace.”¹⁰⁵

At this point, the issue became broader in U.S. eyes, involving the whole range of weapons being transferred by Socialist bloc states to Nicaragua. On September 22 the administration revealed that both the President and Secretary Shultz would raise the issue of increased Soviet military shipments to Nicaragua in their forthcoming discussions with Gromyko. U.S. officials asserted that Soviet arms shipments had increased by 50 percent from June 1983 to June 1984.¹⁰⁶ In late September the Reagan administration reiterated its warning to Nicaragua not to acquire MiGs or other supersonic warplanes. If the FSLN ignored the warning, a Washington spokesperson said, “they will pay a heavy price.” By this time, reports had begun to circulate that the Sandinists might seek smaller Socialist bloc-manufactured trainer aircraft instead.¹⁰⁷

The issue reached a climax in October when the U.S. media picked up hints that one or more freighters were *en route* to Corinto possibly ferrying MiG-21s. Nicaraguan ambassador to Washington Carlos Tunnerman denounced the rumors, attributing them to attempts by the administration to prepare opinion for an escalation of U.S. aggressions. With the arrival of the ships and their unloading it became clear that the cargoes consisted of Soviet helicopters, specifically Mi-8s and Mi-24s, and other military equipment, rather than MiGs. By early November, the Sandinists had received twelve Mi-8s and six Mi-24 gunships, and it was clear that no supersonic aircraft were being delivered. It seemed the FSLN and the USSR had recognized the importance of the matter for Washington.¹⁰⁸ It should be noted, however, that in the context of the war against the *contras*, six Mi-24 armed helicopters are of considerably greater value (as are the Mi-8s as well) than several MiGs.¹⁰⁹

In addition to combat helicopters, the October-November shipments had included Soviet mine-sweeping patrol boats and ‘Fire Can,’ radar-controlled, anti-aircraft guns, thereby enhancing the sophistication of the FSLN armory.¹⁰ And it appeared that Nicaragua would receive more Mi-24s and Mi-8s in the future, according to a source close to Humberto Ortega, though it would not be getting combat planes “for the moment.” Rather than conventional air power, “we need antiguerrilla air power,” the source said.¹¹¹ In addition Czech-built L-39s, a two-seat trainer, convertible to a light bomber, donated by Libya’s Colonel Khadafy, were *en route*, according to U.S. intelligence.¹¹² (It appeared the MiG-21s had gone to Libya rather than to Nicaragua.) This led one U.S. official to theorize that the MiGs may have been “made visible” simply to prepare the way for later acceptance by the United States of L-39s as lesser evils. The fact that the Libyan L-39s were being shipped through the Bulgarian port of Burgos led analysts to conclude

that the Soviets had approved the transfer. By November 27, President Reagan was warning anew that six additional Soviet vessels carrying weapons were heading for Nicaragua, a situation that he characterized as "unacceptable."¹¹³

Were the Soviets "testing" the U.S. response in late 1984? Were they "testing" President's Reagan's resolve in a second term? Perhaps the answer is yes in both cases. The size of the shipments, their frequency, the escalation in technological sophistication of the equipment, and the timing all suggest as much. More than this, the effort demonstrated resolve on the part of the USSR to sustain the Sandinist revolution against U.S. efforts to the contrary. As in March 1982, when the FSLN regime required long-range economic commitments to sustain it, in November 1984 the revolutionaries required, both at home and abroad, evident military supply commitments from Soviet bloc states and Libya, and it received such assurances. Washington could not fail to perceive the message; it remained only to see how the United States would react in the future.

The Sandinists could not acknowledge internationally that they had indeed sought MiGs, since that would enhance U.S. credibility. It was not surprising therefore, that the official media (and foreign solidarity groups) should treat the "MiG affair" as a figment of the Reagan administration's imagination. During late November the view of the official Nicaraguan press was that the crisis had simply been concocted in Washington. No mention was made of previously stated plans to acquire MiGs or of the frequent approaches to the USSR which the regime had made during the past three years. And, of course, nothing was said of the ongoing construction of the Punta Huete airbase, with its lengthy runway.¹¹⁴ It would be hard to imagine the JGRN undertaking such a costly and ambitious task unless supersonic aircraft had been contemplated.

The Sandinists reacted to the vehement U.S. response in the "MiGs affair" by declaring to the world that a U.S. invasion was imminent and by fully mobilizing their defense forces in preparation for an attack, one that had still not materialized by June 1985. The FSLN response occurred in an atmosphere in which confidential talks with the U.S. at Manzanillo, Mexico, had seemingly broken down over the issue of Soviet-Cuban advisers. Sources close to the talks said that Nicaragua had refused to accept a U.S. proposal for all Soviet and Cuban advisers to depart during the next nine months in exchange for a United States promise to "consider" a pull out of its advisers from Central America.¹¹⁵ The Manzanillo talks resumed in December but with no apparent results, and the U.S. broke them off once again, in February 1985, in order to pressure the Sandinists.

Six months earlier Daniel Ortega had told a delegation of U.S. members of Congress that if aid to the *contras* were ended, the government would "seal the country's borders to prevent arms shipments to Salvadoran rebels" and prevent the establishment of Cuban/Soviet bases in Nicaragua.¹¹⁶ It appeared that the administration was not yet ready to accept that position by December 1984. The problem, as in the Contadora case, may have been verifiability. Moreover, for the Reagan

administration it was a deep-seated unwillingness to accept the survival of Sandinist ideology.

A MARXIST-LENINIST REGIME?

During 1984 the ideology of the FSLN leadership, while clearly socialist, remained diffuse and neither sufficiently dogmatic nor divergent to provoke serious rifts among the *commandantes*. The Marxist-Leninist line was espoused most clearly by Bayardo Arce, director of the Sandinist political commission overseeing the electoral process, in a speech to the PSN in spring 1984. Arce attended the meeting, he said, to provide "the perspective that we Communists must have" on the elections. "What a revolution needs," asserted the Sandinist, "is the executive expediency which is the essence of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and from the point of view the elections are a hindrance." But, he explained, "from the point of view of the reality we have, the elections are a tool of the revolution and a way of advancing in the building of socialism." Arce continued,

Imperialism asks three things of us: that we should forsake revolutionary internationalism ... cut our strategic ties with the Soviet Union, and ... be democratic. Now, the formal aspects of what they call democracy, we can handle, and the elections are that. But we could not stop being internationalists or cut our strategic links with the USSR and remain revolutionary. That is out of the question.¹¹⁷

The *commandante* hinted that after the elections "the time will have come to think about a single party." And he asked, "Why should we Communists go on wearing different shirts, if anyhow socialism is being built ... through the strategy of the Sandinist Front?"¹¹⁸

Despite these and other suggestive assertions by members of the FSLN leadership, spokespersons for the participating opposition parties discounted the likelihood of the FSLN seizing upon its November 4 electoral victory (roughly 62 percent of the vote, and 60 of 96 seats in the new Assembly) to create an avowedly Marxist-Leninist state. Opinion differed somewhat among the parties on related matters, however. When asked by a Costa Rican periodical whether the FSLN would impose a Marxist-Leninist constitution, Enrique Sotelo Borgen of the PCD declared that, although the FSLN had a plan of government quite similar to that of Cuba, he felt confident that the Sandinists would not attempt to establish a communist regime. But, he cautiously added, "I don't know what might occur along the way."¹¹⁹ The PCN vice presidential candidate, Manuel Perez Estrada, when asked the same question, replied: "I believe that the FSLN is not a communist party, and, as a result, I discount the possibility that they may establish a system similar to that of Cuba." The FSLN is a front containing many currents, he contended, "although [the leadership] may desire it, they won't be able to achieve it."¹²⁰ PCD presidential candidate Domingo Sanchez Salgado concurred with his former running mate. PLI deputy-elect Juan Manuel

Gutierrez agreed that the FSLN would not obtain a Marxist-Leninist constitution. "We believe that many circumstances may brake this intent and soften positions," he commented. Humberto Guzman of the PPSC also rejected the notion that a Marxist-Leninist constitution might come out of the elected assembly. "In fact," he asserted, "the agreements arrived at in the dialogue of political parties [called in October by the FSLN in response to the urgings of the participating opposition] have established the basis for the drawing up of a Magna Carta of a democratic character."¹²¹

Guzman and the opposition representatives quoted here could not have known that the "dialogue" would be suspended on November 30, after the "illegal" Social Christian Party (PSC), the Nicaraguan Christian Democrats, presented a resolution on November 27 so dividing the gathering that fruitful discussion could no longer be sustained. The PSC proposal was meant as an alternative to a document favored by the FSLN and produced by a commission with a communist majority (composed of the PSN, the Nicaraguan Communist Party (PCN), and the PSC). The alternative resolution would have condemned "the two imperialisms," and advocated an independent and pacifist foreign policy, an independent military, and elections in 1985 and 1986. The proposal to abandon the dialogue was presented by the PSN.¹²² Clearly the opposition, legal and "illegal," did not view the elected Assembly, to be seated on January 10, 1985, as a sufficient instrument for the preservation of democracy.

What is so striking about the Nicaraguan case, as so often occurs in the Caribbean context, is the disparity between perceptions *in situ* held by nationals and those entertained in Washington. As the views noted above demonstrate, members of the opposition elected to the new Assembly hold opinions concerning political reality in their country that are markedly different from those defended by the Reagan administration. Then, who is correct? At the risk of appearing to be a "Mugwump," the author is forced to conclude that both camps have their truth but also their error. The FSLN regime does desire to establish a statist, socialist system, and a "command economy," and it does believe in and act upon its professed commitment to "proletarian internationalism." As has been seen it has cultivated a quite special relationship with the Soviet bloc and other sympathetic states and movements including Libya, Ethiopia, Iran, Algeria, and the PLO. On the other hand, it does still constitute a "front" — an amalgam of differing "socialist" points of view and ideological tendencies. It is probably the case that the abandonment of Western ties and compromises, advocated by no one inside the movement, at this point, would provoke the rupture in the FSLN, and commensurate weakening of the regime, that the leadership seeks to avoid. Such a rupture would provide the possible opportunity for Leninist hardliners to seize power; historical precedents come readily to mind.¹²³

Ironically, ideology aside, it is military and economic pressure from Washington that is forcing the FSLN to violate its own professed plan of "diverse dependency" by developing escalating trade and aid links with

the USSR and its allies and dependencies. The momentum in the direction of increased Soviet influence, so evident throughout 1984, could only have proceeded at this pace in the context of the U.S.-supported *contra* war and in the absence of a U.S. commitment to co-opt the Nicaraguan revolution. The FSLN regime turned to Scandinavia, Canada, Spain, France, Italy and other EEC states for economic assistance and obtained it, but in quantities insufficient for Nicaraguan needs.¹²⁴ The West Germans had halted aid programs and the British response was frigid. It has proven to be the case that by comparison with the assistance proffered by the socialist states, Western aid and trade has been insufficient or parsimonious. Moreover, clearly, on the part of some *commandantes* (Arce, Borge, and Ruiz, for example), there is also a preference for Soviet bloc aid.¹²⁵

By May 1, 1985, the Reagan administration had speeded the decline in U.S. trade with Nicaragua, and neglected the interests of the 66 U.S. firms still present there by ordering an economic boycott. Further, Congress began to reconsider, in light of Ortega's April-May tour of socialist states, begun just two days after his victory in Congress, the decision to terminate aid to the *contras*. As a result, it may have been too late to reverse the policies in both Washington and Managua that were escalating the chances for more serious conflict.

Table A
Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador: Military Matériel (Mid-1984)

	Nicaragua	Honduras	El Salvador
Tanks	73	16	12
Armored Cars & Personnel Carriers	120	12	48
Field Artillery	90	26	42
Mortars	60-70	30	72
Anti-Aircraft Artillery	48	0	0
Rocket Launchers	12	0	1
Military Ships	15	9	6
Combat Airplanes	12	30	41
Transport Airplanes	7	14	14
Gun-mounted Helicopters	8-10	17	9
Armed Forces Personnel	48,000*	17,200	39,000

*But, currently, more than 80,000 Nicaraguans are in arms, including reserves, guarding installations and fighting the *contras*.

Sources: *CAR*, Nov. 23, 1984; *NACLA's Report on the Americas*, May-June 1984; *NYT*, Nov. 18, 1984; the International Institute for Strategic Studies; and U.S. intelligence sources.

Table B
Nicaraguan Foreign Trade by Economic Regions: First Semester 1983-1984

		Exports		Imports	
		1983	1984	1983	1984
Total General		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
I.	Developing Countries	20.0	16.3	49.0	31.7
1.	Central American Common Market	5.0	8.1	18.0	9.6
2.	Latin America (incl. Mexico)	3.0	2.1	26.0	18.6
3.	Others	12.0	6.1	5.0	3.5
	Caribbean	1.0	0.4	3.0	1.7
	Asia and Middle East	11.0	5.7	2.0	1.7
	Europe	—	—	—	0.1
II	Developed Capitalist Countries	70.0	77.9	39.0	40.2
1.	U.S.	17.0	7.9	18.0	15.6
2.	European Common Market	30.0	28.6	11.0	9.8
3.	Others (especially Japan)	23.0	41.4	10.0	14.8
III.	CMEA (Socialist bloc)	10.0	5.8	12.0	28.1
1.	Eastern Europe	9.0	4.2	9.0	23.4
2.	Others (Cuba)	1.0	1.6	3.0	4.7

Sources: Office of the President of Nicaragua; *Envío* (CAHI), 4:47 (May 1985), p. 13a.

Author's Note

*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the CLAH Caribe session, American Historical Association meeting, December 28, 1984. The author is grateful for criticism by Kenneth J. Grieb and the anonymous readers for the *Quarterly*. The quote is from *Times of the Americas* (Washington), December 19, 1984. (Cited hereafter as *TA*).

Footnotes

1. United States. Department of State, *El Salvador: Revolution or Reform?*, Current Policy No. 546, U.S. Dept. of State, Bureau of Public Affairs (February 1984), p. 4, table 5; Theodore Schwab and Harold Sims, "Relations with the Communist States," in *Nicaragua After Five Years*, ed. by Thomas W. Walker, ch. 22.
2. *This Week: Central America and Panama* (Guatemala City), April 16, 1984. (Cited hereafter as *TW:CAP*.)
3. The one billion dollars claim was made on radio station "La Voz de Nicaragua" (Managua), March 29, 1984. (Cited hereafter as *LVN*.) But on May 4, Daniel Ortega told the Council of State that damage amounted to 2,044 million cordobas (\$204.4 million at the official rate of exchange); see *Central America Report* (Guatemala City), August 24, 1984. (Cited hereafter as *CAR*.) In November Daniel Ortega used the figure of \$350 million in a speech at the U.N.
4. *TA*, August 29, 1984.
5. *LVN*, April 1, 1984.
6. *Barricada Internacional* (Managua), October 11, 1984. (Cited hereafter as *BI*.)
7. *Ibid.*, September 24, 1984.
8. *La Nacion Internacional* (San Jose, Costa Rica), October 4-10, 1984, p. 17. (Cited hereafter as *LNI*.)
9. Telephone interview with Steve McFarland, Nicaragua Desk, Department of State, October 17, 1984.
10. *BI*, January 16, 1984.
11. *LVN*, February 12, 1984.
12. *BI*, February 20, 1984.
13. *TW:CAP*, March 19, 1984.
14. *LVN*, September 26, 1984.
15. *TW:CAP*, December 3, 1984.
16. *BI*, August 6, 1984.
17. *LVN*, February 15-16, 1984.
18. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 20, 1984. (Cited hereafter as *PPG*.)
19. *Washington Post*, May 14, 1984. (Cited hereafter as *WP*.)
20. *PPG*, December 10, 1984.
21. *BI*, May 9, 1985.
22. *LNI*, July 19-25, 1984. Rumors that Cubans were working on the airfield were disputed by Sandinist officials. *Los Angeles Times*, August 18, 1984. (Cited hereafter as *LAT*.)
23. *BI*, September 3, 1984, p. 5.
24. *New York Times*, August 3, 1984 (Cited hereafter as *NYT*); *Miami Herald*, August 8 and 31, 1984 (Cited hereafter as *MH*); and *WP*, August 9, 1984.
25. *Wall Street Journal*, October 15, 1984. (Cited hereafter as *WSJ*.) On the Cuban connection with Colombian drug smugglers, see, for example, *LAT*, March 4, 1982.
26. *Knight-News-Tribune*, October 28, 1984.
27. Interviews with Ambassador Anthony Quainton, April 9-10, 1984.
28. Mary Evan, "Canal Treaties Debate Not an Issue," *TA*, December 19, 1984, p. 3; and, *PPG*, January 27, 1984.
29. *LNI*, August 23-29, 1984.
30. *NYT*, March 28, 1984.

31. *BI*, February 20, 1984.
32. *LVN*, February 10, 1984.
33. *BI*, February 20, 1984.
34. *LVN*, February 14, 1984.
35. *Ibid.*, March 19, 1984.
36. *Ibid.*, March 21, 1984.
37. *Barricada* (Managua), March 24, 1984; and, *NYT*, March 28, 1984.
38. *LVN*, March 24, 1984.
39. *Ibid.*, March 25, 1984.
40. *Ibid.*, March 21, 1984; and, National Public Radio, March 21-22, 1984.
41. *NYT*, March 28, 1984.
42. *WP*, August 16, 1984; *MH*, August 19, 1984. The U.S. had urged Mexico and Venezuela to reduce or halt oil shipments (that is, in part, what the clumsy mining of Nicaraguan ports in early 1984 was all about). But it took a nearly \$1 billion U.S. cumulative oil debt, with no prospect of repayment in the near future, to persuade Mexico to reconsider, as Venezuela had done months earlier. See *Envio* (CAHI), 4:47 (May 1985), p. 11a.
43. *LVN*, March 29-30, 1984.
44. Radio Havana Cuba, April 12, 1984.
45. *Ibid.*, April 15, 1984.
46. *CAR*, August 31, 1984.
47. *LVN*, June 4, 1984.
48. *Ibid.*, July 6, 1984.
49. *LNI*, July 12-18, 1984.
50. *LVN*, June 15, 1984.
51. *Ibid.*, June 17, 1984.
52. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1984.
53. *Ibid.*, June 19, 1984.
54. *NYT*, June 20, 1984.
55. Its protestations of "independence" place it in an analogous position to that of the Cuban PSP (Moscow line) in 1959-60. From there the Party was integrated into Castro's political organization, after he had purged his following of anti-Communists. The Nicaraguan PSN would like to provide the FSLN with an ideology, an ingredient that the latter allegedly lacks at present. (Interview with Dr. Jose Luis Medina, PSN candidate for the National Assembly, October 24, 1984.) International appearances may also have been a factor. No merging with the FSLN will be possible as long as it could increase the likelihood of a damaging U.S. response.
56. *TW:CAP*, October 22, 1984. For revealing details of the ideological content of the speech, see *WP*, August 8, and October 12, 1984.
57. A Solidarity spokesperson, Robert Czarkowski, had entered Nicaragua in June 1982. Upon arrival he was imprisoned in the clandestine cells of "El Chipote" and "Palo Alto Verde," held for six months (until December 1982), then expelled as "a spy of Polish Solidarity." See his *De Polonia a Nicaragua* (San Jose, Costa Rica, 1984); *LNI*, July 5-11, 1984.
58. Nicaraguan exports to COMECON states have grown by spurts since 1981, when they increased 133.3 percent over the previous year. During 1982 exports to COMECON increased only 7.1 percent but in 1983 they expanded by 45 percent (this despite the decline of Nicaragua's total exports to below the level of 1981). *CAR*, July 6, 1984; and, *BI*, February 20, 1984.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*
61. *LVN*, March 9, 1984.
62. *BI*, November 8, 1984.

63. *Ibid.*, February 2, 1984.
64. *Ibid.*, February 20, 1984.
65. *CAR*, August 31, 1984.
66. *BI*, October 1, 1984.
67. *LVN*, October 23, 1984.
68. *BI*, November 8, 1984.
69. *Ibid.*, December 6, 1984.
70. *Ibid.*, December 20, 1984.
71. *Ibid.*, November 22, 1984.
72. *LVN*, October 28 and 30, 1984.
73. *Ibid.*, June 11, 1984.
74. *Ibid.*, June 20, 1984.
75. *Ibid.*; and, *NYT*, June 22, 1984.
76. *LVN*, June 21, 23 and 24, 1984; and *MH*, June 24, 1984.
77. *LVN*, June 25 and 26, 1984.
78. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1984.
79. *TW:CAP*, July 2, 1984.
80. *LVN*, July 1, 1984.
81. *LNI*, July 5-11, 1984.
82. *LVN*, August 24, 1984.
83. *Ibid.*, September 4, 1984.
84. *Ibid.*, August 28, 1984.
85. *Pittsburgh Press*, September 2, 1984; and, *BI*, September 10, 1984.
86. *Ibid.*, and, *LVN*, September 18, 1984.
87. *Barricada*, October 11, 1984; and, *LVN*, October 13 and 15, 1984.
88. *BI*, November 29, 1984.
89. Interviews with Ambassador Anthony Quainton, March 9-10, 1984.
90. *LNI*, March 29, 1984. p. 2.
91. *LVN*, April 2, 1984.
92. *BI*, December 6, 1984.
93. Arrangements may have been finalized during the January 1985 visit of the Iranian Prime Minister to Nicaragua. See *WP*, February 28, 1985; and, *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), May 4, 1985.
94. *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), Jun 7, 1984; and, *MH*, June 11, 1984.
95. *LVN*, June 10, 1984.
96. All of these quotes were found in *Ibid.*, June 16, 1984; and, *LNI*, June 21-27, 1984, p. 5.
97. *TW:CAP*, July 2, 1984.
98. *LNI*, July 5-11, 1984.
99. *LVN*, August 19, 1984.
100. *LAT*, August 18, 1984; and, *NYT*, August 18, 1984.
101. *LAT*, August 18, 1984.
102. *LVN*, August 31, 1984.
103. *WP*, September 16, 1984.
104. *Ibid.*; and, *MH*, September 17, 1984.
105. *LVN*, September 19, 1984.
106. *MH*, September 22, 1984.
107. *TW:CAP*, October 1, 1984. By late September the MiGs question had become an issue in the elections. At a rally on September 23, the PPSC's presidential candidate, Mauricio Diaz, declared his opposition to the purchase of MiGs or similar aircraft: "Why MiG airplanes?" asked Diaz, "It would be better to buy tractors and toys for our children." *BI*, October 1, 1984.

108. LVN, October 25, 1984; PPG, October 26 and November 7, 1984; CBS-TV News, November 6, 1984; NYT, November 8, 9 and 10, 1984; TW:CAP, November 12, 1984, p. 347; CAR, November 16, 1984; and, WP, November 18, 1984.
109. For a military assessment of the comparative merits and utility of these potent weapons, see John F. Guilmartin's commentary in WSJ, March 11, 1985.
110. WP, November 18, 1984.
111. *Ibid.*
112. *Ibid.*, November 25, 1984.
113. LAT, November 16, 1984; Washington Times, November 27, 1984; TW:CAP, December 3, 1984; and, BI, December 6, 1984.
114. *Ibid.*, November 29 and December 6, 1984.
115. CAR, November 16, 1984.
116. *Unitarian Universalist World* (Boston), October 16, 1984.
117. Reported by Venezuelan journalist and writer Carlos Rangel, who reviewed a tape of the speech. (The translation is by Rangel.) WSJ, October 12, 1984. The U.S. Department of State's Office of Public Diplomacy has not published the speech in English translation.
118. *Ibid.*
119. *Rumbo Centroamericano* (San Jose, Costa Rica), November 29-December 5, 1984. (The successor to LNI.)
120. *Ibid.*
121. *Ibid.*
122. See two versions of these events, in BI, December 6, 1984, and Central American Historical Institute, *Update* (Georgetown University), December 12, 1984.
123. Marxists or Communists have sometimes used the "broad front" coalition to build a power base while laying the groundwork for forcing out moderates and pluralists by an internal *coup*. Such was the case in Cuba in 1959-60, as Castro's "ultras" consolidated their position at the expense of "humanist" colleagues.
124. For example, during 1984 Nicaragua became the largest recipient of Swedish economic assistance. But the Europeans could not equal the commitment of COM-ECON and the Soviets and Cubans.
125. It is difficult to say whether this camp includes the Ortega brothers. Their many pilgrimages to bloc states could simply be required by collective decisions of the nine-man Sandinista Directorate.