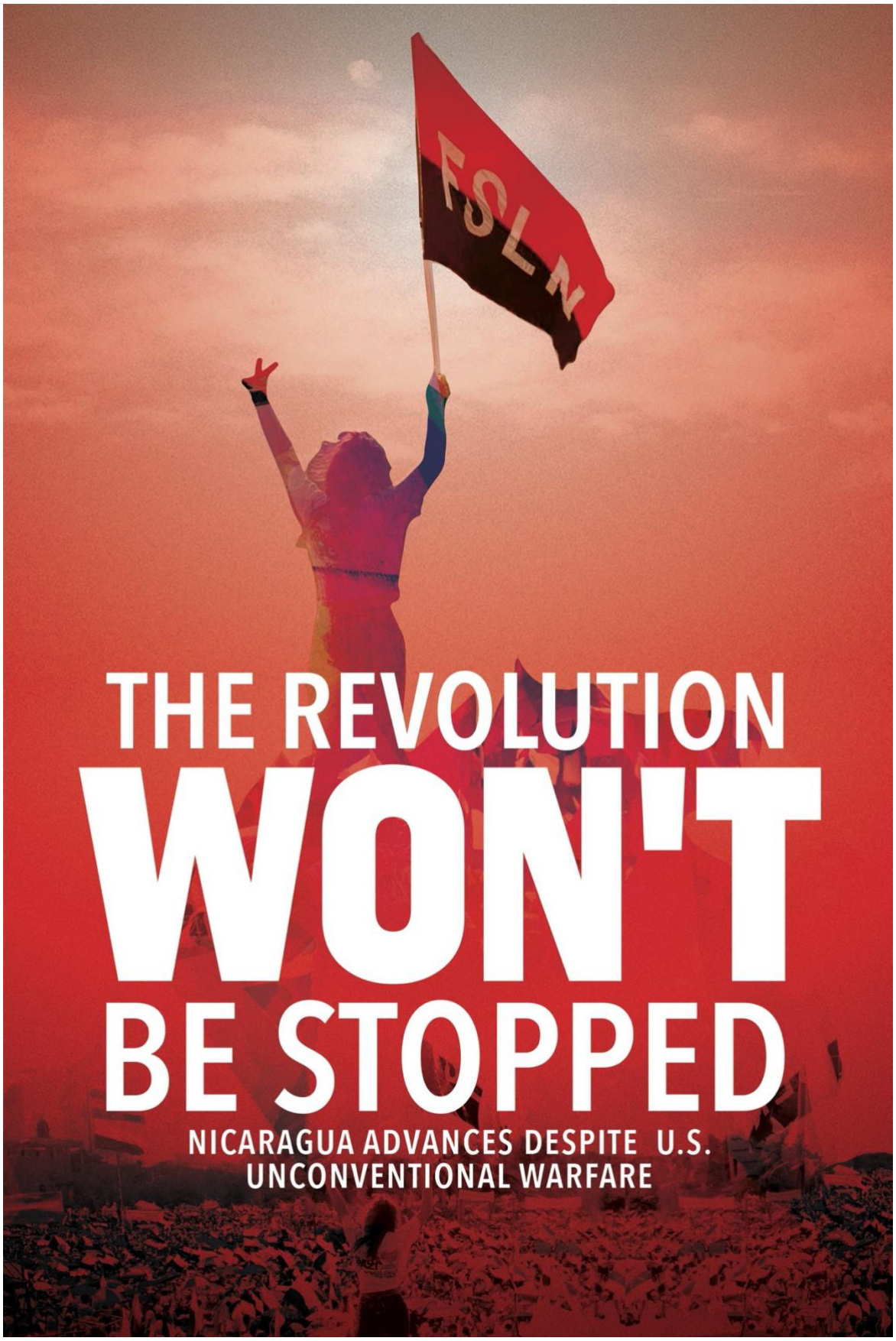
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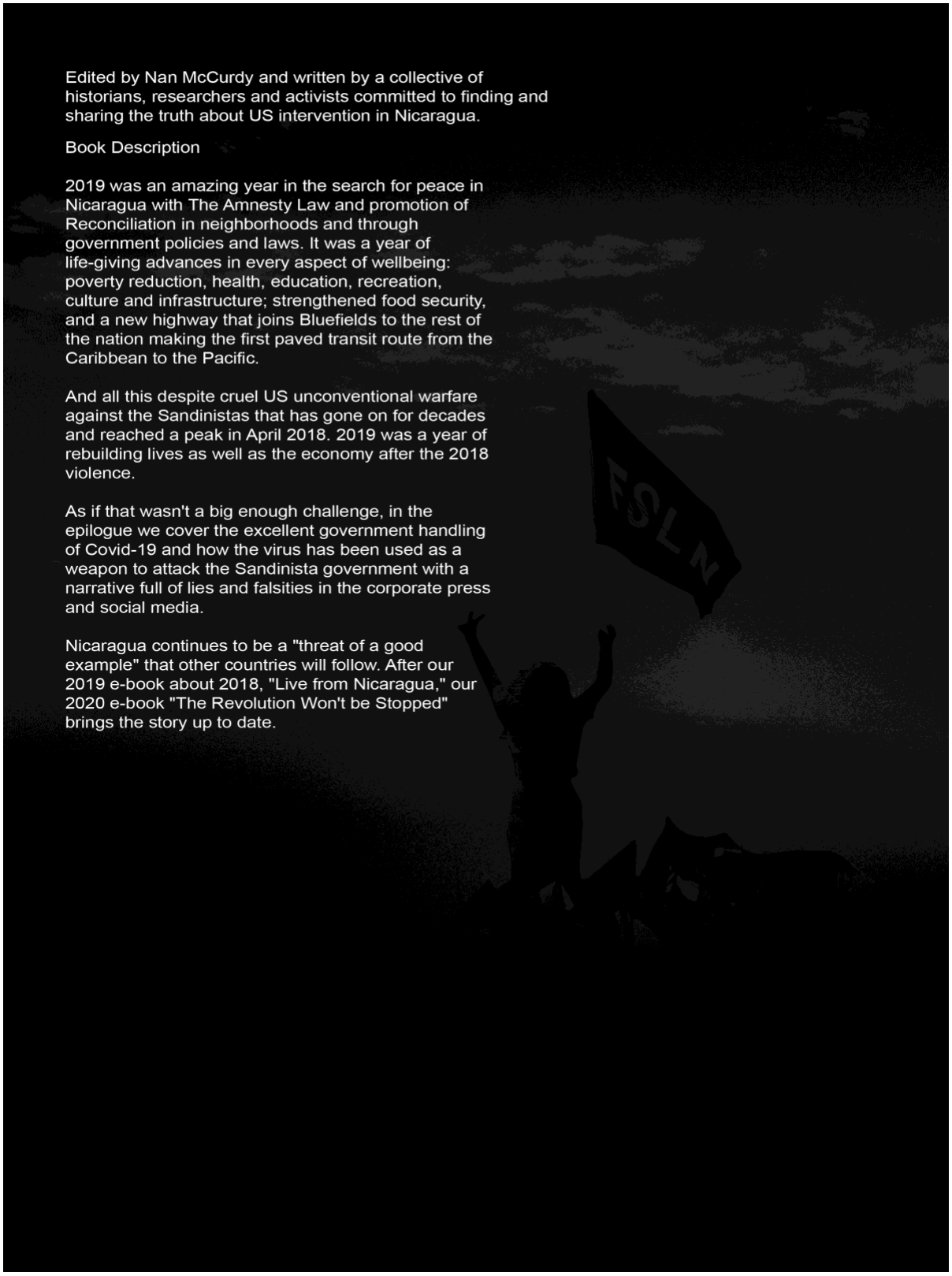
THE REVOLUTION
WON'T
BE STOPPED
NICARAGUA ADVANCES DESPITE U.S.
UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE



Cover by Fredder Pineda

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Introduction

Magda Lanuza

¨The truth is like a lion, you don't have to defend it. Let her get lost, she'll defend herself." St. Augustine of Hippo, philosopher and doctor of the 4th century Catholic Church.

Nicaragua in 2018 was blasted on the front pages of international news and presented as a country immersed in total chaos and violence. This happened even though prestigious magazines and world indicators showed this nation as a unique country, with better citizen safety indexes, with alternative tourism opportunities, a healthy growing economy, in addition to being one of the top countries in the world in terms of gender equality. The reality is that two years later, this country and her people have continued to advance, making structural changes that place it as an example for other countries that seek to develop with equity, sustainability and social justice.

However, there is a before and after April 2018. This new book, **The Revolution Won't Be Stop: Nicaragua Advances Despite US Unconventional Warfare**, offers a different perspective on recent history after the attempted coup. It also gives continuity to the book, **Live from Nicaragua: Uprising or Coup?** presented in July 2019 as a tribute to the 40th anniversary of the Sandinista Popular Revolution.

The chapters of this new book describe and analyze the advances of the Sandinista government especially in 2019. The content describes concrete social investment in the sectors of education, health, infrastructure, environment, economy, tourism, gender equality, great advances in the Caribbean Coast, and the process of reconciliation. All this while the country faces an unconventional war financed by the United States that tries to paralyze the advances of the revolution and end Sandinismo in Nicaragua. The Afterword focuses on the strategy of the Nicaraguan authorities to confront the COVID-19 pandemic in the first semester of 2020. The writers are researchers, historians, analysts and journalists who know the situation well and live the events that make history in this country every day.

In 2019, the government of National Reconciliation and Unity took a bold step towards achieving peace and stability with the approval in June of an Amnesty Law which was preceded by the National Dialogue in March and April 2019. The government complied with many of the opposition's requests and more, but the opposition did not agree to ask the United States to end the sanctions that they themselves had requested since 2015. The law provided the legal guidelines to release from prison all persons directly involved in violent and criminal acts during the 2018 coup attempt. All investigations were also stopped and their criminal records were cleared. These people have continued to enjoy the freedoms, public safety and development of the country that grows stronger every day.

The word reconciliation has a very strong meaning for Nicaragua. In the memoirs written by the Jesuit and Martyr, Ignacio Ellacuría, he describes Nicaragua's role in the Esquipulas II process in January 1988, when Central America was at war. In those years, former President Arias of Costa Rica appeared as the leader of the efforts to bring peace to the region, but for Ellacuría, this was not as it was portrayed. According to Ellacuría, the country that made the most effort to advance in the search for peace was Nicaragua, in spite of the Reagan administration's stubborn determination to reaffirm its warmongering spirit in the region, which caused the other presidents to contribute little to reconciliation. History has shown the Sandinistas' vocation for peace, even in such adverse circumstances as the war of aggression in the 1980s.

With the Amnesty Law, another great historical event was achieved. For many Sandinistas it was difficult to accept that those who had been proven to have committed atrocious criminal acts such as murder, torture, the destruction of private and public property, extortion and even the burning of 55 ambulances that are so necessary today to guarantee the health of the people, would go free. But in spite of everything, once again, the people understood that true reconciliation and forgiveness were needed. These are revolutionary practices necessary to move forward as a people and a nation. It should be recognized that it has always been the Sandinistas who have paid the highest price for peace, sometimes with their own lives.

Memories of coups d'états in the Latin American region are still fresh. However, for the new generations, what happened in Nicaragua for three months of 2018 (April 18 to July 17) was a rehearsal of a new edition of violent overthrow of elected authorities, in the style of the Arab spring. One of the methods used by the US in unconventional wars is psychological warfare through false news. In Nicaragua's recent history, the media and social networks have been at the service of a large media machine. The narrative, focused on the outside world, has the participation of the international media that present supposed facts without any qualms, decency or objectivity and without any basis of truth. First, the opposition media pass the rumors of the social networks and then, the corporate media repeat and multiply the same headlines with false stories, but using the same words: regime, repressors, human rights violations and peaceful protesters. As the saying goes, a lie told 100 times becomes the truth. However, in Nicaragua, there are very few people left who swallow the lies, the deceptions and media manipulation orchestrated for the outside.

This unconventional war using lies has continued very strongly with the involvement of opposition leaders and activists, journalists, bloggers and NGO 'owners', almost all paid from abroad, mainly from the US. Lies continue to travel by copying and pasting, following pre-dictated sketches to always reach the same sources and repeat the same message. The false news has been denied again and again, both by the victims and by serious researchers and think tanks. This country still lives in those two realities, the one they show to the outside and the one that is lived internally since August 2018. The country has not forgotten, but the commitment of the Sandinistas to reconciliation and peace remains, and they work every day to recover from the economic crisis caused by the attempted coup d'état.

The dirty media campaign against Nicaragua hides the fact that over the past 14 years, the Sandinista government has developed many emblematic social programs to eliminate poverty and redistribute wealth. In most parts of the world the gap between the few rich and the large impoverished majority is further strengthened by neoliberalism. But in Nicaragua, since the arrival of the Sandinistas, the gap has been closing. Between 2007 and 2016 poverty was reduced from 48.3% to 24.9%. Extreme poverty fell by more than half from 17.2% in 2007 to 6.9% in 2016. In part, the Government has achieved this after strongly promoting a popular economy that involves the redistribution and sustainability of resources, self-management of wealth, solidarity work and the search for social justice. This has made possible further progress in the diversification of economic sectors and the restoration of basic rights.

This legacy began with Sandino between 1927 and 1934 with the promotion of cooperatives. From there, the public policies promoted by the Sandinista Government were implemented with programs and direct investments to the small and medium economic sector. Part of the 5.2% economic growth that the country had been experiencing until April 2018 - one of the highest in the region - is based on the popular economy, which has meant the possibility of direct participation of micro, small and medium production. By the end of 2019 the country was able to cover more than 85% of its own food demand. This model becomes the shield that protects the vast majority of the population from political attacks, natural disasters and pandemics. It will not be possible to kill Nicaragua with hunger, were recent words of the President.

International human rights organizations receive most of their funding from the US and large corporations. The agenda of these organizations can tend to be determined by their major funders. In the recent case of Nicaragua, it has been demonstrated that biased reports, with technical inaccuracies and without any objectivity, have served to accuse the country of human rights violations and thus justify economic sanctions imposed against the people. The reports of Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have the same narrative. They have all validated and repeated the news from the opposition, from media with little credibility and from social media rumors. They continue to present victims who were not and are not victims, and continue with false data and no evidence. Several national and international academics and researchers have demonstrated through rigorous research that reports like Amnesty International's are far from the truth and presented the report Dismissing the Truth. So far, AI has failed to respond, to apologize, let alone to correct its work. As history has shown, economic sanctions against a sovereign country only succeed in violating the most basic human rights on a large scale, but they will never be able to overcome its will.

The information prepared for abroad in 2018 was only intended to strengthen an adverse state of opinion. They presented, time and again, a narrative of supposedly peaceful protests; while violent, masked people with deadly weapons were seen in front of cameras, destroying public and private property, setting fires - even of human beings - and murdering Sandinistas in full view of everyone. For Nicaraguans who lived through

it all, these were the most violent events of the recent past, where Sandinistas were hunted, terrorized, tortured and killed. One of the results of all this is that, in Nicaragua, international human rights organizations, have lost credibility and are seen more as an industry working in the service of the world's factual powers.

In 2019, the people of Nicaragua continued to advance and strengthen the social agenda for women, whose rights are guaranteed in national laws, policies, strategies, programs and institutions. The Global Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Report puts Nicaragua in 5th place, just below the Nordic countries. At the cabinet level, 58 per cent of the highest positions are held by women. Women are a priority in access to health, which has resulted in a 59% reduction in maternal mortality rates by 2018. This progress has earned Nicaragua the United Nations Prize of the Americas in 2011. This reality is felt by rural women who for the first time have experienced access to reproductive health, education and respect for all their human rights.

Nicaragua is a multicultural country, with a considerable Indigenous and Afro-descendant population (almost 10%) that inhabits more than half of the country - 55% of the national territory -, the Caribbean Coast. In 1987, the Autonomy Law was approved, thus providing a model of two regional autonomous governments - South and North - which are both recognized and work in coordination with the central government in Managua. However, this region had historically been the most excluded and abandoned, with no infrastructure, no public investment, no paved roads and very limited access to basic services.

History began to change from the second time the FSLN assumed the presidency. Between 2007 and 2019, US$ 1,121.7 million was invested in expanding the electricity network, paved roads, sanitation and drinking water, production companies and a large modern infrastructure for health and education. For PARLACEN (Central American Parliament) and the Central American Integration System (SICA), Nicaragua is an example in the restitution of Indigenous and Afro-descendant rights. Social (56% of the budget) and productive investment has led to the union of the Pacific and the Caribbean coast, which has been a major objective of the country´s National Human Development Plan.

The year 2020 was designated by the United Nations as the Year of Tourism and Rural Development. Nicaragua has been consolidating its position in the world's tourist destinations, with a great offer of unique volcanoes and paradisiacal beaches such as Corn Island in the Caribbean. In spite of the events of 2018 that caused the numbers to drop, the tourism potential is growing thanks to the fact that the nation continues to be one of the safest countries in Latin America and offers a great variety unique and pristine destinations.

The implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Development Plan, approved in 2011, has made tourism the second largest industry in the country. Every year more than one million tourists (until 2018) visited the second-best place in the world to surf and one of the 10 countries with the best eco-friendly destinations. The government has promoted

a new type of development, providing small businesses and families with credit and training to strengthen the sector. Nicaragua offers respect for natural resources, cultural diversity, integrity of people, citizen safety and recognition of all that is local, unique and indigenous.

Forest fires anywhere in the world are an ecological tragedy. But in March 2018, a week-long fire in the Indio Maíz reserve in Rio San Juan was the first deliberate and planned political action since 2015. That fire was put out in record time by the Nicaraguan Army with international aid. Since the Rio agenda in 1992, the country has adhered to all international treaties and conventions for the protection of the environment within the framework of the United Nations System. Nicaragua signed the Paris Agreement in 2017 and has continued to demand greater commitments from developed countries with differentiated responsibilities. Nicaragua has been a leader in the last 15 years in independence from fossil fuels, going from using 25% renewable energy sources in 2007 to 62% in 2018. By 2020, 97 out of every 100 Nicaraguan homes have electricity
.
This book is being launched in the midst of a global pandemic, for which no government was prepared. Nicaragua is called upon to resist the onslaught of COVID-19, and once again, the new media onslaught and new calls for more sanctions. Political opportunism has changed actors. Now opposition doctors are being paraded before cameras and social media. Many participated in the attempted coup and repeat the same narrative: the government is doing nothing. The Pan American Health Organization and the people of Nicaragua continue to recognize the level of preparation and commitment of the Nicaraguan authorities. This is despite the work that some are doing to hide the great efforts being made to confront the epidemic.

Preparations to deal with the pandemic began in January 2020. In May, health authorities presented the White Book, which describes the national strategy and the resources available to the country to prevent, contain and provide the necessary care for its patients. No other country in the region has anything like it. At the national level, the country has 77 public hospitals, 19 of which were prepared to specialize in the care of patients with Covid-19. There are 449 respirators (only equal to Costa Rica), 37,000 trained health workers who are supported by 5,806 small community health centers. It is the country that invests the most in public health in Central America, with 21% of its national budget - US$ 800.00 per person per year. Despite being the second poorest country in the hemisphere, it is proud to have a preventive and community-based public health system that guarantees the right to health to all its population.

For those who seek truth, reason and justice, this book is for you. Nicaragua continues to advance and resist in all areas and offers the potential for equitable economic development, with a gender focus, with sustainability and in harmony with nature. For those who have the opportunity to delve into this writing, you will be able to enter into the realities of a people that continue to resist many imperial abuses. This story will remain imprinted as a photograph that does not fade with time but is only consolidated by the struggle of our people and renewed by the solidarity and sacrifice of the great

majority. Every new day, despite the challenges, the economic sanctions, the media attacks, the pandemic and the international harassment, progress is made. In the end, justice and truth prevail for those who continue the struggle.

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Economic and Social Progress Continues

By Nan McCurdy and Katherine Hoyt

In spite of the serious blow to the economy of the 2018 coup attempt, the FSLN government has continued its social and economic programs that benefit the nation's poor. School attendance during the 2019 school year surpassed 1.7 million children with advances in building construction and improvements, school supplies, and teacher professionalization. 1.2 million children received school meals each day. New hospitals and maternal wait homes were inaugurated in 2019 and water and sanitation improvements were completed throughout the country. By the end of 2019, 97% of Nicaraguans had access to electricity with 60% of that energy produced from renewable sources. Maternal mortality declined as did deaths of children under one. Deaths from tuberculosis, malaria, and cervical cancer were reduced in 2019 as well.

In August of 2019, the World Bank recognized that "Nicaragua has the best executed World Bank project portfolio," which means that Nicaragua has an outstanding record on project completion, including World Bank funded roads, electrification, hospitals and other infrastructure. Meanwhile, in October, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, which is financing 29 projects in Nicaragua, praised the country saying, "Nicaragua is a significant partner that has a perfect execution rate of its project portfolio and serves as an example for other Central American countries on how to plan investment projects and implement them efficiently."

These are just a few of the achievements of the past year in Nicaragua that are addressed in the articles and news briefs that follow. To begin, Louise Richards summarizes the accomplishments of the FSLN government in the thirteen years since it took power in January of 2007.

Then, Nan McCurdy, writing in November of 2019, describes some of the advances in Nicaragua that, on the 43rd anniversary of his death in 1976, would have made FSLN founder Carlos Fonseca proud. Jorge Capelan first addresses advances in the economic areas of tourism, agriculture, small business, and affordable housing and then, in a second article, looks at recent important infrastructure projects. David Archuleta expands on the advances in agro-ecology through projects of the Rural Workers Association (ATC). Finally, we include a section of News Briefs recounting many of the economic and social achievements of the year 2019.

Accomplishments of the Sandinista Government since 2007

By Louise Richards, Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group of the UK, February, 2020

http://www.nscag.org/resources/Update%20Feb%202020.pdf

On 10 January, the FSLN government celebrated 13 years in power. Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans took to the streets to celebrate the achievements of the government and the transformation of society which has taken place since Daniel Ortega was elected in 2007 after seventeen years of neo-liberal government. Many say

that the FSLN government has rewritten the nation's history, eliminating poverty and the legacy of dictator Somoza.

Since 2007, the FSLN government has created programs focused in particular on strengthening the economy and the productive capacity of families as the nucleus of a new society. Social, human and economic development have formed a central part of the government's program, with emphasis on policies which benefit the poorest and most vulnerable in society. Free health and free education are now guaranteed; at the same time, 420,000 land titles have been given to families since 2007 (with a further 28,000 planned in 2020), giving them legal rights to their own land. Poverty has been reduced by half and 1.2m children have been lifted out of food poverty. 54% of the 2020 national budget has been ring-fenced for social expenditure.

Government programs have been rolled out in the barrios and communities in order to improve conditions for families. Electricity coverage in the country is now 97.16% (as opposed to 55% in 2006). Apart from fulfilling a basic need, this has led to a more stable income for many families involved in farming, since production had previously been hampered by constant power cuts and lack of power. Sewerage and access to drinking water (now 85%) has also been vastly improved since 2007.

Nicaragua is also taking tangible actions to fight climate change by providing green energy.
80% of the energy matrix is now provided from renewable sources, as opposed to 25% in 2007. The government's target is 90% by 2020. The government is also prioritizing protected areas. In 2020, US$2 million will be invested in protected areas of the country, with an emphasis on sustainable tourism and commerce in Nicaragua's natural reserves. Municipal staff members will also be trained in the care of wildlife reserves and ecological parks.

Decent low-cost housing is another feature of the government's program. Since 2007, 130,000 new houses have been built. 10,000 were built in 2019 and the government plans another 50,000 over the next five years as part of the Bismarck Martinez housing initiative.

In education, 2.3 million students now have access to free education. In addition, 1.2 million students receive free school meals, something that had not existed prior to 2007. All students receive free backpacks and text books. Technical education is also free – in 2006, there were 17,412 students in free technical education – this figure had increased to 37,620 by 2019. The number of technical schools has increased from 26 in 2006 to 153 now. And 6% of the national budget goes to public universities. In 2019, 250 digital classrooms were built in secondary schools, a 250% increase on the previous year. And all 57,000 teachers in Nicaragua will be undergoing training in new technologies during 2020. The Nicaraguan government believes that providing free and quality education for all Nicaraguans is a human right, an instrument of social justice to eradicate poverty and to provide a bright future for all Nicaraguans.

Considerable advances have been made regarding the position of women. Constitutional reforms of May 2014 established a minimum quota of 50 per cent women candidates for party political and public office and women's participation in the social and economic life of the country has risen. Social programs such as the provision of low interest loans and training for urban women have empowered women by giving them greater control of resources and increased economic autonomy. Nicaragua now occupies position 5 in the World Economic Forum gender gap report (as opposed to position 62 in 2006) and the UN and inter-parliamentary union have ranked Nicaragua third in the world for gender balance in politics, with women making up 42% of the National Assembly.

"Since Daniel Ortega came to power, he and his team have rolled out a series of tasks leading to better participation of women and on an equal footing with men in important areas… more women now occupy important posts where decisions are made…" – Tirsa Saenz, journalist and political analyst

The Government has also announced the relaunch of Women's Police Stations as part of a campaign in which it will be seen as the duty of all state institutions to combat violence against women and to protect women's lives. The campaign will focus on peace, security and dignified lives for all women and ensure that violence against women is reported and punished accordingly.

The achievements of the government relating to the care and living conditions of children in Nicaragua have been recognized by the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF. In addition to reducing infant mortality and neonatal mortality rates, maternal mortality has dropped from 97 to 37.5 for every 100,000 live births from 2007 to 2016, largely due to the increase in the number of births attended in health centers and the attention by qualified personnel in addition to the increase in the number of maternity centers, which now number 178. Chronic malnutrition associated with poverty, inequality, and inadequate food has also been reduced from 17.3 percent in 2006 to 12.8 percent in 2007. The number of child development centers, for children under the age of 6, has also increased, from 63 in 2007 to 270 at the end of 2018.

The government is committed to guaranteeing the right to free health care through expanding and improving the coverage and quality of its services. Spending on health care has tripled since 2007. Eighteen new hospitals have been built, and there are plans for 15 more, marking the beginning of a network of modern hospitals in the country. Incidences of breast and cervical cancer have been reduced due to the introduction of ultrasound screening in many hospitals and improved treatment. Nicaragua is also starting to produce its own medicines.
In 2010, the government established the *Todos con Voz* program, designed to give special attention to people with disabilities. The program does not only attend to health issues, but also provides resources such as wheelchairs and walking frames to those who need it, as well as guaranteed tests such as MRI and CT scans.

From 2010-2017, the economy grew by an average of 5.1%. Families also benefitted from production grants and low-cost loans enabling women to set up micro businesses.

"The work that the government did with families like ours has been excellent because it relates to development as a whole - we were not only trained in how to manage pigs, we were taught processing and business skills which is very important. This has improved our quality of life' – Carmen Zelaya (source: TN8 TV)

The government has also announced a *'One Nation, One Product'* project which will be providing support to 50,000 small creative businesses nationwide for the development and implementation of business plans, as well as funding to participate in national and international business fairs and access to digital marketing platforms. This initiative is part of the Creative Economy Model that the Nicaraguan government is implementing throughout the country.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has praised Nicaragua's social programs that address food security and malnutrition, particularly in rural areas. Nicaragua now produces 90% of the food it consumes and is one of only 38 countries to reach the UN Millennium Development Goal of cutting malnutrition by half. The Zero Hunger program has supported over 100,000 women by providing them with pregnant cows and sows, sheep, goats and hens, as well as materials to house these animals and free technical support and training. The Healthy Backyard program provides training and seeds to urban families to improve nutrition and generate a family income.

Since 2007, Nicaragua's trade unions have seen their rights restored and they now play a central role in decision-making and are valued for their contribution to society. The neoliberal governments from 1997-2007 saw massive redundancies in the public sector and, as a consequence, the trade unions were considerably weakened. Today, the trade unions enjoy solid collective bargaining agreements and year on year salary increases. Particularly notable is the strength of the public sector unions, and the 60,000 strong Self-Employed Workers' Confederation CTCP, representing street sellers and all those who eke a living outside formal employment structures.

The FLSN government has devoted more resources to the Caribbean region than any other previous government, providing new roads, drinking water and sanitation, energy coverage, health and hospitals and schools, thereby improving the quality of life for people living in the region and providing them with new opportunities for development. An important initiative saw the opening of a road between Managua and Bluefields in May last year. In addition, the region saw the installation in Corn Island of the first and only solar plant in Latin America.

Unsurprisingly, there is a broad consensus among the Nicaraguan people in favor of the government's model of national development, this in spite of constant attempts by the United States and the right wing opposition in Nicaragua to return Nicaragua to colonial status, efforts which included the defeated coup attempt in 2018. As in the 1980s, it is

clear that Nicaragua again represents 'the threat of a good example'. The latest poll by independent M&R Consultants covering the last quarter of 2019 shows that the Sandinista government is more popular than ever and all but a tiny minority of Nicaraguans reject the violent tactics and street blockades used by the US-supported opposition in 2018. The poll found that 52% say they strongly support the FSLN and 60% say they are likely to vote for the party in the 2021 national election. 65% of those polled support the current government, 55% think that President Ortega is leading the country in the right direction and 59.7% hold a favorable opinion of his administration. Likewise, 59% think that the Sandinista government is a factor of unity for Nicaraguans and 58.3% say that it is a government that generates hope. A strong majority believe that the country has made progress compared to six years ago. 61.1% think that the current government is the best the country has ever had and 69.3% that the Ortega government works for the general population. A significant finding of the M & R poll was the nearly universal rejection of the violent tactics of the US-funded opposition. In addition, 82.5% of those polled agreed that 'it is the people through their vote who should decide who should govern and when'. Only 16.5% were in favor of the government being replaced, while over two-thirds rejected pressure on the country by the international community to have early elections. 69.9% rejected attempts to remove President Ortega.

All of the Nicaraguan government's programs going forward will focus on working for peace and prosperity through the integrated development model which has been implemented since 2007. Family, community and society are the fundamental blocks of this model. The defense of the country's sovereignty remains paramount as it seeks to build a better future for its people. Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans are marching every Saturday for peace, prosperity and non-violence. In their own words***: 'The sun lights us up, it never sets'.***

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NicaNotes: Nicaragua in 2019 Would Make Anyone Proud

By Nan McCurdy, November 27, 2019

https://afgj.org/nicanotes-nicaragua-in-2019-would-make-anyone-proud

Carlos Fonseca Amador, the founder of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation, would have a lot to be proud of in 2019, 43 years after he died in battle with the Somoza National Guard. Nicaragua continues to be a country in solidarity with others as it showed November 6 at the United Nations when it denounced the hardening of the US blockade against Cuba, a blockade which only hurts the people. The three countries that did not vote against the blockade were the US, Israel and Brazil.

Ten members of ALBA-TCP, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas – Peoples Trade Agreement met the week of Nov. 14 in Managua and issued a resolution that "Strongly condemns the coup d'état in Bolivia, demands respect for the institutionality of the Plurinational Legislative Assembly of Bolivia and supports the willingness of the Constitutional President Evo

Morales to return to the country and convene a national dialogue as a political avenue to restore stability, peace and constitutional order to Bolivia."

Hundreds of thousands of people marched for peace all over Nicaragua on Nov. 16 repudiating US-supported regime change in Bolivia, asking for peace and the return of the former president, Evo Morales, with the proclamation "Evo, friend, the people are with you." Meanwhile, in Nicaragua, the FSLN has been back in the executive for thirteen years and has done much to improve the lives of the impoverished majority beginning with cutting poverty and extreme poverty in half (48.3% to 24.5% and extreme poverty dropped to 6.9%). Eighteen new hospitals have been built and others are underway for a total of 33 in the next four years. 97% of Nicaraguan families will have electricity by the end of 2019 and green energy production has gone from 22% to 62% during the Sandinista administration. Minister of Finance and Public Credit Iván Acosta presented the 2020 General Budget of which 56.7% will be earmarked for social spending, including 44.7% for health, education and universities.

The representative of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Ana Solís-Ortega, said on her arrival Oct. 8 that "PAHO has a special commitment to Nicaragua because it has achieved great progress in health indicators like national vaccine coverage, maternal mortality, child nutrition, and others. And Nicaraguan authorities maintain a clear perspective of what aspects need to be improved and the ways in which PAHO can support this work through technical cooperation."

"Nicaragua has a perfect execution rate of its project portfolio and serves as an example for other Central American countries on how to plan investment projects and implement them efficiently," declared Dante Mossi, president of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) on Oct. 13. Nicaragua and CABEI are carrying out 29 projects including hospitals, roads, electricity, water and sanitation aimed at the development of infrastructure and the fight against poverty.

Two loan agreements for US$600 million were just signed between the Ministry of Finance and the CABEI. The loans are for the Road Maintenance and Expansion Program and the Program for Expansion and Improvement of the Potable Water and Sanitation System benefiting 432,000 inhabitants in the departments of Boaco, Chinandega, Chontales, Estelí, León, Masaya, Matagalpa, Managua and the two Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast.

Nicaragua was congratulated for its important achievements in gender equality and restoration of women's rights. The recent publication of the UN Women and Inter-Parliamentary Union Women in Politics map highlighted that the Nicaragua Government cabinet is made up of seven men and ten women representing 58.8% of Ministers, making it the third place country in the word with the best gender balance. The recognition took place at the International Seminar on Violence against Women held October 8 to 10 in the Dominican Republic.

Alba Luz Torres, Minister of Labor, at the Initiative: "Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor," held from October 22 to 25 in Lima, Peru, said, "Nicaragua has been working on the elimination of child labor through public policies and effective social programs for the eradication of poverty and the restoration of the rights of children and adolescents."

The South Korea Ambassador to Guatemala, Seok-Hwa Hong, at the South Korean-Latin American Cooperation Initiative said on Nov. 5, "Nicaragua is an example in the region of successful execution of productive development projects. In the last twelve years, national agricultural production has increased by 86% and livestock production grew 65%, contributing to

the fight against poverty and strengthening food security." Nicaragua leads Central America in livestock and beef exports. Two weeks prior, the National Assembly passed an Update that establishes the obligation of the government to promote policies that contribute to food security as part of the National Human Development Plan and to the sovereignty of the country.

The representative of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Paola Valle, stated that "Nicaragua has a modern legislative system and these new norms will reinforce legal certainty and strengthen institutions in the productive, consumer and commerce systems, as well as the new climate change response system." She also said the new standards are excellent inputs for the FAO 2020 Report on the legal contribution by Nicaragua to sustainable development goals.

Nicaragua was recently elected to represent Latin America and the Caribbean on the Executive Committee of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. This election recognizes Nicaragua's commitment to sustainable management of forest resources. Nicaragua is applying the Emission Reduction Program that seeks to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 11 million tons between 2020 and 2025, reducing deforestation and degradation of the forest on the Caribbean Coast by at least 50%. The World Bank representatives congratulated Nicaragua for designing a program that applied prior, free and informed consultation with the Caribbean Coast territorial governments and that meets all international standards for forest protection and emission reduction established in the Framework Convention of the UN on Climate Change (UNFCC).

US$110 million will be invested in the conservation of two of the largest reserves in Mesoamerica, the Bosawás Nature Reserve and the Indio Maíz Biological Reserve over the next few years. The financing comes from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) Green Climate Fund and the General Budget of the Republic.

Alfredo Coronel, vice-president of the Free Trade Zones Corporation, announced on Oct. 24 that China plans to invest more than US$200 million in the Nicaragua's textile industry. A company that will open in Mateare will create more than 3,000 jobs. October 31 the Central American Economic Integration Secretariat (SIECA) reported that Nicaragua is among the top producers and exporters of textiles and garments.

In celebration of World Food Day, the First International School Nutrition Forum was organized to evaluate progress in child nutrition as well as the School Meal Program. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) representative, Alexandre Florencio, said, "Nicaragua is an example because through the School Meal Program it has provided healthy and balanced meals to all schools in the country, beneficial for growth and academic performance of the children." Antonella D'Aprille, representative of the World Food Program (WFP) stated that the Nicaragua School Meal Program is one of the largest social protection programs in the region, as it guarantees healthy meals to 1.2 million students, many of them in rural areas."

Leonor Corea, director of the microloan program called "Zero Usury" reported that in the last 12 years Nearly 400,000 women from 140 municipalities have received US$23.9 million to establish and expand small businesses. Corea said, "In 2019, financing was provided to 15,000 women contributing to revitalization of the national economy." The "Zero Usury" program is part of the Plan for Strengthening Productive and Organizational Capacities within the framework of the National Model of Creative Economy. A crab processing plant on the Atlantic Coast that already generates 150 jobs announced Nov. 6 it plans to expand in 2020 in Bluefields to provide 200 more jobs. On Nov. 1, a Women's Solar Oven project in Catarina won first place in the "Urban Innovation category" of the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat).

Children and adults all over Nicaragua come to the capital to enjoy the Luis Alfonso Velásquez Park built in the 1980s and improved every year since 2007. The Park that covers more than 20 square blocks has an official youth baseball stadium, basketball and volleyball courts, a rollerblading course and multiple rides for different ages. It is one of the most visited spaces because of the wide variety of attractions for children and parents, who like the security, large trees, cleanliness and tranquility. Recently the largest trampoline in the capital was inaugurated, where children can play and do acrobatics. "A trampoline is great fun for our children because they jump until they can't. We are happy because they have a great place to play," said Tatiana Castillo. Antonio Berríos and his wife and grandchildren arrive early; walking in this space is an adventure they treasure. They love the artificial lake and boats inaugurated in 2018.

This article was compiled from news items from October and November 2019 from Radiolaprimerisima.com, el19digital.com, informepastran.com, Nicaragua News, Canal8.com.ni, Canal2.com.ni. We can only wish that Carlos Fonseca and all the tens of thousands of martyrs who made possible today's Nicaragua were here to enjoy the fruits of their labors.

NicaNotes: The Sun Doesn't Go Down 'Even a Little Bit'

By Jorge Capelán, September 4, 2019, *Translated by Nan McCurdy.*

https://afgj.org/nicanotes-the-sun-doesnt-go-down-even-a-little-bit

(A longer Spanish version was published in managuaconamor.blogspot.com on Aug. 29, 2019)

In Nicaragua, the sun continues to shine without declining an inch, as the great Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío stated. Tourism is recovering, agricultural production continues to increase, social programs do not stop, Managua welcomes parliamentarians from the region and schools are preparing to celebrate September, the month of the homeland. Meanwhile, in Washington, Stroessner's, Videla's and William Walker's heirs are struggling to find members for an interventionist commission of the Organization of American States (OAS) that everyone knew would be rejected by the Nicaraguan government.

Let's take a look at some of the Sandinista government's economic and political achievements made public this week:

In the tourism sector, the co-director of Intur, Anasha Campbell, announced that tourism has reversed by two-thirds the decline in visitors to the country that occurred with the failed coup plot last year. Nicaragua ended 2018 with 30% fewer tourists than in 2017. This year, from May to date, the figures are positive, and from January to July 2019 the country had only 10% fewer tourists than during the same period in 2017 indicating that Nicaragua is recovering in this sector of vital importance for the economy while the U.S. policy of destroying the country's tourism industry is no longer giving the expected results.

In the agricultural sector, which in fact increased production in the months of the coup, casting down the coup speeches of a "peasant revolt against the Interoceanic Canal," Nicaragua continues to advance according to Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) vice-minister Isidro Rivera who announced the plan for the second planting and a plan related to livestock that ensures food security. All areas of livestock have grown: meat production, exports, production and stockpiling of milk and cheese and pork production. In the poultry sector, there has been a decrease of 1%

because large producers refuse to invest; but that loss has been replaced by a 39% increase in small-scale production in the municipalities. And egg production increased. All this economic activity in the livestock sector has its fundamental basis in the small and medium-scale producers of the popular economy, who play a fundamental role, not only for domestic consumption, but also for export. (Whoever has doubts about these data, go to any market and ask for food prices and compare them with the slide of the Córdoba with respect to the dollar. You will notice an extraordinary stability over the years.)

Related to the previous topic, this week the Nicaraguan Council of Micro, Small and Medium-scale Enterprises CONIMPYMES, officially became the representative of private enterprise in Nicaragua. The organization, which replaces the historic COSEP of Big Coup Capital, has been admitted as the country's representative in the Central American Business Council. At the same time that Freddy Cruz, CONIMPYME's director made that announcement on August 26, in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, the Minister of Family, Community, Cooperative and Associative Economy, Justa Pérez, shared the achievements of the Nicaraguan popular economy at a meeting of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Pérez met with Julio Berdegué, Deputy Director and Regional Representative, in which they discussed cooperation issues to strengthen family farming in Nicaragua.

In the municipality of Condega the Bismarck Martínez Social Housing Program began with the delivery of plots of land to the first 60 families. With an affordable price of only 500 dollars with very low monthly payments, families receive a lot of 8 by 20 meters where they will build their house when they have paid 80% of the total cost. To access this program one must not already have a home and must earn less than US$300 per month. In Managua several thousand people have already benefited. The challenge is to build 50,000 affordable housing units in the next seven years. Bismarck Martínez was a Sandinista who was kidnapped, tortured and murdered on June 29, 2018. [His body was found in May of this year.]

Beginning August 26 Managua hosted a series of meetings of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) within the framework of the Regional Meeting of Women of Political Parties, the Central American Conference of Political Parties, and its forums on Tourism, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants and Education. In greeting the members of the PARLACEN Board of Directors, President Ortega spoke about, among other issues, the importance of the Inter-Oceanic Canal and the need to advance the Central American integration project as a zone of peace in order to strengthen its position in the world and emerge from poverty.

In recent days, no one living in Nicaragua has been able to avoid witnessing the great enthusiasm with which students and professors throughout the country devote themselves to preparing the celebrations of September – national independence, Central America's independence and the victory over William Walker's interventionist troops. Day by day there are parades, band music, rehearsals of all kinds, celebrations of historic dates such as one of the early FSLN armed attempts against the Somoza National Guard at Pancasán, discounts in the markets to help the parents buy school uniforms and typical dress for the parades; in short, a whole eruption of activity that penetrates the whole society. Those of us who lived through the decade of the 80's cannot stop smiling with a certain feeling of "deja vu" when the children and young people in their parades chant slogans and songs about poet Ruben Darío, Sandino and Carlos Fonseca.

The opposition wanted to achieve a "regime change" in Nicaragua. Well, they sure got a regime change, though not the one they were looking for. Before the coup attempt Big Capital was part of nearly every decision that was made, and it didn't want anyone else to participate. They

thought that the Sandinista Front was only there to contain “the mob” and they have watched with fear as that “mob” became more empowered every day. That’s why they joined the coup prepared by the most mafia-like interests of the empire. And what a mistake they made! They failed miserably. That “rabble,” a diverse people of many origins, many identities, many histories, many beliefs, many shared sufferings, many accumulated experiences and knowledge, many solidarities, many dreams of futures of a land of milk and honey that no oligarchy has ever realized, demonstrated to the coup plotters and their lackeys that their historical moment has passed irremediably.

A few weeks ago we asked President Daniel Ortega at a meeting what he had learned from last year’s misnamed “soft coup”. His answer was: “You have to believe and trust the people. This is a people that had the patience to endure those terrible days of acts of terrorism, when the Bishop’s Conference demanded that we send the Police to their stations and the streets were free for criminals and terrorists for a little more than two months, and the people endured… and the Police endured and did not respond when they attacked them in their barracks. So, the people have a high degree of consciousness, and they understand that to have acted in the way they acted helped unmask the criminals. And that was the explosion of joy of this July 19th, a celebration of victory. Rosario Murillo added, “And confidence in the future!

Meanwhile, National Assembly Deputy Carlos Emilio López, promoter of the Reconciliation, Justice and Peace Commissions, a social movement that is gaining much strength in Nicaragua, announced that more than 7,171 of these commissions have already been created throughout the country, made up of community leaders, Catholic and evangelical clergy, and people of good will. López pointed out that adolescents and young people represent one of Nicaragua’s living treasures. “For this reason, they [the Commissions] have been working hand in hand with the youth to promote peace, unity and a promising future,” he said and reported that “the reconciliation, justice and peace commissions are promoting care for the environment and calling on heads of state to protect the Amazon.”

Revolutions are made by the people

By Jorge Capelán, July 11, 2019**,** translated by Nan McCurdy

http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/6851(This article appeared originally in Spanish at https://managuaconamor.blogspot.com/2019/07/las-revoluciones-las-hacen-los-pueblos.html)

Revolutions are made by the people, not by international organizations, and the people of Nicaragua are making theirs under the flag of the Sandinista Front, let no one doubt that.

The majority of the Nicaraguan people continue to work day by day to build a better nation for all, while a few who want to destroy the country drown in their own poison. They no longer know what to do because their foreign-focused maneuvers fail to have an impact inside Nicaragua.

On Saturday, the inauguration of the Corn Island Solar Plant in the South Caribbean will take place, a project of great impact on society and development of the tourist economy

on Corn Island. The plant, built thanks to a 1.5-million-dollar loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the central government, will light up the population, and will charge large batteries ensuring clean energy for thousands of people.

Yesterday construction began on a 12 kilometer stretch of road that will break the historic isolation of the community El Boquete in the municipality of El Crucero, 20 kilometers from Managua, allowing farmers to move their production to market more easily.

"It will improve the quality of life, work conditions, access to health and education for children. These twelve kilometers will be 18 centimeters thick guaranteeing durability for many years to benefit current and future generations of this municipality and of Villa el Carmen," said the Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, retired General Oscar Mojica.

Minister Mojica shared the latest data from the World Economic Forum Ranking which found Nicaragua to be the country with the best roads in Central America and with some of the best in all of Latin America.

On July 9 authorities from the Ministry of Health (MINSA) and the municipal governments of Chinandega and El Realejo, made a visit to the construction of the Chinandega Departmental Hospital to see the progress. To date the structural foundations have been laid for the areas of the most complex services such as intensive care, operating rooms, neonatal and labor units and delivery rooms. Serving the department of Chinandega, this will be one of the biggest hospitals in Nicaragua.

Since 2007, the Government has built 18 hospitals throughout the country and has refurbished and built hundreds of health centers, medical posts and maternity homes (where women from isolated areas spend their last weeks close to a health center or hospital as they wait to give birth). The construction of this new hospital will have a great social impact on the families of the 13 municipalities throughout the department of Chinandega.

The coup promoters' propaganda distorts, turns things upside down, exaggerates, looks for the gloomy side of everything, and lies, but fails to break the Nicaraguan people's love of life. The opposition believed that they could bring Nicaragua down in the OAS but they only reaped frustration. U.S. spokespersons sanction and threaten Nicaragua, but they cannot stop the will of the people to make a better country.

Fresh Eyes on Nicaragua: A Renewed Sense of Internationalism

By David Archuleta, February 20, 2019

https://afgj.org/fresh-eyes-on-nicaragua-a-renewed-sense-of-internationalism

Those of us who search for truth find ourselves in an age of increasing anxiety. Beyond the political left and right are competing narratives of what is actually occurring at home and in

foreign countries. Views of Venezuela rend discussion across the US, for example, as some oppose intervention while others allege authoritarianism. The State Department maintains its travel advisory warning on Nicaragua citing among other things civil unrest, crime, and the arbitrary enforcement of laws. We are inundated on our virtual timelines and televisions with headlines and videos from various interests and institutions with various strategies and objectives. There are federal stories, mainstream stories, and there are insurgent stories from below the professional or even academic paradigm.

One such story is that of the *campesinos* of Nicaragua, whom I hold in higher regard than US politicians, and whom I had the exceptional opportunity to work and live with for ten days in the countryside. Beyond visions of a 'principled' internationalism and towards a humanistic understanding and appreciation for the working poor this article applies to all of us in the western neoliberal bubble. I posit that anybody should have it in mind as their duty to defend the Nicaraguan political project with their voice, their vote, and their wallet. This duty is owed not simply to a government whom I view as having the interests of the people in mind, but to the workers themselves, who are building a genuine project for the betterment of their lives at the detriment of global capital.

The ten days I spent in Nicaragua were part of a delegation on Food Sovereignty and Agroecology, sponsored by the Friends of the ATC and my own organization, the Alliance for Global Justice. The ATC (Rural Workers Association) was the Nicaragua-based organization to which much of the delegation experience owed its organization. The ATC itself is a historic grassroots organization of women, children, workers, small scale producers, unions and cooperatives. They were instrumental during the first Sandinista period of land reform and literacy improvement, but now as well in working towards improving the lives of the poor. They were responsible for arranging homestays and our time at the Francisco Morazan Peasant Worker School in Ticuantepe, Managua.

First of all food sovereignty refers to the goal and right of a people to realize culturally appropriate food in sustainable ways. This means among other things the negation of agribusiness domination and vulnerability through market vacillations of mono crop culture. The *campesinos* can own their own land for example and produce what is necessary for them to live without fear of job loss, land loss or the total wipeout of a single dependent crop. Essentially it is putting as a priority the needs of the producers and consumers of food in front of the greed of business. It promotes local as opposed to global interests, as well as ecology, health, and non-hierarchical social relations.

The ATC, as part of *La Via Campesina* – a worldwide organization of peasants and indigenous peoples, aims to develop food sovereignty in Nicaragua within its organization. Agroecology describes the sustainable techniques and practices of food production, again at odds with agribusiness and the global market. A part of agroecology is the heeding of knowledge of ancestral practices, organizing farmer to farmer knowledge sharing, schools, and in general its political movement to undo the destruction of neoliberalism and the green revolution. At all of our homestays in the Nicaraguan countryside we were taught first hand these novel techniques and shown their value in the local communities and in the national economy.

My experience staying with my host families, working and learning with the *campesinos* in the countryside taught me a few things. First how incredibly privileged I was to have the opportunity to see on my own the brilliant political project that is taking place in Nicaragua. From a macro view to the individual, sub-political level I saw the deeply interwoven organization and profoundly human-centered lives the people live. As opposed to a problematic view of

superiority through the “voluntourist” gaze or experience I see the Nicaraguan undertaking as a global model not on par but above the United States and the First World. I also saw how staunchly the *campesinos* were in support of the Sandinista government as well as President Daniel Ortega. I did meet folks in the opposition camp, who were quick to cite Channel Ten and other private media but I also know the well documented manipulation of events by US-funded NGOs and oligarchy, so there is no need to get into that here. I found out during my time there why the workers so emphatically supported the FSLN political party.

The most educational experiences of the delegation were the conversations with, and the testimonies of, the working poor. Multiple persons relayed to us the transformation of a country, first from Somoza dictatorship in the 70s to revolution and then from neoliberal rule to the contemporary FSLN era. Sandinista land reform projects improved the lives of many after the Sandinista revolution in 1979. Back then big agribusiness and the Nicaraguan oligarchy owned the vast majority of land – two million hectares out of five, and worked landless peasants to brutal consequences.

Emerita Vega narrated her experience of the transition from the Somoza era, describing her impoverished childhood in abject poverty to the empowerment of land ownership with the onset of the Sandinista government. The transition to food sovereignty begins with land reform and the building of popular economic self-sufficiency. This was exemplified by the people in the communities where we stayed, who not only produced the majority of what they ate but produced and sold commodities and foodstuffs in an insular fashion within the neighborhood. There was no need to look anywhere else for anything you might need, just ask your neighbor.

That families had their own land or land held in common to produce their own food impacted my own understanding of what it means to build community. Much of what I learned in Nicaragua was at the indices of confrontation between theoretical knowledge and the actually existing. It is a jarring experience to see first-hand what you had only imagined in your head while reading. I also contrasted this self-sufficiency with furloughed government workers in my own country who were basically asking for handouts during the government shutdown. That is dependency, not self-sufficiency. Besides land, major progressive Sandinista programs include free higher education and housing for those who cannot afford it, free healthcare, and the *‘bono productivo’* (Zero Hunger) initiative, among others. This initiative gives resources including livestock such as pregnant cows as well as plants and building materials to peasants and the majority of the recipients are women.

Some of the communities we met with were women’s organizations, like the FEM (Foundation between Women), a foundational association of women’s cooperatives that have been organizing around women’s issues for over 20 years. When the neoliberal governments took power in the 90s many land gains were lost and women were the most vulnerable and displaced. So it was in that context that they began to organize themselves against gender violence, and for sexual and reproductive rights. We also lived at the Gloria Quintanilla Women’s Cooperative in Santa Julia, originally a German-owned coffee plantation, which is now owned by the women in the cooperative. Besides organizing to rid their community of domestic violence, they have also been working on getting better access to water, which has been a $200,000 project. Eloisa, my house mother, also described how the cooperative had been working with the ATC even before the Sandinistas came into power. While explaining this autonomy in organizing, she still ties change in the community fundamentally to the FSLN. “That’s what this government has brought to us, rights for women, and rights for children,” she said.

Besides the North American and European members of the delegation we were also half composed of students from the IALA (Latin American Agroecology Institute). IALA is a set of schools organized by *La Via Campesina* and originally developed by the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil, and Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, to educate young *campesinos* to defend the peasant way of life. The goal is to promote a popular education in the Freirean model, not top down but based on popular enquiry and community interaction. The students receive engineering education and certificates but they do not train to enter the capitalist wage labor market but rather to bring back what they've learned to their communities. On our delegation these youth came from Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic and we traveled with teachers as well from Venezuela and El Salvador.

The commitment of the students is extraordinary as they are genuinely militant in their behavior and attitude towards their education, and were so in their participation in the delegation. One morning they presented us with a *mystica*, a ceremony of sorts where they placed machetes, shovels, seeds and books on the ground and acted out their agricultural tasks. This spiritual activity stood out to me as I realized the deep focus the students had for their everyday lives, their education, and their communities. I discovered on a holistic level the connection between the individual and the grand political picture and was awed at how incredibly historic this movement was. Although I realized how far removed the question was from their context I asked, among other things and for curiosity's sake, how they identified. The answer from every student I asked was *campesino* first and foremost.

In regards to the political question the Nicaraguan students were supporters of the Sandinista government. For the students, themselves children of *campesinos*, Ortega represented the interests of the farmers and the poor in Nicaragua. They cited not only the *bono productivo* program but bringing electricity to impoverished communities and improving the roads. They recognized the FSLN for supplying them with school necessities like backpacks and notebooks and with building schools. They told me that without the government they wouldn't have gone to school because they wouldn't have been able to afford it. The roads were important too because the small producers cultivate food and bring it to areas with citizens who don't produce, so it has been an advantage to them. Along that same vein, it was the opposition groups during the crisis last year that blocked roads, and effectively cut off the marketplace for many peasants. Although they had food to eat themselves, which they produced, the *campesinos* could not sell their excess and a lot of that was wasted. The students also had to stall their education a bit during this time but they never gave up hope for the government. Overall the countryside was not affected much, thanks to their efforts in achieving food sovereignty.

My brief stay in Nicaragua changed the way that I see my own country and the world. It is one thing to read so much about how genuine popular movements are organized and another to see it happening before your eyes. Besides that, it also gave me a sense of reverence for the food I eat and the knowledge of how it is produced. I believe the grassroots movements, unions, and FSLN government are a model to look to when developing our own movements in the United States. For people who would like to support the Nicaraguan *campesinos* they should donate to the Friends of the ATC. Other actionable steps to take would be to bring your voice to your congressional representatives about sanctions on Nicaragua and policies like the Nica Act, which work only to harm the working poor.

Selected NicaNotes Briefs 2019

The following are news items about accomplishments in economic and social areas published between January and December 2019 in the weekly NicaNotes at https://afgj.org/category/nicanotes

Nicaragua Successful in Reducing Gender Gap
The latest gender gap index published by the World Economic Forum places Nicaragua as the only country in Central America where the government has overcome the gaps in equity issues by implementing policies where women and men have the same conditions to perform in political, economic and social positions. “There has always been a stigma in society about the capabilities of women in the workplace and if Nicaragua is implementing policies to open this field to women, I think that they must continue to be replicated, not only in institutions, but also in companies”, said Alfredo Tejeda, an expert on Human Resources issues at the Nicaragua Catholic University. (Informe Pastran, 1/11/19)

Nicaragua Wins International Housing Contest
The Vice President of the World Bank – Latin America and the Caribbean Division, Jorge Familiar, announced that Nicaragua was awarded the Resilient Homes Challenge prize. The Nicaragua firm ANTU won the World Bank international competition on resilient housing and climate change, presenting an innovative design “that can withstand earthquakes, hurricanes and landslides,” Mr. Familiar said. (Nicaragua News 1/23/19)

More than 1,700,000 to Study in 2019
School Year 2019 begins this Monday (2/4/19). According to data from the Ministry of Education (MINED), more than 1,700,000 students will attend; the majority in the country’s 9,105 public schools. The infrastructure of the national school system has been considerably improved thanks to a budget of more than US$28 million which ensures students have study material, school meals, blackboards, mobile digital classrooms, etc. Fifty-seven thousand teachers are also ready to begin classes, thanks to improvement initiatives carried out by MINED. Professionalization classes are standardizing the Nicaraguan faculty which will increase the quality of teaching, a training process that will be evaluated in the region during the last quarter of the year by UNESCO. (Radio La Primerisima, 2/4/19)

Dream of Land Connection between Pacific and Caribbean Realized
The Nicaragua Minister of Transport and Infrastructure (MTI), Oscar Mojica, said the new Nueva Guinea – Bluefields highway was officially inaugurated on Feb. 14. “The US$39.5 million highway was financed by the Nicaragua government with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB),” Mojica said. (Nicaragua News, 2/14/19)

New Hospital inaugurated in San Miguelito, Rio San Juan
The Nicaragua Ministry of Health (MINSA) reported that a new Hospital was inaugurated in San Miguelito Municipality, Rio San Juan Department last Wednesday. "The US$5 million-dollar investment was financed by the Nicaragua government, with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)", the MINSA report states. (Nicaragua News, 3/7/19)

New Hospital in San Juan del Sur
The Nicaragua Ministry of Health announced that a new primary hospital will be inaugurated in

San Juan del Sur Municipality, Rivas Department, on April 3. “The new US$5.4 million hospital has 45 beds and will offer services in general medicine, orthopedics, surgery, gynecology, pediatrics, dentistry, laboratory and X-rays,” the MINSA report stated. (Nicaragua News, 3/27/19)

Thousands Find Recreation at Salvador Allende Port
During Holy Week more than 8,000 people visited this recreation port center on Lake Managua every day. (Radio La Primerisima, 4/22/19)

Government Purchases Multi-Million-Dollar Linear Accelerator
The new Linear Accelerator will be inaugurated at the National Radiotherapy Center on May 8, with the participation of Japanese Ambassador Yasuhisa Suzuki and the Representative of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Nicaragua, Hiromi Nai. The International Atomic Energy Organization approved the operation of the Linear Accelerator which complies with international safety standards. A linear medical accelerator (LINAC) personalizes high-energy x-rays, or electrons, to fit the shape of a tumor and destroy cancer cells without affecting the surrounding normal tissue. It has several built-in safety systems to ensure that it will deliver the dose as directed, and a medical physicist checks it periodically to make sure it is working properly. (Informe Pastran, 4/24/19)

Highway to Caribbean Coast inaugurated
The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (MTI) announced that the Nueva Guinea – Bluefields highway was inaugurated last week. “The new US$115 million highway was financed by the Nicaragua government, with support from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB),” the MTI report states. (Nicaragua News, 5/1/19)

3,000 property titles to be presented on Mothers’ Day
This month for Mothers’ Day, May 30, 2019, 3000 property titles will be presented to their owners in several municipalities. (Channel 4, 5/20/19)

IDB Pleased with Corn Island Solar Energy Plant
The Minister of Energy and Mines, Salvador Mansell, announced that an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) delegation visited Nicaragua to evaluate the progress of new energy projects in the country. “The delegation was pleased to confirm the successful construction of the new solar energy plant on Corn Island that will be inaugurated next month. The US$5.9 million plant was financed by the Nicaragua Government with support from the IDB,” Mansell said. (Nicaragua News, 5/25/19)

Health Advances for Women and Children
The expansion of immunizations in Nicaragua against five diseases, the reduction of chronic malnutrition rates from 21.7% to 11.7%, as well as the reduction of cases of HIV transmission from mother to child in recent years, are reasons to celebrate Nicaraguan children on the International Day of the Child, said Dr. Sonia Castro, Minister of Health. The official, in the midst of a festive atmosphere of face-painting, dances and exhibitions, announced the advances in health that benefit children in the last 12 years in the country. She said that from 2007 to 2018, 14 neonatal units have been built and three breast milk banks have been created. She added that more than 700 heart surgeries, 37 kidney transplants and more than six thousand treatments for cancer have been performed. (Canal 2, 5/31/19)

Granada Inaugurating New Municipal Palace
The historic Municipal Palace of the city of Granada, which was burned by violent groups last

year, was restored and reopened on June 5 by Mayor Julia Mena. This is the first stage of restoration of the building, which on November 22, 1856, was also burned by the American filibuster William Walker. Mena announced that the second stage will be inaugurated in July of this year, based on its original design and structure from 1524. (Informe Pastran 6/5/19)

Nicaragua Elected to UN Economic and Social Council
On June 14, Nicaragua was elected by the UN General Assembly to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), one of 10 countries representing Latin America and the Caribbean. Nicaragua obtained a large majority of votes, 184, from a total of 190 voting and present. ECOSOC is one of the main organs of the United Nations. It is composed of 54 countries representing all the regional groups. It is responsible for the follow-up to the major UN conferences and summits, including the 2030 agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the High-Level Policy Forum. The other nine countries representing Latin America were: Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay. (Radio Ya, 6/15/19, Canal 2, 6/17/19)

Nicaragua among Top Three Countries with Highest Vaccination Coverage
Nicaragua ranks among the top three countries in the Americas with the highest vaccination coverage guaranteeing the right to health to the general population, said Dr. Celia Riera, PAHO/WHO representative in Managua on June 13. Riera praised the immunization program of the Ministry of Health (MINSA), which has a coverage of over 95 percent at the national and community levels reaching the most remote areas to serve the most vulnerable sectors. MINSA held the First International Congress on Immunizations on June 13. Dr. Martha Reyes, director of Health Services, explained that the meeting was an opportunity to share the efforts of the National Immunization Program through which 16 diseases are prevented with coverage above 95 percent throughout the country. Reyes highlighted the great investment made by the Sandinista government in inputs for the acquisition of syringes, cotton and vaccine doses, as well as constant vigilance for the timely diagnosis of any case of a disease. (Radiolaprimerisima.com 6/14/19)

Nicaragua among Top Renewable Energy Generating Countries in the World
Nicaragua is among the top ten countries that continue to switch to electricity generation from renewable projects, according to the report entitled “Renewables 2019 Global Status Report.” According to data from the Nicaraguan Energy Institute (INE), at the end of 2018 wind energy constituted a nominal installed capacity of 186.20 megawatts (MW). Solar energy nominal capacity was 13.96 MW. Wind energy represents 13% of the nominal installed capacity while solar energy has a share of 1%, according to official INE data. The nominal installed capacity of the National Interconnected System (SIN) in 2006 was 746.20 MW, but reached 1,482.37 MW at the end of 2018, showing an increase in installed capacity of 98% in twelve years, according to INE data. Plans for expansion include the construction of four new wind projects ranging from 40 MW to 64 MW. Additionally, there are seven photovoltaic projects, including one under construction (El Velero, 12 MW); the rest are projects of 30 MW each. (Informe Pastran, 7/1/19)

Nicaragua Presents Human Development Achievements at the FAO.
On June 25, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Edward Centeno presented the achievements of the government in the fight against hunger and poverty with programs that provide access to health, education, work, housing, food, basic services, citizen security and peace at the 41st session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). He highlighted the implementation of the National Human Development Plan which “puts people at the heart of its actions,” expressed through sustainable development policies, plans, and strategies, while prioritizing the participation of women and youth, with the aim that peasant

families are protagonists of socio-economic development and have tools to combat poverty and inequality. He also highlighted the alternative production model that is based on the family and a creative and entrepreneurial economy that provides 80% of the nation's food, more than 70% of employment and 40% of GDP. "The FAO has recognized that Nicaragua is one of the countries in the world with the best performance in reducing hunger and poverty, of which we Nicaraguans feel very proud. Although we are aware that there is still much work to be done, we are firmly committed to more welfare and prosperity for all," Centeno said. (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/26/19)

United Nations Recognizes Nicaragua as Safest Country in the Region
Nicaragua, with 8.3 homicides per 100,000 people is the safest country in the region according to the UN's 2019 World Homicide Survey published July 7. El Salvador has the highest per capita homicide rate at 62.1 per 100,000. Central America, with an average homicide rate of 25.9 per 100,000 inhabitants is the area with the highest level of violent deaths in the world, due to the murders caused by drug trafficking. About Central America, the report notes "The highest national homicide rate is more than seven times higher than the lowest." Honduras and Guatemala follow El Salvador, in violent deaths. Homicides of young men are eight to 11 times higher than killings of women. (Radio la Primerisima, Informe Pastran 7/8/19)

Million Dollar Investment in Water and Sanitation in Chontales
The government is investing US$14 million in drinking water and sanitation projects in the municipalities of Acoyapa and Santo Tomas in the department of Chontales. Improvements in a treatment plant will bring sewage connections to 75% of homes. In Santo Tomas the dam on the Quipor River will be improved and the installation of six km of water pipes and 500 new household water connections will bring potable water to 95% of the population. In Acoyapa, the rehabilitation of the Manota and Bejuco wells and 2.4 km of pipelines for water distribution networks and 120 new household connections were carried out. (Radiolaprimerisima, 7/26/19)

Nicaragua with Second Lowest Dengue Mortality Rate in Latin America
The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Dengue Epidemiological Report, covering the period of January to June 2019, states that Nicaragua is the Latin American country with the second lowest death rate from the dengue virus. In the first six months of 2019 Nicaragua reported eight deaths, much lower than those of other countries in the continent. The success of Nicaragua is attributed to the Permanent Sanitation Campaign promoted by the Ministry of Health to strengthen the fight against the dengue-carrying *Aedes aegypti* mosquito. (Nicaragua News, 7/31/19)

One Million Two Hundred Thousand Students Have School Meal Guaranteed
On July 29 the Taiwanese government gave nearly US$2 million to help guarantee school meals for public education students. Ambassador Jaime Shin Mi Wu told Canal 2, "This donation guarantees that 1.2 million students have a daily meal and do not miss class." The school meal program has been promoted by the state in all public schools for 12 years. (Informe Pastran 7/29/19)

Ministry of Health Inaugurates House for People with Special Needs
The Ministry of Health inaugurated the House for People with Special Needs in El Almendro, Rio San Juan, and delivered wheelchairs and walkers to individuals with motor disabilities. MINSA also conducted general medical care days, operations, and exams in Masaya, and also in Managua at the National Center for Cardiology. (Informe Pastran, 7/29/19)

More than Sixty Businesses of People with Disabilities Promoted in Expo-Fair
On July 27 and 28 the Expo-Fair promoted the business ventures of individuals with disabilities who inspire others by their example. The sixty entrepreneurs from across the country offered products like handicrafts, wines, jewelry, textiles, and natural medicine. Salvador Vanegas, presidential advisor on educational issues, said that people with disabilities are overcoming obstacles and show the entrepreneurial culture of Nicaraguans. “We are working intensely on restoring the right to education with quality, justice and equity that develops the maximum potential of everyone in the educational system,” he added. Taiwan Ambassador Jaime Wu said that the Expo-Fair platform is a show of support for people with disabilities. (Canal 8, 7/27/19)

Flu Vaccinations for Children, Teens and Seniors
On August 5, The Ministry of Health launched the second national vaccination campaign against influenza, which aims to provide the vaccine to children age six and older and to seniors. The Campaign begins in Managua vaccinating 143,000 people. “Since our government is very responsible we are always ahead, bringing health to our people. Vaccinations will be available at all Health Centers during August and September,” said Dr. Ligia Aragon. Nicaragua is now producing flu vaccine in a plant built with the assistance of Russia. (Radiolaprimerisima, 8/6/19)

Nicaragua Again Recognized for Work to Stop Drug Trafficking
The achievements of the government and its commitment to the fight against drugs were highlighted in the Drug Policy Evaluation Report 2019 of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), published July 1, 2019. The report recognizes that Nicaragua has a national drug authority responsible for coordinating all areas of drug policy and has organized a National Anti-Drug Strategy 2018-2021, which takes into account the Sustainable Development Objectives of the United Nations Agenda 2030, as well as the human rights perspective, the gender approach and development with social inclusion. CICAD is pleased to note that Nicaragua addresses the causes and socio-economic consequences of the drug problem. National legislation provides for the application of alternative measures to imprisonment and proportional penalties, recommending the creation of special courts for those who commit these crimes. This is yet another example of Nicaragua’s international prestige in the defense and promotion of human rights. (el19Digital, 8/1/10)

World Bank Says Nicaragua Best Executor of Projects
A World Bank mission that is in Nicaragua evaluating the progress of road infrastructure projects, has recognized that “Nicaragua has executed the best World Bank project portfolio”. Projects such as the extension of electricity coverage, hospital services and infrastructure as well as roads are part of the current Portfolio that has contributed to the reduction of poverty and improvement of international competitiveness of the country. During this visit, new projects to be financed in the coming years will be identified. (Nicaragua News, 8/12/19)

More Homes for Low-income Families
50,000 homes will be built by the Nicaraguan government in conjunction with the country’s mayors within the next five years, as part of the Bismarck Martinez housing program, Vice President Rosario Murillo announced on August 9. The structures will be of concrete blocks with a constructed area of 582 square feet, on lots of 1350 to 1620 square feet. The homes will have water and electricity. The developments will have all the optimal conditions and public services such as asphalted streets, storm drainage, schools, health centers, parks and police stations. This investment fund will be for low-income families who cannot access credit and self-employed workers. The payments are less than $40 per month over 25 years. 1,000 homes are being built in 2019, 3,000 in 2020 and more than 10,000 in 2021. (Canal 2, 8/9/19)

More Nicaraguans Benefit from Operation Miracle
The number of Nicaraguans who benefited from free eye operations in the first half of 2019 exceeds by 14 percent those served in the same period of 2018, according to an August 8 report from the Ministry of Health. The difference lies in the fact that from April to July 2018 Nicaragua experienced violence associated with an attempted coup d'état, characterized, among other elements, by roadblocks on public roads to impede the free movement of vehicles and people, including for health reasons. According to MINSA's balance sheet, at the end of 2018 13,300 Nicaraguans recovered their vision as a result of Operation Miracle, and by the end of 2019, 15,000 people are expected to benefit from the planned surgeries. Operation Miracle was conceived and promoted by the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, for the treatment of ophthalmological diseases for those without resources. The program began in Nicaragua in 2007 with the arrival of Cuban doctors who by the end of 2012 had treated 95,000 patients. At the same time the doctors trained Nicaraguan specialists, and Operation Miracle is now run by Nicaraguans. (Radiolaprimerisima, 8/8/19)

Progress in Meeting UN Development Goals
In the last decade Nicaragua has made great progress in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Poverty has been reduced from 48.3% to 24.9%; maternal mortality rate decreased by 46%; infant mortality decreased 52%; reduction of chronic malnutrition in children under 5 decreased 46% and in school-age children (6-14 years) by 66%. Vaccine coverage is at 95%. More than 1.7 million students in primary, secondary and technical training level receive tuition free education and 812,654 women in all municipalities of the country have access to credit. Potable water coverage is 95%. Electricity coverage is 96% and electricity generation using renewable sources grew from 26% to 62%. The national road system is one of the best in the world. These successful programs and projects have contributed to poverty reduction, which is now firmly on the path of economic and social development. (Nicaragua News, 8/16/19)

Nicaragua's Family and Community Health Model Recognized
The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) awarded the "Childhood and Mother Friendly" certificate to the "Milton Rocha" Health Center in Kukra Hill municipality, Nicaragua Southern Caribbean Autonomous Region. The ceremony was attended by Minister of Health Carolina Dávila and UNICEF delegate in Nicaragua María Delia Espinoza. "UNICEF extends this certification to health centers that promote comprehensive care of children in all stages of growth, as well as prenatal care for mothers," the UNICEF representative said. The Minister of Health stated that the award is a recognition of the Family and Community Health Model implemented by the Ministry of Health. "With this certification, the Nicaragua Southern Caribbean Region has 5 centers recognized by UNICEF," the Minister said. (Nicaragua News, 8/23/19)

Nicaragua Reduces Infant Mortality
Nicaragua has reduced infant and maternal mortality by more than 50 percent since 2007, when the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) returned to power. Since then, it has become a priority policy of the State to reduce both mortality rates based on strategies drawn up by the Ministry of Health (MINSA) focused on primary and comprehensive care. Nicaragua reduced infant mortality from 29 deaths per 1,000 births in 2006, to just 12 by the end of 2018, which means a reduction of 58 percent, according to official data. As for maternal mortality, the MINSA figures show a 59 percent decrease in the number of women who died, from 115 women [out of a 100,000] who died during pregnancy, childbirth or postpartum in 2006, to 47 by the end of 2018. The head of Health of Nicaragua, Carolina Dávila, explained that each year the country

conducts a nutritional census for children, and its results are evaluated and certified by the World Health Organization (WHO). (Radiolaprimerisima, 9/2/19)

Food and Agriculture Organization Recognizes Nicaragua's Progress
Members of the National Assembly shared the review and updating of the Policy for the Promotion of Agro-ecological Production in Nicaragua with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). At the meeting FAO representatives recognized the progress Nicaragua has made in the production of organic crops. "Here there are many advanced field experiences that have many years of work; for example, organic coffee and other export products," said Emma Siliprandi, FAO Agriculture Officer in Rome. Deputy Maritza Espinales, first vice president of the National Assembly, affirmed: "Today we are filled with pride, the FAO recognizes that the government has succeeded in public policies and national production programs, for strengthening production with inter-institutional relations where all social actors meet and emphasize the model of consensus and dialogue". (Informe Pastran, 8/28/19)

Nicaragua Ensures Food Security
The Ministry of Farming and Agriculture (MAG) announced yesterday that Nicaragua has achieved food security in 2019 due to increase in yield and productivity of different agricultural commodities and sectors. The MAG Minister, Eduardo Centeno said "Food Security is a fundamental part of the Nicaragua National Human Development Plan." He added that "the promotion of planting and production in the second harvest, as well as livestock restructuring, the use of better technologies, expansion of community seed banks and genetic improvement are some of the factors that influenced the attainment of this important objective." A recent MAG report states that from January to July 2019, milk production increased 5% compared to the same period in 2018, beef 2% and pork 6.5%. Similar growth is reported in other agricultural products. (Nicaragua News, 8/28/19)

UNICEF Recognizes Nicaragua's Social Advancement
The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recognized great progress on economic and social policies under the Sandinista administration reflected in the decrease in poverty from 2009 to 2016 from 42.5% to 24.9%, and extreme poverty from 14.6% to 6.9%. UNICEF announced it has begun a new cycle of cooperation with Nicaragua for the next five-year period 2019-2023 "Nicaragua has reduced the infant mortality rate from 58.9 per 1,000 live births in 1993 to 22.7 per 1,000 live births in 2012. By 2018, this rate was 12 per 1,000 live births. Neonatal mortality went from 10 to 8 per 1,000 live births in 2018," UNICEF said. In its report it points out that maternal mortality decreased from 97 to 37.5 per 100,000 live births from 2007 to 2016. "The percentage of girls and boys who breastfed within the first hour of birth rose from 54% to 77.35%, and the exclusive breastfeeding rate increased from 31.7% to 46%". UNICEF recognizes that under the government of President Daniel Ortega, "the number of Child Development Centers (CDI) went from 63 in 2007 to 270 in 2018 in which they serve about 15,000 girls and boys six years and under." (Radiolaprimerisima, 9/18/19)

CA Bank President Recognizes Achievements in Electricity Coverage
The president of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), Dante Mossi, acknowledged that Nicaragua is approaching the goal of 100% national electricity coverage. "It is worrying that while Nicaragua is about to reach their goal of 100% coverage of electricity, we, here (Honduras) are worried about paying debts, instead of investing in providing services for the general population," he said. In Honduras only 74.1% of rural homes have electricity according to the latest survey by National Statistics Institute (INE). (Radiolaprimerisima, 9/17/19)

Nicaragua at UN Economic and Social Commission
The 2019 "Sustainable Cities" Forum of the Standing Committee on Finance of the Framework Convention on Climate Change held September 12 and 13, 2019, at the headquarters of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in Beirut, Lebanon. The keynote address of the Panel on Participatory Development was given by Dr. Paul Oquist Kelley, Presidential Minister for National Policies of Nicaragua, who is also a Member of the Standing Committee on Finance of the Climate Change Convention. The paper dealt with Participatory Development in Nicaragua since 2007.

In 2007, Nicaragua ranked 90th among the countries of the world in the Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. After a decade, in 2018, Nicaragua ranks fifth in the same Index. Only the Nordic countries of traditional egalitarian fame are ahead of Nicaragua in the ranking: Iceland, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Nicaragua is even ahead of one of the Nordic countries: Denmark. Thus, in terms of the gender gap, Nicaragua is ahead of all European countries except the Nordic countries indicated, all developing countries in the world and all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The main theme of the panel became "How Nicaragua had achieved such a revolutionary economic, social, political and cultural transformation in such a short time." Dr. Oquist explained that participatory development in Nicaragua is implemented in all sectors through mechanisms of citizen participation in decision-making and management processes. This is especially relevant for sectors that were previously excluded.

Extreme poverty was reduced from 17.2% to 6.9%. The indigenous and Afro-descendants of the Caribbean Coast and the Upper Wangki River now have 37,859.3 square kilometers of land delimited and titled in favor of 23 Territories and 314 Communities all administered by their own territorial governments.

The reduction in the economic gender gap is doubly positive due to the empowerment of poor women through the Zero Hunger and Zero Usury programs. In Zero Hunger the women of impoverished families with land received in donation: a pregnant cow, a pregnant sow, chickens, farmyard material, seeds and fertilizers. The result has been women producers and a significant improvement in the nutrition of the families, higher incomes when selling surpluses in the local market and greater self-esteem of the women. During the first 10 years of its execution, 113,850 families were capitalized nationwide. There are now 173 new cooperatives made up of 8,186 women in 9 departments of the country. This has been the product of the women's' initiative.

In Nicaragua in terms of Women's Participation in Politics: 9 of 16 ministries are headed by women. The World Parliamentary Union points out that Nicaragua has the greatest representation of women with a 56% female Cabinet. In the National Assembly, 42 of 92 Deputies are women, fifth place in the world, according to the World Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women. (El 19Digital, 9/24/19)

In 2020 Clean Drinking Water will Reach More than 96% of Nicaraguans
Beginning in the first six months of 2020 more than 30,000 Caribbean Coast families will have drinking water service 24 hours a day, reported the executive director of the Nicaraguan Company of Aqueducts and Sewerage (ENACAL). "We hope the project is complete in Bluefields by the end of 2019 with completely new plants, networks, tanks and connections," said the official. Mr. Barreda added that the testing process is 3 months because more than 90 km of pipes need to be analyzed so Bluefields will have water 24 hours a day by March 2020. In

the case of Bilwi's 16,000 families benefit from the potable water project in Bilwi and four indigenous communities. "If we add Bilwi and Bluefields, that is 30,000 families, or more than 200,000 people with drinking water by mid-2020" he added. (Radiolaprimerisima, 9/30/19)

Nicaragua among Best Electrical Systems in Region
This week the Regional Operating Entity (EOP) conducted an evaluation of the regional electricity system to identify and correct failures in the Central American electricity network. The EOP congratulated Nicaragua for the work done on national electricity coverage, changes to the energy grid and response to emergencies in the supply of energy. Minister of Energy and Mines (MEM) Salvador Mansell said, "The Regional Operator is pleased with the work and the effort to reach the goal of total electricity coverage in the country, which is a firm commitment of the Nicaragua Government." (Nicaragua News, 9/27/19)

Nicaragua Rated Third in Gender Equality in the World by the United Nations
UN Women, a United Nations organization dedicated to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment released a list of the 10 countries with the best gender balance in the world. Nicaragua ranked third. Vice President Rosario Murillo emphasized October 4 that this is a triumph for Nicaraguan women. "We are heroic, we are hard-working, we are intelligent, we are capable and we are recognized in the world as women protagonists of our rights in Nicaragua," she said. According to data from the UN Women in Politics map and the Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019, world wide, women represented 24.3% of all legislators and 20.7% of government ministers in January 2019. Read report here: https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/learn/knowledge-resources/here-are-most-gender-balanced-cabinets-world-today (El19Digital 10/4/19)

Bank President Says Nicaragua Has Perfect Project Portfolio Execution Rate
During the groundbreaking ceremony for the new offices of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) last week in Managua, CABEI President Dante Mossi reaffirmed the commitment of the Bank to support development projects in the country. "Nicaragua is a significant partner that has a perfect execution rate of its project portfolio and serves as an example for other Central American countries on how to plan investment projects and implement them efficiently." The Nicaraguan Government and CABEI are currently carrying out 29 projects including hospitals, roads, electricity, water and sanitation, aimed at the development of productive infrastructure and the fight against poverty. (Nicaragua News, 10/14/19)

Nicaragua Congratulated for its Gender Equity and Balance in Cabinet
Nicaragua participated in the International Seminar on Violence against Women, held October 8-10 in the Dominican Republic with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The aim of the Seminar was to foster dialogue between representatives of the national statistical offices of Latin American and Caribbean countries and to exchange experiences in the collection of information on violence against women and its impact on public policy formulation. During the Seminar, Nicaragua was congratulated for its important achievements in gender equality and restitution of women's rights, highlighting the recent publication of the UN Women and Inter-Parliamentary Union "Women in Politics" map, which noted that the Nicaragua Government cabinet is made up of seven men and ten women representing 58.8% of Ministers, making it the third country in the word in terms of gender balance. (Nicaragua News, 10/14/19)

New PAHO Representative: "Nicaragua Has Achieved Great Progress in Health"
The new representative of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Ana Solís-Ortega, said on her arrival October 8 that "PAHO has a special commitment to Nicaragua because it is a

country that has achieved great progress in health indicators such as national vaccine coverage, maternal mortality, child nutrition, among others. Even with these advances, Nicaragua authorities maintain a clear perspective of what aspects need to be improved and the ways in which PAHO can support this work through technical cooperation," Solís said. (Nicaragua News, 10/9/19)

CABEI Lauds Poverty Reduction, and Access to Education, Health, Electricity
October 8, Minister of Finance and Public Credit Iván Acosta and Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) President Dante Mossi, signed two new loan agreements totaling US$585.4 million for improvement and expansion of highways, potable water and sanitation systems in seven Nicaraguan cities. The CABEI President said, "Nicaragua has made important social advancements recognized by multilateral organizations such as access to health and education, electricity coverage, poverty reduction, eradication of extreme poverty, among others. The Bank has supported and will continue to support economic and social development in the country." (Nicaragua News, 10/9/19)

New Investment in Ports
First Executive President of the National Port Company Virgilio Silva said new investment in ports "will improve conditions for the transfer of materials between ships and land. Puerto Corinto is being modernized and is now in the dredging phase and 2020 will begin with engineering and equipment purchase. This work has a cost of US$116 million with funds from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) and has generated about 450 jobs. (Radiolaprimerisima, 10/9/19)

PAHO and FAO Celebrate Nicaragua's School Lunch Program
In celebration of World Food Day, the First International School Nutrition Forum was organized in Managua to assess progress in child nutrition and the School Lunch Program. The Representative of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Alexandre Florencio, said, "Nicaragua is an example because through the School Lunch Program it has provided healthy and balanced meals to all schools in the country, beneficial for growth and academic performance of the children." Antonella D'Aprille, Representative of the World Food Program (WFP) stated that the Nicaragua School Lunch Program is one of the largest social protection programs in the region, as it guarantees healthy meals to 1.2 million students, many of them in rural areas." (Nicaragua News, 10/17/19)

Public Investment Plan Exceeds Expectations
Minister of Finance and Public Credit Iván Acosta said the execution of the 2019 Public Investment Plan (PIP) will exceed expectations and compliance. He explained that "the PIP for 2019 is US$506,171,270 and that between January and October there has been a 53% execution rate, equivalent to US$357,297,367." Acosta noted that the year will close with a projected 95.5% compliance. The institutions that have executed the most public investment projects in 2019 are the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI), the Water and Sewage Company (ENACAL), the National Electricity Transmission Company (ENATREL), the Ministry of Health (MINSA), and the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM). (Nicaragua News, 10/15/19)

Public Policies to Eliminate Child Labor
Minister of Labor (MITRAB) Alba Luz Torres, is participating in the conference on the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor Regional Initiative being held from October 22 to 25 in Lima, Peru. Torres said, "Nicaragua has been working on the elimination of child labor through public policies and effective social programs for the eradication of poverty and the

restoration of the rights of children and adolescents." Representatives of 26 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that aspire to meet the Millennium Development Goal for a region free of Child Labor in 2025 are participating in the meeting. (Nicaragua News, 10/26/19)

Highest Enrollment of New Police Officers
On October 31 the graduation ceremony for 776 police officers who completed the Basic Police Training Course was held yesterday in Managua. The Director of the Walter Mendoza National Police Institute for Higher Education, Commissioner Cairo Guevara said, "This course had one of the highest enrollments the Academy has ever had, with 776 police officers successfully completing the training program." He noted that "223 members of the graduating class are women, reflecting the commitment of women to public service and national security." (El10Digital, 11/1/19)

Hundreds of Thousands March in Nicaragua
Thousands of Nicaraguans marched Saturday Nov. 16 in the different municipalities of the country. The march "We All Have Rights, We Are Millions" was held in support of the Sandinista Government which for 13 years has given progress and restoration of rights to Nicaraguan families. There were messages such as: "Nicaragua is in solidarity with Bolivia," repudiating the coup d'état, asking for peace and the return of the former president, Evo Morales, with the proclamation "Evo, friend, the people are with you." The Sandinista "May 4th Movement" declared itself in support of the self-determination of the Bolivian people and expressed its trust that President Morales will win the battle against the coup plotters. "We must confront the U.S. and European power that does so much damage to the world," said Juan Carlos Ortega of the Sandinista 4 de Mayo Movement. "We can no longer let them impose their way of looking at life on us. Every nation has the right to choose their way of life, called the self-determination of peoples and we are here because we are children of Sandino and we defend the sovereignty and dignity of this nation." (Radiolaprimerisima, 11/16/19)

Malacatoya Bridge Benefits 40,000 People
Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI) Oscar Mojica announced that the new Malacatoya bridge would be inaugurated on November 13th in the Department of Granada. The cost of the 90-meter bridge amounted to US$2.7 million, benefiting 39,927 inhabitants in Malacatoya, El Tabacal, Tepalón, Las Tapias, El Salvador, San Marcos and La Trinidad communities. Funding for the project came from the General Budget of the Republic. (Nicaragua News, 11/13/19)

Park Delights Visitors with Massive Trampoline
The Luis Alfonso Velásquez Park in Managua is one of the most visited recreational spaces by families from the capital and other departments with a wide variety of attractions for children and parents who like the security, large trees, cleanliness and tranquility of the park. Recently the largest trampoline in the capital was inaugurated, where children take advantage to perform their best acrobatics. "A trampoline is great fun for our children because they jump until they can't," said Tatiana Castillo. (El19Digital, 11/17/19)

94% of Students Finish School Year
There are 78,000 high school graduates from public and private schools this year. Of those, 64,000 come from public schools. The goal for total number of primary and secondary students by 2020 is to reach more than 1.796 million, an increase of 55,000. Presidential Advisor Salvador Vanegas, commenting on education goals, said, "We are closing the year with 57,000 teachers. Of those, 37,000 have had specialized training in the use of technology, new math methodologies, scientific research, initial education and development, among others." "We're

closing the year with good retention: the latest figures show a 94% retention. That means that 94 of every 100 students enrolled finish their classes," he reported. "We closed the school year with 1.2 million school meals delivered daily throughout the year. More than 600 study centers have digital classrooms and next year we are going to reach 741 centers, all of this creates the conditions for educational quality to become a reality," Vanegas said. This year, the public investment program remodeled more than 1,500 classrooms (Informe Pastran, 11/25/19)

Health of Nicaraguans Improving

"Nicaragua is making important health gains," presidential health advisor Sonia Castro told INFORME PASTRAN. Maternal mortality has been reduced by 16% from 37 to 31 deaths comparing January to September of 2018 to the same months of 2019. Deaths of children under one fell from 1,223 to 1,150 or 6%." Chronic malnutrition in children under 5 years old went from 21.7% in 2006 to 11.4% in 2019, a reduction of 46%," Castro said. From January to September 2018, 3,318,262 doses of vaccines were administered and in the same period of 2019, 4,113,835 doses were administered, an increase of 24%. "Operation Miracle" for people with cataracts performed 9,606 operations in 2018 which number increased to 10,617 between January and September 2019. In this same period, deaths from cervical cancer in 2018 were 224; this has been reduced in 2019 to 163, a reduction of 27%. Castro highlighted that malaria in 2019 has been reduced by 8% and tuberculosis by 20%. Cases of death from pneumonia were 380 in 2018 and so far this year there are 294 cases, 23% less. Regarding dengue fever, Castro explained that the lethality in Nicaragua is 0.018%, being the lowest in Central America or the United States. (Informe Pastran, 11/25/19)

Families Receive Titles to their Homes

The Attorney General's Office distributed thousands of property titles in the municipality of Tipitapa, Managua. Families with more than 20 years living in their home and others who rented or lived with friends or family now have a home because of help from the government, with legal title which gives them absolute security. (Informe Pastran, 11/19/19)

Thousands Walk to End Violence against Women

Thousands of people walked on Nov. 25 from University Avenue to the "Paseo de los Estudiantes" in Managua, and in every municipality in the country to support policies that promote women's rights and are guaranteed by the Sandinista Government. They marched under the slogans "Dignity, Rights, Nonviolence," "Brave Women," and "With Peace You Don't Play." Marchers proclaimed that Nicaragua is the only country in the region with tranquility and security where women have more options to develop in all aspects of life: economic, social, cultural, and sports. November 25 marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, a date that Nicaraguans commemorate by calling for peace and non-violence, a right earned and recognized by the FSLN. (Radiolaprimerisima, 11/26/19)

Managua Inaugurates Sixth Sports Academy

The Volleyball Academy is aimed at developing the talent of children between the ages of ten and sixteen. Deputy mayor of Managua Enrique Armas said, "The idea is to continue promoting volleyball. This was a very successful year for Nicaraguan volleyball; we had great tournaments here, both salon volleyball and beach volleyball." The Mayor's Office of Managua sponsors baseball, soccer, boxing, basketball and swimming academies, which bring together more than 1,600 athletes. (El19Digital, 11/30/19)

New Maternal Wait Homes and Home for Special Needs

The municipalities and the Ministry of Health will complete new maternal wait homes where women from rural areas can stay until they have their babies. Ten projects are planned with an

investment of US$100,300 that also includes homes for people with special health needs in San Isidro, Matagalpa; Bonanza, North Caribbean; and improvement of the maternal wait home of La Libertad, Chontales. (Informe Pastran, 11/28/19)

Government Issuing Property Titles
The government is issuing 3,500 property titles during December 2019, ensuring legal security to families. On Dec. 4, Barrio San Judas families received their property titles in Managua. Francisca Mora thanked God for having received her property title, saying she believes that it will bring her legal security. "I've been waiting for a long time and finally the dream has come true, after twenty years my home is legal!" In addition to being free, all work is done by the state including registration in the land registry. (Canal 8, 12/9/19)

One Million Children Receiving Toys for Christmas
The Sandinista government began delivering more than one million toys to the same number of children who attend pre-school, first, second and third grades in the public schools. The toy delivery began on December 10 in the municipalities of Chontales, Boaco, the Northern and Southern Caribbean, and Rio San Juan through the Ministry of Education in each of the communities. On Dec. 11, toys will be delivered in Madriz, Estelí and Nueva Segovia; on Dec. 12, 13 and 14 in Jinotega, Matagalpa, León and Chinandega; on Dec. 16 in Rivas, Carazo, Granada and Masaya, and on Dec. 17 in municipalities and districts of the capital, Managua. (Radiolaprimerisima, 12/10/19)

Nicaragua's Phytosanitary System Recognized
During the launch of the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH 2020) held on Dec. 3rd in Rome, headquarters of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu said, "Nicaragua has one of the most advanced phytosanitary systems that uses comprehensive sanitary checks at all its borders, applying rigorous sanitary controls for the certification of export, import and transit of food." Nicaragua Agricultural Minister (MAG) Edward Centeno explained the Phytosanitary Surveillance System that the Nicaragua Institute of Agricultural Health and Safety (IPSA) is implementing in the country. He highlighted the importance of the agricultural sector, which represents 20% of Nicaragua GDP and 34% of exports of primary products. The IYPH 2020 was declared by the United Nations General Assembly for the purpose of raising awareness of the importance of plant health in addressing hunger, poverty and environmental threats, as well as boosting economic development. (Nicaragua News, 12/4/19)

Major Potable Water Project in Tuma-La Dalia
The Nicaragua Water and Sewage Company inaugurated the potable water and sanitation system in Tuma-La Dalia municipality, Matagalpa Department, benefiting 7,876 inhabitants. The cost of the project totaled US$1.3 million and was financed by the Emergency Social Investment Fund (NUEVO-FISE) with support of Swiss Development Cooperation. (Nicaragua News, 12/6/19)

Electricity Coverage Reaches More Than 97% of the Population
In Nicaragua, 97 out of every 100 citizens have electricity service in their homes thanks to the programs that the Sandinista government has been developing for several years to bring electricity to the most remote communities in the country. Salvador Mansell, executive president of ENATREL, shared that the electrification index reached 97.02% at the end of November 2019, a goal planned for this year. Mansell said more projects will be carried out in the country to reach 99% electrification in 2022. (Radiolaprimerisima, 12/12/19)

The Amnesty

By Nan McCurdy

Introduction

This chapter reviews the historic record that led to The Amnesty Law of June 2019 by the Nicaraguan government through articles and news briefs.

Creating a simple law that gives amnesty to all of the violent criminals who participated in the 2018 failed coup attempt was an audacious act but one that was not surprising for the Sandinistas who took the name *Government of Unity and Reconciliation in 2007*. They have worked towards peace and reconciliation since they first came to power in July 1979. The government and the majority of Nicaraguans have a deep desire for peace because they know that only with peace can all the people have a better life.

As predicted, despite The Amnesty, the US-financed and directed opposition still claims that common criminals in Nicaragua's jails today are "political prisoners" and it is one of the main fictional arguments they use to get international media coverage. They also continue to lobby for more economic sanctions against Nicaragua. And the US continues to pay them for these actions.

The Amnesty was one more act that helped the population see that the opposition simply wants power, at any cost.

Granting amnesty is contrary to actions by the US and the Nicaraguan oligarchy. When the Sandinistas lost in 1990 the new president, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro was asked what was going to happen to the Sandinistas. She responded that they will disappear like ants. The US lackeys have always tried to eliminate the Sandinistas; what happened in 2018 was not new. The US objective is to eliminate the Sandinistas as an alternative political power to the traditional oligarchy they support, because the Sandinistas dare to represent the needs of the people, not of the US corporations.

The Amnesty has been a hard pill to swallow for the Sandinista family, especially for the families of the victims – those killed, like 23 police, and hundreds tortured and terrorized. For them it must be extremely hard to know the perpetrators of the violence are walking free.

However, accepting The Amnesty shows the willingness of Sandinistas to sacrifice to arrive at peace. The people make a great contribution by forgiving the protagonists of the violent acts of 2018. The Amnesty, although not a panacea, facilitates solutions to political problems and demonstrates again the commitment of the Sandinistas to promoting peace. It shows the amazing generosity of the Sandinistas and of their government.

NicaNotes: Forgiveness: A Revolutionary Trait

By Chuck Kaufman

June 12, 2019
https://afgj.org/nicanotes-forgiveness-a-revolutionary-trait

The willingness of the Sandinista government to go to almost any lengths to achieve national peace and tranquility, including pardoning the crimes of those in the opposition who killed, tortured, burned homes, schools, markets, and public buildings in last year's failed coup attempt, is consistent with their historical record.

Recall that the triumphant Sandinista revolutionary forces captured many of Somoza's brutal National Guard. They were tried by courts and sentenced to 30 years in prison, the maximum penalty for any crime under Nicaraguan law then and now. Within two years, in an effort to achieve domestic tranquility and to pacify the new Reagan administration in the US, the Sandinista government declared amnesty for a number of the criminals who had killed 40,000 Nicaraguans in the war. Unfortunately, many of those pardoned headed straight for Honduras where they were gathered up by the CIA and became part of the Contra Army funded by the US. And, in 1989, the government freed almost all the remaining National Guard prisoners, even though they had served only a fraction of their sentences.

When the Sandinistas lost the election of 1990 and the Contra War ended, there was little ///to no/// revenge killings at the grassroots level as Contras, who had killed another 40,000 Nicaraguans, returned to their communities. The three neoliberal governments of Chamorro, Aleman, and Bolaños virtually ignored the welfare of the demobilized Contras and demobilized Army, but when the Sandinistas returned to the presidency through elections in 2007, the government promoted reconciliation and funded programs to distribute land, galvanized roofing, pensions, and other programs to demobilized military and Contras alike.

John Perry analyses this newest effort by the government of President Daniel Ortega to achieve peace and prosperity.

Nicaragua's Amnesty for Crimes Committed in Last Year's Violence
Fails to Satisfy an Implacable Opposition

By John Perry

John Perry is a long-time resident of Nicaragua. His family was directly impacted by the violence of the failed coup of 2018.

In February 2019, the Sandinista government resumed a "national dialogue" with the opposition, re-establishing a forum to resolve political conflict in the country after the previous dialogue fell apart during last year's violence. In the new negotiations, the opposition Civic Alliance's key demand has been the release of those who were imprisoned for crimes committed during the failed coup. In late March, the government agreed to release all detained prisoners by June 18, a process which is well underway in co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Only 34 coup-related indicted or convicted criminals are still to be released [they were released before June 18].

Agreeing to this demand was very controversial given the large number of Sandinista victims of the coup. There is great reluctance among Sandinistas to accept amnesty for their tormentors. However, many are coming around after their leadership made it clear that this is an important step towards deterring further violence, securing peace and strengthening the country's social and economic stability.

The Civic Alliance and the international bodies that support them claim that those being released are simply "political" prisoners, "not having committed a single crime". Supposedly all were protesting peacefully and were improperly convicted under a new anti-terrorism law that they claim violates the legitimate right to protest. However, as the AFGJ report Dismissing the Truth showed, most if not all were charged or convicted for crimes committed under Nicaragua's long-established penal code. The crimes range from murder to "impeding or seriously obstructing" transit, which of course occurred across the country for three months in 2018 when the nation was paralyzed by opposition roadblocks. The recent series of short documentaries on Youtube by *Juventud Presidente Keys of the Truth*, are now available in English, and show the truth about several of last year's worst crimes.

The government has argued, understandably, that those who are charged or convicted after due process cannot simply be allowed to walk free: their release must also be subject to legal process. To achieve this, the National Assembly has just passed a simple law with four articles (translated here) that creates an amnesty for those guilty or accused of "political" or "related common crimes" from April 18, 2018 onwards. It also applies to those not yet arrested or investigated, extending the amnesty to those in hiding or who left the country. The Amnesty is conditional on their not repeating their crimes.

Any objective observer must see this as an extremely unusual act of state generosity, given the seriousness of the violence. This past week there was a reminder of how horrendous this was, with the funeral of Bismarck Martinez, whose incomplete remains were only recovered last month. He was a Managua municipal worker, kidnapped on his way to visit relatives in Jinotepe in June 2018 and then brutally tortured by opposition criminals before being killed. His case was one of many incidents of kidnapping and torture of Sandinista supporters and police officers.

Far from welcoming the amnesty law, however, their twisted logic led the opposition Civic Alliance to condemn it, on the basis that since their "political" prisoners are 'innocent' and amnesty is unnecessary and they should simply be released. The real purpose of the amnesty is, they say, to exonerate the government for the crimes they allege it carried out. The opposition website *Confidencial* called it a self-amnesty (summarized in English here).

The Civic Alliance and their supporters reveal themselves to be much less interested in freeing Nicaraguans from jail than they are in getting another round of headlines across the globe saying that the Nicaraguan state is harboring paramilitaries, avoiding justice and failing to meet the demands of international bodies. They see the entire "dialogue" as a strategic part of an ongoing global media offensive to delegitimize the Nicaraguan government, whatever it does.

For example, Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, was alerted to complain about the planned law even before it was published, saying that "Amnesties for serious human rights violations are prohibited under international law." Had she waited to read

the new statute, she would have seen that it specifically *does not apply* to crimes "regulated under International Treaties to which the State of Nicaragua is Party." Among these treaties (listed here) is the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture. In the context of last year's events, it appears to have a major flaw in applying only to state agents (see Article 3 of the convention). Nevertheless, it would not permit the Nicaraguan government to exonerate any state agent who committed torture, under a very wide definition of what that means.

In any case, despite Civic Alliance claims, there is no credible evidence of opposition supporters being tortured by government agents. Most opposition deaths were during exchanges of gunfire, with victims on both sides, so it would be extremely difficult for any further investigation to reach firm conclusions. For example, during the relief of Masaya on July 17 there were six deaths (including a police officer) in heavy firing by both sides.

Apart from their supposed innocence, the opposition also claims that those imprisoned were submitted to a process plagued with illegalities. They make constant reference to the findings of international bodies, who blame the government for most of last year's deaths, without of course admitting that those bodies accepted evidence only from the opposition side, as we demonstrated in our analysis of Amnesty International's report last October. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (part of the Organization of American States) was particularly culpable, showing its complete inability to carry out an objective investigation that takes proper account of the opposition's violence.

The Civic Alliance's menu of alternative routes to the liberation of the prisoners, presented last month, was also full of legal pitfalls and would have been so time-consuming in terms of court processes that the timetable could not have been met (as a legal expert explained to Radio La Primerisima). The amnesty statute is simply the quickest and most transparent method of meeting the opposition's demands while complying with Nicaraguan law.

As the government has repeatedly pointed out, the Civic Alliance has acted in bad faith from the start, determined to disrupt the dialogue through non-attendance or else finding fault with whatever concessions the government makes. This is merely the latest example. The opposition refuses to address the government's main demand, which is that it urges the United States to remove sanctions such as the Nica Act and requests international bodies such as the OAS to desist from further action against Nicaragua, such as threatening to expel Nicaragua because of alleged violations of the OAS's democratic charter. The Civic Alliance only comes up with excuses, arguing either that Nicaragua has not yet complied with international demands or that it lacks the necessary influence to get the US government or the OAS to change their minds (despite having actively lobbied for sanctions since May 2018).

The Alliance is divided: some members want to negotiate with the government but most simply reject the government's legitimacy and seek regime change. This prevents them from making any genuine commitment to a negotiated settlement, much less one that might lead to lasting peace. Soon after you read this article the last prisoners will have been released: the Alliance will have achieved one of its main objectives, but they will continue to behave like spoilt children, stomping their feet and claiming they have been cheated.

The following article was written eleven days before the Amnesty Law and describes a few things the opposition did that show they had little, if any, desire for a real negotiation. Then and now they are paid to create small protests and strikes, and claim that violent criminals are 'political prisoners' – all so that the international media has material with which to misinform inside and out of Nicaragua in an attempt, for example, to paint Nicaragua as a dangerous place to discourage tourists, undermine growth of the economy and employment.

NicaNotes: Nicaraguan Government Makes Headway for Peace with No Help from the Opposition

By Nan McCurdy

May 29, 2019
https://afgj.org/nicanotes-nicaraguan-government-makes-headway-for-peace-with-no-help-from-the-opposition

The Nicaraguan government and the opposition Civic Alliance have been negotiating a peace agreement since February but, while measurable good faith is seen on the government's side, the opposition has ceded nothing, and half the time does not even show up.

On May 23, as a way of measuring support, the opposition Civic Alliance together with part of big business, called for a general strike. The strike was unsuccessful as it was not supported by transportation collectives, unions, gas stations, markets, the free trade zones with their 120,000 workers, call centers with 7,000 workers, construction companies, or workers in the health and education sectors.

The largest chain of supermarkets, Pali (owned by Walmart), with more than 115 stores, functioned normally. The other big chain, La Colonia, with about 20 stores nationwide, closed. One bank chain, Banpro, did not function. The other banks functioned normally. The owners of malls did not open, but many shop owners complained. All the public markets in the country opened but between 5 and 10% of stalls did not. High-end bars and restaurants in Managua were closed.

Radio political analyst William Grigsby said it was the wealthy owners who went on strike, not the workers. The strike was to measure support, but more than anything it was for external consumption so that the major media in the US could write about the strike giving a false impression of support for the opposition. And it worked. There were articles and headlines in Fox News, Aljazeera, Voice of America, and progressive Democracy Now.

The opposition said the strike was to pressure the government to release those whom they call political prisoners and whom I call common criminals who murdered, kidnapped, tortured, committed arson and extortion on a massive scale, and more. Since the beginning of the attempted coup, the opposition, their organizations and their human rights groups have inflated the numbers of dead. Since the International Red Cross confirmed 253 deaths in relation to the coup attempt, the opposition has dropped this. Within that number about a third were opposition supporters, a third were Sandinistas and government workers and a third were innocent bystanders. To see the details of the report by the Nicaragua Truth, Justice and Peace Commission, go here: https://www.cvjp.org.ni/uploads/documentos/20190429145918936.pdf

Now the opposition is claiming hundreds of "political prisoners." The Government has already released well more than half of them. There are only 132 left and they will be released, at the

very latest, on June 18 of this year. This was one of the first commitments in the negotiations. They have already released 336 people as a show of good will. Because most of these prisoners have already been tried and sentenced (you can see details of their crimes, capture, trials and sentencing in issues of NicaNotes since July 2018) the laws do not allow the government to simply release them. Those who have been released are in a situation of "house arrest" – their home is their prison. The government will have to pass some kind of amnesty law to give them freedom. The opposition still insists there are 800 political prisoners when many organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, have concurred on the numbers and the fact that only 132 are still in prison. As long as there are prisoners in the prisons, I believe the opposition will say they are coup prisoners, to use them for international media hype. I really would not be surprised if the government emptied the prisons. They want to eliminate any subject on which they could be criticized, even when they are opposition lies.

There is great resistance among Sandinistas to amnesty – many Sandinistas were tortured, kidnapped, had a vehicle or home burned, had a family member killed or tortured. And the entire population is traumatized by the fear they felt during those terrifying three months. The idea that these criminals will be set free is not palatable to many.

However, the government has been educating people about the need for peace, pardon and reconciliation since August 2018. Analyst Grigsby says "We are the ones who want peace, we are the ones doing everything to bring about peace and we will all benefit from peace."

Sandinistas support their government and most will support this audacious move.

The opposition has currently left the negotiating table. The Government delegation to the negotiating table presented the Work Program for Peace and Stability on May 22. This includes all of the items committed to in the negotiations and much more. What the government is agreeing to do is overall so incredible, it is very likely the opposition will return and sign on the dotted line so that they can say they pressured the government to do all of these things.

1. Definitive release of all the prisoners no later than June 18, 2019
2. Continue to work with the Organization of American States to strengthen the electoral process for celebration of general elections in 2021.
3. Expand and strengthen the more than 500 neighborhood peace and reconciliation committees.
4. Continue attention to victims materially, physically and psychologically that has been functioning since last year and create a law for integral attention to all the victims.
5. Promote the Program of Voluntary Return of Nicaraguans Abroad, assuring constitutional and security guarantees for their reintegration into society (many people have already returned).
6. Ratify, as mandated by the Constitution and the Labor Code, the participation of workers in management of companies, through their organizations.
7. Proceed, in accordance with tax law, to make the relevant audits, as appropriate, of all companies, media outlets, non-profits and foundations that receive tax exonerations.
8. Call on the international community for the cessation of sanctions like the Nica Act.
9. Guarantee the right to demonstrate and publically mobilize while respecting the constitution and laws of the country.

There is a clear recognition by the majority of the population of all the government has done and continues to do in order to bring about reconciliation, peace, economic stability and growth and the return to the way Nicaragua was before April 2018.

In a new survey by the Public Opinion Monitoring System of the independent consulting firm M&R, 58% of Nicaraguans approve of the work carried out by President Daniel Ortega. (M&R was the only international polling firm to correctly call the Sandinista defeat in the 1990 election. Even the opposition does not claim M&R is biased in favor of the Sandinistas.)

The survey was released May 20 and indicates that 97% of Nicaraguans want a peaceful country and 98% want social and economic stability. 88% reject actions that threaten employment and development; 85% reject the roadblocks set up by the opposition between April and July, 2018. 68% want the country to retake the route it was on before April 2018; 81.5% are in disagreement with the coup d'état. 97% believe the population has the right to demonstrate as long as it does not affect the rights of others.

That same week, the opposition called for a march for Sunday May 26. Opposition groups had about fifty people with their faces covered in the large square of the Managua Cathedral. News reports indicated that there were almost as many journalists as protesters. As soon as the reporters had what they needed, just like in a photo shoot, the protesters took off their masks and left. Clearly these were some of the people still being paid. As long as USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, and others are financing the coup-supporting organizations, they will continue to try to cause chaos at every turn – they are being paid to do it.

Tomas Valdez Rodriguez is a member of a Catholic Christian Base Community and is one of the authors of the letter asking the Pope to remove the coup-organizing Bishop Silvio Baez from Nicaragua. Nearly 600,000 Nicaraguan Catholics signed the letter and the Pope did indeed remove Baez. In response to the opposition's call for a general strike, Valdez lamented, "Evil Ones: Let Nicaragua Live in Peace."

The following article addresses amazing news totally ignored by International media while they were busy maligning the "Amnesty" of the coup mongers. The Sandinista government carried out actions for peace and wellbeing building modern hospitals, connecting the Pacific and the Atlantic coasts of Nicaragua for the first time by road, and creating laws to promote peace like that of the Amnesty. Jorge Capelán is a Nicaraguan journalist and political analyst who has worked for and collaborated with several national and international outlets such as Radio La Primerísima, El 19 Digital, Revista Correo, Tortilla con Sal, RT and teleSUR.

CNN Doesn't Tell the Story: Nicaragua Frees Prisoners, Builds Hospitals and Connects the Nation

By Jorge Capelán, translated by Nan McCurdy

June 20, 2019
http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/6725

Vice President Rosario Murillo reported that the land will be inaugurated for the construction of a major new hospital in the city of Leon on June 20, the anniversary of Leon's founding. The Oscar Danilo Rosales Hospital will be the largest in the country with an area of 35,685 meters, 461 beds and an investment of 105.8 million dollars.

The new hospital, along with surgery, will have many specialties: physical therapy, psychiatry, neurology, maxillofacial surgery, oncology, nephrology, among others. It will also have rehabilitation services, chemotherapy, hemodialysis, tomography, endoscopy, intensive care, transplants and nuclear magnetic resonance examinations.

These are not empty promises. During the sixteen years (1990-2006) of the three neoliberal governments that plundered the country, only four hospitals were built while the population almost doubled. Since 2007 the Sandinista government has already built 16 modern hospitals for the population.

On June 10 and 11 amnesty was awarded to all the criminals who participated in violence in 2018. But because complaints about prisoners get them articles in international media the opposition has come up with a list of 80 new delinquents they say are political prisoners. They say that's why they don't sit down to negotiate with the government. The reality is that those 80 were in prison before the attempted coup. But the Sandinista government releases prisoners all the time. Two weeks ago 200 women prisoners were given "family coexistence". Yesterday, it was announced that a thousand people in the different penitentiary establishments will be awarded "family coexistence" on Father's Day, June 23.

Since the time of the right-wing governments, it has been customary every year to release a certain number of people sentenced to less serious crimes. The Sandinista government has followed this policy, and since 2016 (long before the coup violence) released larger numbers of people with sentences up to five years for less serious crimes. Last December, more than 1,000 prisoners were released in this way; in April of this year, at least 636 inmates were released.

"That is the definition that our Superior Law gives to the penitentiary system: we have a system based on rehabilitation, as expressed in our Magna Carta. In Nicaragua, the penitentiary system is humanitarian and has as its objective the transformation of the person in order to reintegrate him/her into society," explained Congressman Carlos Emilio López on humanitarian measures implemented by the government.

More important news of the day: The Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, retired general Oscar Mojica, highlighted on June 19 in the television program "Revista En Vivo" that the new road to the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast recently inaugurated by the Sandinista government, unites the country from ocean to ocean opening infinite possibilities for commerce.

This road, together with the construction of the new port of Bluefields, for the first time in history, will allow the Pacific and Atlantic coasts to be connected in an agile way so that goods can be transported from coast to coast in just eight hours." This is a milestone in the economic development of our country and of Nicaraguan families. The Caribbean region will benefit the most, but benefits will radiate to the whole country," said the minister.

None of this news is broadcast by the international media. You won't find it easily on Google either. But it is the reality of what is happening in Nicaragua today.

Related NicaNotes Briefs

Prisoner Human Rights Respected
Nicaraguan Human Rights Ombudsman and member of the Truth Commission, Dr. Adolfo Jarquín, said the National Penitentiary System is guaranteeing full respect for human rights of those involved in the failed coup attempt. “The Commission has verified that the Nicaraguan government is guaranteeing respect for the human rights of prisoners, ensuring they receive medical attention as well as visits of relatives, spouses and friends,” Jarquín said. (Nicaragua News 1/23/19)

Roadblock Leaders Found Guilty of Murder and Other Crimes.
A Managua Criminal Court judge sentenced Medardo Mairena to 216 years in prison on Monday for the murder of four police officers and a school teacher in the municipality of Morrito in Rio San Juan and other crimes committed during the failed coup attempt. He was also found guilty of ten kidnappings, organized crime, and aggravated robbery. Mairena’s actual sentence is 30 years because that is the maximum allowed by Nicaraguan law. According to the prosecutor’s indictment, on July 12, Mairena is responsible for the armed attack on the police delegation in Morrito that left five dead and several wounded. Also sentenced to 210 years was Pedro Mena. Co-defendant Orlando Icabalseta was sentenced to 159 years. (Radio La Primerisima, El Nuevo Diario, 2/19/19)

Inmates Will Enjoy Being with Family Members on Valentine’s Day
Vice President Rosario Murillo said more than 1,170 inmates in the National Penitentiary System will benefit from the Family Reunification Program promoted by the government. “On Valentine’s Day, all these prisoners will celebrate alongside their families and friends. This is how we are ratifying our firm commitment to the protection of human rights and the promotion of social reintegration of inmates.” (Nicaragua News 2/14/19)

Government and Business Begin Negotiations
Negotiations between the government and the business sector began Feb. 28. The parties worked on the approval of a Roadmap that establishes the norms and procedures of the negotiations. The twelve points were approved in the first two sessions. The parties agreed to continue meeting Monday through Friday, so that the negotiation is concluded in the shortest possible time. (Nicaragua News, 2/28/19, 3/4/19)

Government gives *House for Prison* to more than One Hundred Prisoners
On Feb. 27 the government began to release prisoners from the penitentiary system of Tipitapa at La Modelo and La Esperanza prisons. These people will enjoy house arrest, described as *house for jail,* instead of serving time in prison. There are between 100 and 150 prisoners who will be given *house for prison*. In the Women’s Penitentiary System, La Esperanza, moving scenes of tears and hugs were seen as women were released under the measure of *house as prison*. The release of prisoners came within hours of the beginning of an economic negotiation between the government and opposition business leaders. In social media there are several videos of the moment in which young people from Leon are received by their relatives in this city. (El Nuevo Diario, 2/27/19)

Catholic Bishops Torpedo Current Negotiations
The only two Catholic leaders invited to accompany the reinitiated national negotiations were Managua Archbishop Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes and the Papal Nuncio Waldemar Stanislaw Sommertag. On March 11, the government delegation and the Papal Nuncio attended the negotiating table, but the opposition business sector did not. For the May 2018 Dialogue, the Bishops were invited by President Ortega to mediate, but they took the side of the opposition and the dialogue went nowhere. This time, some of the Bishops who had previously mediated appear to have convinced the Cardinal and the business sector to walk away from the negotiating table.

A Foreign Affairs Ministry press release stated: “The delegation of the Government of Nicaragua ratifies its commitment to continue strengthening democracy and developing working sessions to reach a consensus on the agenda approved by both delegations on March 5, 2019.” Some of the agenda items include:

1. Strengthening the Electoral Institutions through implementing the recommendations of the OAS Electoral Accompaniment Mission and Proposals for Electoral Reforms.
2. Justice and Reparations to Continue Consolidating Peace, Security, and Stability.
3. Release of prisoners who have not yet been tried in the context of criminal acts that occurred from April 2018 against the State of Nicaragua. Continue to strengthen the freedoms, rights and guarantees established in the Constitution.
4. Make international efforts to obtain support for the implementation of the Final Agreements of the Negotiation and call on the international community to suspend all sanctions against the Nicaraguan people in order to facilitate the right to human, economic and social development favoring the most vulnerable sectors of the population. (Radio la Primerisima, 3/12/19)

Nicaraguan Government and OAS Agree to Have a Representative in the Negotiations
The Government of Nicaragua formally invited a special envoy of the OAS General Secretariat to participate in the negotiations with the opposition. Luis Ángel Rosadilla is in Nicaragua and has participated over the last two years on work towards electoral reform. (Informe Pastran, 3/11/19)

Release of Prisoners
The Ministry of Government announced the release under house arrest of 50 persons who were detained for having committed “crimes against collective safety and crimes against public tranquility.” (Nicaragua News, 3/15/19)

US Does Not Rule Out Military Option in Nicaragua
Although “focused on resolving Nicaragua’s crisis through political, economic and diplomatic action,” Washington “does not rule out any other option, including the military option,” Ambassador Todd Robinson, the U.S. special envoy for Central America, said Monday in Madrid. Robinson met with representatives of the Spanish government to analyze the internal conflict in Nicaragua. As he did last week in Brussels, the State Department representative insisted that the United States supports dialogue in Nicaragua; that sanctions against the government will continue; and that Washington calls for “prompt, free and fair elections.” The US continues to apply a policy of sanctions and restrictions on investments by international financial institutions, said Robinson. The US demands “the release of all political prisoners,” which Robinson put at between 800 and 1,000, while at the same time minimizing the recent release of a hundred prisoners as “the vast majority remain under house arrest.” Ambassador Robinson said he was convinced that the dialogue, which has the support of the opposition, the Holy See and some U.S. allies, “is going to work.” (La Prensa, 3/17/19)

Committed to Negotiations for Peace
In a press release issued March 20, the Negotiations Round Table announced that “Thanks to the efforts of the Apostolic Nuncio, as witness and companion, and the OAS Secretary General Special Delegate, the negotiation process has resumed.

March 20 the Negotiations Round Table received a communication from the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity in which it states its decision to release, within a period not exceeding ninety days, all persons arrested and detained in the context of the events that occurred since April 18, 2018, in full compliance with the legal framework of the country. The Negotiations Round Table has decided to extend a formal invitation to the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States to resume work on issues of electoral reform; and to extend a formal invitation to

the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to accompany the Negotiations in the process of releasing imprisoned or detained." (Nicaragua News, Mar. 21)

Latest update on peace negotiations
In a press release issued March 22, the Negotiations Round Table announced that "On March 21 and 22, 2019, the eleventh and twelfth sessions of the Negotiations Round Table were held at the INCAE Campus. As a result of these working sessions, a number of topics were agreed upon, including the incorporation of Mr. Luis Ángel Rosadilla as Witness and International Accompanier of the negotiation in representation of the General Secretariat of the OAS. The agenda for the following week will include the content of an agreement to follow up on the process of release of prisoners and detainees in the context of the events that occurred as of April 18, 2018, in accordance with the legal framework of the country, for which the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been requested. The follow-up mechanism for the process of release of prisoners will begin by reconciling and updating the lists of the Government, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the Civic Alliance. (Nicaragua News, Mar. 25)

Firmly committed to peace and security
In remarks during the inauguration of the new Nejapa overpass yesterday, President Daniel Ortega reiterated that his government is firmly committed to peace, security and the wellbeing of all Nicaraguan families. "We are moving forward on the path of peace and reconciliation. That peace that is fundamental to build new highways, hospitals and schools and to continue to advance in our main goal which is the fight against poverty." (Nicaragua News, Mar. 22)

Washington and OAS support negotiations
OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro said today that he recognizes "in a note from the Government of Nicaragua a fundamental element for committing the General Secretariat to a process of dialogue, a necessary condition for peace, justice, respect, human rights and democracy, fundamental objectives of the Nicaraguan people." For his part, the U.S. Ambassador Kevin Sullivan commented on Twitter that the negotiating agenda "marks a path towards the return to full democracy in Nicaragua" adding, "there is no time to lose, real solutions are needed in real time." Meanwhile, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Kimberly Breier said that "the negotiations agreed to are a positive first step" adding that "We expect immediate action, including an early unconditional release of all political prisoners. The time to restore democracy in Nicaragua is long overdue." (Informe Pastran, Mar. 21)

Recent Agreements at the Negotiation Round Table
On March 28, the Negotiations Round Table announced that the negotiations will finish on April 3. The Nicaraguan government and the opposition leaders agreed on March 27 on the procedure to follow up on the process of releasing some of those detained accused of crimes between April and July of last year. Communiqué number 9 issued by both parties after a month of negotiations, explains that after reaching agreements, negotiators held a meeting with representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which issued recommendations that have already been incorporated into the preliminary agreement. The Red Cross sent the agreement between the three parties to its world headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, where the ICRC will give the final go-ahead to implement it. The Papal Nuncio Waldemar Stanislaw Sommertag and the OAS Representative Luis Ángel Rosadilla continue to participate in the meetings as international witnesses and accompaniers. (Radio La Primerisima 3/28/19)

Truth, Justice and Peace Commission Clarify Numbers of Detained
On March 26, the Truth, Justice and Peace Commission (CVJP) challenged the data on detainees issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and a committee of people involved in the 2018 coup attempt. During a press conference, Jaime López Lowery stated that the

commission verified that 261 people are currently being detained, contrary to the IACHR's list of 647 inmates. Lowery explained that of the 386 prisoners remaining from IACHR data, CVJP members stated that 152 have been released, 61 are not linked to the conflict, 54 do not have complete personal information, "which makes it impossible to verify their real state; 112 are not in any penitentiary or police establishment and seven names are duplicated." (Radio La Primerisima, 3/27/19)

Government Releases 50 More Prisoners Involved in Coup Violence
The Ministry of Governance announced on April 5 release orders for 50 prisoners detained for crimes committed against public safety and tranquility during the 2018 attempted coup. These individuals received house arrest or other precautionary measures. This brings the total number released to house arrest in the last two weeks to 200. (Nicaragua News, Radio La Primerisima, 4/5/19)

The Castle of Opposition Lies Tumbles Down
The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has released the reconciled list of persons imprisoned in the context of the socio-political crisis that originated in Nicaragua in April last year.

The number verified by the Red Cross is 290 "political prisoners" of which 200 have already been released to house arrest. The Red Cross's authoritative count reveals the crude lies of sectors of the opposition united in the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy and the Blue and White National Unity (UNAB). According to their reports, communiqués and a media campaign unleashed in social networks and other media, the number of "political prisoners" ranged between 600 and 900 people. Using this false data, including the claim that more than 1,000 people have been disappeared, the opposition has launched international campaigns calling for new and more forceful sanctions against Nicaragua. Unfortunately, the most radical sectors of the opposition again suspended dialogue with the government on April 3 and called for demonstrations. (Giorgio Truccio, ALAI, 4/5/19)

Government Negotiating Team Reports
April 23 the six members of the government negotiating team reported on advances in the negotiating process including agreements. They also agreed on freeing from prison the majority of those detained, tried and sentenced for violence related to the 2018 coup attempt. The government has unilaterally removed 236 people from prison who now enjoy "house arrest." **The opposition had promised to request the lifting of economic sanctions, but have not fulfilled on this agreement.** (Radio Ya, Radiolaprimerisima, El Nuevo Diario, Canal 2, 4/23/19)

Opposition Returns to the Negotiating Table
After a number of absences, the opposition was present April 29 at the negotiating table. The government negotiating team has been calling on the opposition for better behavior since the government negotiating team is always present at the required hour and has fulfilled all agreements made so far. The government also went ahead and released 196 prisoners to house arrest. For the negotiations location, the opposition chose the INCAE which is the campus of an expensive business school. Last week the opposition became a laughing stock on Facebook as they requested that the government pay their food bill also. The government only has six people there while the opposition has their six principal negotiators and some 40 others. The bill was for more than $30,000 dollars. There were at least thirty different memes about this. Nicaraguans are very creative and enjoy making jokes. (Radio La Primerisima, 4/29/19)

Government Committed to Negotiations
Presidential Minister and Advisor Valdrack Jaenschke reaffirmed Nicaragua's commitment to negotiations at the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States. He summarized the accords reached with the opposition during 21 sessions that began Feb. 21 and in another session

on electoral issues with the OAS specialist Cristobal Fernandez. He also reported on special sessions with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with the presence of the Papal Nuncio and an envoy from the OAS Secretary General. As a gesture of good will, the Nicaraguan government has released nearly 200 prisoners. A mechanism has been proposed for the return of those who left Nicaragua in 2018, but the opposition has not accepted it. They also rejected a proposal to the international community to end economic sanctions. On March 26, the government had asked the OAS Secretary General to restart the memorandum of understanding signed in 2017 to work together on electoral reforms and March 27 this was accepted by the General Secretary. Jaenschke also thanked Pope Francis for exhorting the opposition and the government to find a peaceful solution quickly that will benefit the Nicaraguan population. (Informe Pastran, 4/26/19)

Opposition Calls on BCIE to Withhold Loan

Juan Chamorro, a member of the political opposition, has stated that he wants the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) to suspend payments to the National Police of Nicaragua for its program to extend rural coverage for increased security. At present the program is funding 19 projects, with 140,000 jobs. BCIE is apolitical, with the goal of generating employment. Projects are approved by all Central American members. One analyst, Moises Pastora, says in his column that people must separate their personal sentiments from what is best for the country. (Detalles del Momento on Ch. 6, May 10)

Opposition Negotiators Refuse to Reverse Stand on Nica Act

The Government representatives at the dialogue (Denis Moncada, Foreign Minister; Wilfredo Navarro, National Assembly deputy for the PLC; Edwin Castro, Assembly deputy for the FSLN; Francisco Rosales, Supreme Court Judge; Jose Figueroa, Assembly deputy for the FSLN) have had on the table the condition that, in order for the Government to agree to release the majority of prisoners in June, the opposition "Civil Society" needs to agree that they will reverse their support for the Nica Act passed by the US Congress. This act would affect Nicaragua's economy negatively by mandating the US vote against any loans by international funding agencies to Nicaragua. However, the opposition refuses to ask the US to repeal the Nica Act. They also refuse to pay their part of food consumption at the meetings. Their representatives, Juan Sebastian Chamorro, Jose Adan Aguerri of COSEP, Mario Arana, Michael Healy, Jose Pallais and Carlos Tunnerman, all seem more interested in obtaining an elected government post. This is impossible according to the Constitution since they have no legal status because they have not formed a political party to run as candidates in the next election. (Informe Pastran, May 7, 8,13).

Prisoner Killed in Melee

At the *Modelo* Penitentiary in Tipitapa during a visit of the International Red Cross, some inmates attacked a guard attempting to take away his weapon, and in the attack more than 20 guards were wounded and one inmate, Eddy Montes (a dual US-Nicaraguan citizen), who was sentenced to prison for wounding policemen at a roadblock in Matagalpa, was killed. (Informe Pastran and channels 4, 6, 8, May 16, 2019)

Ministry of Government Investigates Prisoner Death and Wounding of 21 Guards

The Ministry of the Interior reported that "On May 16 at 2:30 pm at La *Modelo* Prison in Tipitapa, Eddy Antonio Montes Praslin, 57 years old, was wounded when together with a group of rioters he tried to grab a penitentiary official's regulation weapon. Montes Praslin was taken immediately to the nearest hospital where he died." 21 penitentiary officials were also wounded. The Ministry reports that the autopsy by the Institute of Legal Medicine was performed in the presence of relatives. The National Penitentiary System asked the National Police to carry out the pertinent investigations for the clarification of the facts and identification of those responsible on the same day.

Chéster Emanuel Navarrete, one of the 100 prisoners released yesterday as part of the government's release to house arrest of criminals tried, sentenced and imprisoned for violent acts during the coup, told several media that Montes was not shot in the back as some media have published. Navarrete, paramedic and former firefighter, said that it was true that they rioted and that in the confrontation with the police Montes was shot in the pelvis and that he tried to help him and could see what happened. This belies the versions that there were two shots in the unfortunate event. During the riot, the inmates "wounded 21 prison officials, burned assigned mattresses, tried to destroy the electrical system, the roof of the gallery, the perimeter mesh," said the Interior Ministry. The riot was clearly planned together with opposition leaders as it occurred while a mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was meeting with staff of the National Penitentiary System in "La *Modelo*" prison. (Informe Pastran, May 17, 20, 21, 22, Radio la Primerisima 5/23/19)

Forensic Medicine Institute Says Remains are Bismarck Martinez

On June 4, experts at the Forensic Medicine Institute reported that the remains found near the Jinotepe Stadium belonged to Bismarck Martinez, after extensive DNA tests comparing the bones with family members. They have yet to say how he died as the bones are deteriorated and incomplete. Martinez was kidnapped at an opposition roadblock, tortured at the Catholic San Jose School in Jinotepe and disappeared. Martinez was a municipal worker and member of a Catholic Christian base community in Managua. After his disappearance, his grandson, Daniel Jose, began carrying a large picture of him to the twice weekly Sandinista Walks for Peace held between July and November of 2018. People were very moved and followed the family and the news. On the phones of various detainees caught last year the police found the videos of Martinez' torture. The San Jose school was used to torture a number of Sandinistas, as can be seen in videos taken by the torturers. (Radiolaprimerisima.com 6/4/19, Esto Es Noticia 13, 5/29/18)

New Documentary about the Massacre in Morrito

In the town of Morrito, Department of Rio San Juan, the opposition massacred four police and a school teacher on June 12, 2018. A new documentary about this was released June 4. This is the seventh documentary in the series Keys of the Truth. The title of this chapter is "*Matar y Mentir, el Plan en Morrito*" ("Kill and Lie, The Morrito Plan"). NicaNotes covered this extensively at the time as did journalist John Perry. To see the videos go to *Youtube*, put in "Juventud Presidente Keys of Truth" and scroll down. The documentaries in this series vary in length from 15 to 30 minutes and are excellent. A few are listed below:
Searching Through the Ashes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myr9yYMpsbM ,
Fire at Carlos Marx: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cz6kJ-tRNJI
Murder of the Journalist Angel Gahona: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfBiqo0oCxU
Mafias Exposed: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONw1Y4UZ6Ek
(Canal 6, Youtube, Juventud Presidente, 6/3/19)

50 More People Imprisoned for Coup Violence sent Home

The last week of May fifty more people found guilty and imprisoned for violent activities during last year's coup attempt were sent home on house arrest. With these fifty people now serving their sentence in their homes there are only 84 coup-related prisoners left. All of them will be freed by June 18. (La Sandino, 5/31/19)

Amnesty Granted for 2018 Coup Violence

On June 11 the Government of Nicaragua fulfilled a major agreement from the negotiations with the opposition, completing, in accord with the Amnesty Law passed by the National Assembly on June 8, the release of all indicted and convicted criminals who had been detained. For example, Medardo Mairena and Pedro Mena were convicted last year for the murder of four police officers and a primary school teacher in Morrito, Department of Rio San Juan. Miguel Mora was accused of multiple counts of inciting others to murder. One of those murdered was a young community policeman Gabriel Vado who was tortured, killed and burned on July 15, 2018. They both received

amnesty and had their records wiped clean. If they return to violent actions their amnesty is revoked. (Sin Fronteras, 6/12/19, Radiolaprimerisima, 6/11/19)

National Police Pay Homage to Eight Lieutenants Killed in June 2018

The eight police Lieutenants, were killed in the line of duty in June 2018 during the failed coup attempt. The names of the eight are: José Abraham Martínez, Dixon Bismark Soza, Douglas Mendiola, Marcos González, Carlos José Zamora, Jean Kerry Luna, Zaira Julisa López. "Their blood was like an offering for the peace that we have today that we consolidate to recover the paths of tranquility that we had before 18 April 2018," said Aldo Sáenz Ulloa, Deputy Director General of the National Police. On the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Police they remembered the sacrifice of the 22 officers killed in the attempted coup d'état. Of the eight lieutenants killed in June, 2018, all were killed with firearms; one was killed in Masaya, one in Nagarote, two in Mulukukú, one in Managua near Radio Ya, two in Barrio San Jose Oriental in Managua, and one in Managua near Metrocentro. They all leave children under twelve. (Radio la Primerisima 6/13/19) https://canal6.com.ni/2019/06/13/nicaragua-recuerda-a-los-37-companeros-asesinados-por-la-guardia-somocista-en-la-colina-110/

Police Pay Homage to 12 Officers Victims of Coup Violence in July 2018

On July 7 the National Police paid posthumous tribute to 12 police officers who were victims of violence in July of 2018 during the attempted coup. The tribute took place in the mausoleum of the police institution where the relatives of the murdered officers and the high command of the National Police placed floral offerings. The officers killed were: Inspector Iris Arón Urrutia killed on July 1 in Esquinas in the department of Carazo, Senior Petty Officer Allan Alexander Rodríguez Hernández killed on July 1 in Esquinas, Carazo, Lieutenant Martín Ezequiel Sánchez Gutiérrez killed on July 5 in the area of the Mining Triangle (Rosita, Siuna and Bonanza), and Lieutenant Hilario de Jesús Ortiz Zavala killed on July 8 in Jinotepe. Inspector Faber Antonio López Vivas fell on July 8 in Jinotepe; major commissioner Luis Emilio Bustos López, lieutenant Lenin Ernesto Olivas Alaniz, lieutenant Mario José Requenet López, and inspector Faustino Téllez Vargas were massacred on July 12 in the municipality of El Morrito in Rio San Juan; lieutenant Gabriel de Jesús Vado Ruiz was tortured, killed and incinerated on July 15 in Masaya; inspector Kevin Javier Lainez fell on July 17 in Masaya; and inspector Luis David López Hurtado fell on July 18 in Chontales. Doña Elena del Carmen Hernández mother of fallen officer Allan Alexander Rodríguez said "I was left without my son, but he lives on in our hearts and will live on forever for the National Police because he loved this institution. She remembered that since age of five Allan used to say that he was going to be a policeman and "He died being a policeman and before he died he told me, "Mother the day I die I want to go with my uniform on'." (El 19 Digital, 7/8/19)

Peace and Reconciliation in Nicaragua

By Susan Lagos

Introduction

"My personal revenge is to forgive." In September 1979, FSLN leader Tomás Borge visited a prison called La Modelo and faced a former Somoza Guardsman who had tortured him repeatedly. Tomás said to him, "You tortured me. You tortured me, but my personal revenge will be to forgive you."

The Sandinistas have been practicing peace and reconciliation probably since their inception. The United States occupied Nicaragua, determined who would be president, and managed the country, sending the wealth back to US bankers for most of the eighteen years leading up to the demand by Augusto C. Sandino for them to leave. He mobilized thousands of Nicaraguans to fight one of the world's first guerrilla wars against the occupying Marines from 1927 to 1933. As soon as the Marines were beaten and left, Sandino signed a peace agreement. When he signed a final peace accord a year later on February 21, 1934, General Somoza, who would become president, had Sandino and his generals murdered on the orders of the United States. All Sandino and Nicaragua had wanted was peace without US intervention.

Treatment of Prisoners

After overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, the new Sandinista government followed Tomás Borge's example of mercy. One of its first actions was to eliminate the death penalty while making the maximum prison term thirty years.

The Sandinistas created new institutions, including a new prison system based on the promotion of human transformation through dignified care, education, and skills-training. Prisoners had the opportunity to study and work, either in the prisons or on farms where they could have easily escaped; and they had the right to conjugal visits. Also, in 1979-1980 thousands of members of Somoza's National Guard were tried and imprisoned for torture, murder and more, but most were released after six months to a year. In 1989 some 1,933 who were still in prison were released.

When the Sandinistas lost the February 25, 1990 elections they controlled the army and the police and still enjoyed wide support. They had come to power through a revolution and probably could have stayed in power. Nevertheless, with a deep desire for peace after years of war, fighting Somoza and then a decade defending the country from the United States' Contra war, they turned over power in April to a new president, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. It was the first peaceful turnover of power in Nicaragua's history.

Reconciliation: Sandinista Willingness to Compromise Ends US Contra War
The US government fiercely opposed regional attempts to negotiate an end to their war in Nicaragua. Negotiations began with the Contadora process in 1983, involving Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela and Panama but US resistance lead to its abandonment. The Contadora process evolved into the Esquipulas Peace Process thanks to the leadership of Vinicio Cerezo, then president of Guatemala.

Because of all the casualties of the US Contra War, the embargo crippling the economy and the blockade of international loans the FSLN government strongly supported the peace talks in Esquipulas, Guatemala with the other four Central American presidents in May of 1986 and August of 1987.

The 1986 International Court of Justice judgment condemning US terrorism against Nicaragua undercut US resistance and made possible the signing of the 1987 Esquipulas 2 Agreement stipulating peace measures to be implemented, their timetable and the role of international observers. The regional credibility and authority of the US government was also diminished by the Iran-Contra scandal and its related hearings.

Then in March of 1988 in Sapoa, Nicaragua, they again met, with no US official presence, and drafted a peace accord. Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo and OAS Secretary General João Baena Soares signed the cease-fire, with Defense Minister Humberto Ortega and Contra leader Adolfo Calero representing the government and the Contra respectively. Point Three was an amnesty for Somoza's Guardsmen from before the July 19, 1979 Sandinista victory as well as for the US-formed Contra Resistance: They were allowed to return to Nicaragua openly without being tried, punished, or persecuted; another concrete example of the Sandinista willingness to compromise for peace and reconciliation.

After Violeta Barrios de Chamorro won the 1990 election representing the US-funded and formed UNO Party, the Sandinista Ministry of the Interior under Comandante Tomás Borge was disbanded, the Sandinista Police became the National Police, and former soldiers of the Contra Resistance army were allowed to train to become police officers. Weapons belonging to the Resistance, the Sandinista Army, and the people's militia were surrendered, and compensation was paid for them. They were then buried under a Peace Monument in Managua. Most resistance soldiers were given land so they would have a way to support their families. The National Reconciliation Commission established by the Sapoa Peace Accords oversaw these measures to try to reintegrate the Resistance into society, so that peace might be achieved between the warring factions.

While the Sandinistas were out of office from 1990 to 2007, the former contra fighters, many of whom were poor farmers who had been manipulated by outside forces in the 80's, became allies of the FSLN as it advocated for the poor who were suffering from neoliberal austerity and privatization policies. The Contras' political party, PRN or Partido Resistencia Nicaragüense, often votes with the FSLN in the National Assembly and runs in elections as part of an alliance with the FSLN.

Father Miguel d'Escoto's Example of Creative Non-violence

Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, a Maryknoll priest and Nicaragua's Foreign Minister from 1979 to 1990, was a Sandinista Prophet of Peace in the tradition of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Bolivar, and Sandino, as well as an advocate of liberation theology, creative non-violence, and anti-imperialism. His leadership further entrenched the Sandinista legacy of responding to violence with peace and reconciliation rather than revenge. During the US-funded Contra war against Nicaragua, he led through his example of creative non-violence. First, he fasted for over a month in 1985 to call for peace and an end to the US terrorist aggression. Then in 1986 he led a 300 kilometer *Walk for Peace* from Jalapa to Managua.

But Father d'Escoto's most celebrated act of creative non-violence was to lead the team that sued the United States at the International Court of Justice for the mining of Nicaragua's harbors. In 1986 the ICJ ruled in favor of Nicaragua. The Court ordered the US to cease its violence and pay Nicaragua US$17 billion, just for damages inflicted from 1981 to 1985. But the US declared itself exempt from the Court's rulings and continued its war – killing and destroying schools, health centers, crops and more until the 1990 elections. The United States has never paid the billions of dollars ordered by the Court (which would be equivalent to well over US$100 billion in today's dollars).

Still, Fr. Miguel was part of the Sandinista leadership that knew how to distinguish between the United States government and United States citizens, welcoming thousands of Americans to Nicaragua during the 1980s to witness the Sandinista revolution firsthand. The ties of friendship established between our peoples continue to this day.

From 2008 to 2009 Fr. d'Escoto served as President of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly. From the President's podium his prayer for the US government and people was, "May God illuminate your minds, so befuddled for now with hatred and greed, and allow you to straighten out your criminal foreign policy before it is too late for the world, for Mother Earth, and humanity. " (Tortilla con Sal, June, 2017).

Padre Miguel died a year before the 2018 coup attempt when the US government again directed a regime change effort against a Sandinista government. But his lessons of Christian forgiveness and reconciliation still serve the Nicaraguan people.

Peace and Reconciliation during the Coup Attempt

Since its election in 2006, the current Sandinista administration has called itself the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity, emphasizing its service not only for Sandinistas and former Contras, but for all citizens without regard to party or religion. However, the U.S. government maintained its decades-long practice of undermining the Sandinista movement.

By 2018 U.S.-funded NGOs had trained more than two thousand youth in ‘democracy promotion’ and government destabilization methods. In April of that year they sent millions of false messages via Facebook and WhatsApp accusing the police of killing people. Soon thousands of roadblocks were erected all over Nicaragua by the opposition, who paid common criminals $15 a day plus food, alcohol and drugs to terrorize citizens who needed to go to work, school, or the hospital, and paralyzed the economy. Many Sandinistas were kidnapped at roadblocks, tortured, and killed.

During a dialogue the government had requested, in May 2018 the opposition demanded that the police be confined to their stations. President Daniel Ortega agreed to this in exchange for the removal of the roadblocks. Although the President kept his word and the police were pulled off the street, the opposition not only failed to keep their part of the bargain, they built even more roadblocks.

During this time, Sandinista members spread the word to keep calm and not respond to the opposition violence with violence. Sandinistas were invited to form local Peace and Reconciliation Commissions in every neighborhood to encourage dialogue among the population, and help clarify the situation for people confused by the fake news on social media. In the absence of the National Police, historical combatants from the 1970’s and 1980’s helped the population organize to dismantle the roadblocks.

Once all the roadblocks were removed by ordinary citizens with help from the police in July 2018, peace was restored. While the Nicaraguan people began the task of rebuilding the shattered economy, the government began training the Peace Commissions for their very important job of fomenting peace, reconciliation and forgiveness, neighborhood by neighborhood. Peace Commissions promote peace among neighbors through dialogue, by training citizens to recognize fake news on social media, and creating an atmosphere of peace so that neighbors can live and work together in harmony.

National Assembly Deputy Carlos Emilio Lopez Hurtado was named to head the Peace and Reconciliation Commissions. He started by training people in each Department. Now he continues to travel to meet with at least two Commissions every day, inspiring and supporting the members.

The Law for a Culture of Dialogue, Reconciliation, Security, Work, and Peace (Law 985), was passed by the National Assembly in January 2019. Now, in 2020 there are more than 7,500 Peace Commissions, operating in every department of Nicaragua, including some 10,000 communities from coast to coast. They are now known as Commissions of Reconciliation, Peace and Human Rights and include the rights of women, youth, and children.

In a meeting with District 7.3, Managua (https://youtu.be/8vxCNgoD_a0) recently, Carlos Emilio summed up the task of the Peace Commissions:

“We have the responsibility to preach and practice peace, harmony, respect, tolerance, inclusion, a culture of brotherhood/sisterhood, solidarity, and peaceful family co-existence, which are Christian values.

1. We have the responsibility to communicate with others about current Nicaraguan laws on the human rights of women, girls, and boys, with zero tolerance for physical and psychological violence;
2. We must explain and raise awareness about the government’s social and economic programs and how people benefit from them; and
3. We need to promote relationships of love, justice and freedom in our marketplaces, families, cooperatives, unions, and schools.”

In an interview on March 18, 2020 in District 6.2 Managua (https://youtu.be/fba153wA3cc), Carlos Emilio López Hurtado emphasized that the people and government of Nicaragua want peace. He quoted Matthew 5:9, “‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” “Nicaraguans experienced the oppression of the Somoza dictatorship from the 1930’s to the 1970’s; the Sandinista war to end the dictatorship and for social revolution in the 1970s; the contra war imposed on us in the 1980s; and the neoliberal-conservative governments from 1990 to 2006 that ignored the plight of the poor.”

“Nicaraguans are finally able to live and work in peace under the present Sandinista government. Now we have social and economic programs for Catholics and Evangelicals, for Sandinistas and non-Sandinistas, without discrimination, including public education; Maternity Homes where pregnant mothers can stay near hospitals; alternative clean energy; electricity for 97% of the population (only 50% had electricity in 2006, with over 8 hours of blackouts per day, countrywide); child care centers, property titles, loans for production and small businesses, mostly for women; public health care with over 18 new hospitals; excellent roads, bridges, etc. All these projects are possible with our taxes, which during the neo-liberal governments were stolen from the people. Now the government uses those taxes, returning them to the people in social and economic programs.”

Conclusion

The most extraordinary example of peace and reconciliation, rather than revenge, is the fact that the Nicaraguan government granted an amnesty to all persons charged or convicted of crimes in connection with the violence of April-July 2018. This could not have been enacted, nor could it have been accepted by the population that had suffered at the hands of the amnesty recipients, were it not for the FSLN’s deep tradition of forgiveness and promotion of peace and reconciliation.

The Sandinistas’ rich heritage of peace and reconciliation was essential in keeping the opposition-fueled violence from escalating even further in 2018, and in helping the population to recover from it. If the people had responded to the violence with violence, and if the police or army had responded in a fashion typical of other threatened governments around the world, there would have been far more deaths. Hopefully, this

tradition of reconciliation and efforts such as the Peace Commissions will help the nation continue to heal and return to the path of peace and prosperity.

2019 Documents and Articles Related to Reconciliation

Report on Number of Dead in Coup Attempt
by the *Truth, Justice and Peace Commission*, Feb. 2019, https://www.cvjp.org.ni/

NicaNotes: The Sun Doesn't Go Down 'Even a Little Bit'
Jorge Capelan, translated by Nan McCurdy, 9/4/19**,** https://afgj.org/nicanotes-the-sun-doesnt-go-down-even-a-little-bit

Selected 2019 NicaNotes Briefs

Law for a Culture of Dialogue, Reconciliation, Security, Work and Peace
Law No. 985 was published in the official newspaper La Gaceta on Jan. 28. The purpose of this law is to establish the general legal framework that guarantees a Culture of Dialogue, Reconciliation, Security, Work and Peace. It regulates how the State Policy can be defined as the set of values, attitudes, traditions, worldviews, rights and duties, behaviors and lifestyles that allow individuals, families and communities to achieve human development inspired by Christian values, socialist ideals, solidarity, democratic and humanist practices, while considering the culture and identity of Nicaraguans. (Informe Pastran, 1/28/19)

Local Peace Commissions formed
All of Nicaragua's 153 municipalities have formed Peace Commissions which are comprised of citizens desiring peace and harmony and who are being trained in workshops to mediate in situations of resentment and loss due to the violence and hate propagated by the opposition during the attempted coup April to July, 2018. (Informe Pastran, May 17)

National Assembly Passes Law for Comprehensive Services for Victims of Coup Violence
With 69 votes in favor, the new Law to Serve Victims of Coup Terrorism was passed. Although the government has been serving the needs of victims, this law will assure healthcare (including mental health), social services, and more to all victims. (La Sandino, 5/30/19)

Commissions of Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace Now Number 879
National Assembly Deputy Carlos Emilio Lopez reported on the Commissions of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace to the Government Negotiating Committee. This initiative is based on the Constitution and also on the law passed earlier this year "For a Culture of Dialogue, Reconciliation, Security, Work and Peace" with the objective that Nicaraguan families learn to resolve their differences through peaceful means. Neighborhood meetings are held at least twice a month with agendas related to culture and peace which try to identify problems in the community and find ways to resolve them. (El 19 Digital, 6/7/19)

Government Grants House Arrest to 1,012 inmates for Father's Day
The Government gave a Father's Day gift to 1,012 inmates convicted of various crimes by releasing them from prison to house arrest. Inmates were released from prisons in Granada, Masaya, Carazo, Rivas, South Caribbean and Chinandega. The beneficiaries came out of prison full of joy and pledging to be better men and women in order to strengthen the family unit. (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/23/19) photos of reunited families:

http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/264677/cambian-de-regimen-a-1012-reos-por-dia-del-padre/

Nicaraguan Resistance Reiterates Its Support for the Government
On June 27, members of the Nicaraguan Resistance (former *contras*) met and reaffirmed their commitment to an alliance with the Government, saying that it is the only Government that has looked after the people. "We commemorate this anniversary to demonstrate to all those gentlemen who want war that those of us who were at war do not want to have anything to do with war. Those who want war have never had to fire a shot, but those of us who lived through the war do not want war. This government we have is the best that we Nicaraguans have ever had." said Elia Maria Galeano (Commander Chaparra). "This government has worried about our people, about the mothers of the fallen, about the highways, about education, about health and has made the country beautiful. The government of Nicaragua has done this by working for peace and reconciliation," added Galeano.

"In the midst of this coup attempt, we reaffirm that true reconciliation, true peace is in this alliance we have," said Edwin Castro, head of the Sandinista Caucus in the National Assembly. "The Nicaraguan government has carried out social projects for the benefit of the people like Zero Usury, Zero Hunger, scholarships for studying at universities and technology centers, and Peace Commissions that have been developed in different communities." Commander Chaparra continued, "Thanks to this government we have received land which we cultivate and by which our children get ahead. We are loyal allies of the government because we know Daniel Ortega cares about his people." Alexis David Cornejo, another Nicaraguan Resistance leader said, "During the 16 years of neoliberal governments we were never taken into account, whereas now we have various social projects that only this government has achieved. The most important thing is that our rights have been restored." (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/28/19)

Comprehensive Services for Victims of the Attempted Coup
The Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, Corina Centeno, explained that they are making progress with implementation of the Law on Comprehensive Services for Victims of the Attempted Coup. Since implementation of Law 994 began, 768 families that were victims of the violence that occurred in 2018 have received mental health care as well as other kinds of medical care.

"527 people with some kind of illness were seen at home and 146 people had to be referred to the health units. We are talking about 768 families plus the 397 injured police officers who also received care. We are also talking about the 199 victims, which also includes the 22 families of the police officers who died," said the Human Rights Ombudsman.
"Also found were 192 people who were financial dependents of the deceased: 918 orphans and 389 adults. Next week our job will be to visit families who suffered damage to their private property as a result of the coup violence". (TN8, 8/12/19)

Positive Work of the Red Cross and the Government
The Coordinator of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Laura Schneeberger, said the work with the Nicaraguan Government in recent months has been positive. The ICRC official explained that "the Ministry of Governance (MIGOB) has provided all the facilities for the staff of our organization to make regular visits to all detention centers in the country, where we have been able to assess the conditions of prisoners serving time and make our recommendations to the Ministry of Government (MIGOB)." Schneeberger added that in agreement with the Government, the ICRC is following up on the release of persons arrested and convicted of violent crimes during the 2018 failed coup. The ICRC had reconciled and confirmed the names that were on the list that was agreed to during the negotiating process. The government has released all the agreed to prisoners. (Nicaragua News, Sept. 11)

Large Peace March http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/273694/multitudinaria-marcha-en-defensa-de-la-paz/ (Radiolaprimerisima, 11/23/19)

Penitentiary Inmates Advance in Education
The Jorge Navarro Penitentiary Center in the municipality of Tipitapa graduated 125 inmates on Dec. 4 who completed literacy, primary and secondary education programs. Forty-two prisoners completed a second phase of literacy education; 70 inmates completed primary education, and 13 more are now high school graduates. The ceremony was presided over by authorities from the Tipitapa penitentiary complex, local municipalities and the Ministry of Education (Mined). The graduates received their diplomas accompanied by their parents and spouses. See photos here: https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:97546-sistema-penitenciario-de-tipitapa-promociona-a-125-reos-en-tres-niveles-educativos?fbclid=IwAR0mT8z1AbV5u8jvC6zKrl0hTg2JHA-iKSH-j_OKKjLh_5PO-0cnLvqOWYA (El19Digital, 12/4/19)

Uniting a Country and its People: Thirty-two Years of Autonomy on Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast

Coleen R. Littlejohn

As Adolfo Pastrán reports in the interview below, the implementation of the Autonomy process in Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast has meant the uniting of a country under a vision of nation, incorporating and promoting the development and participation of abandoned and impoverished indigenous communities. The Statute of Autonomy of the Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, Law # 28, was passed in 1987, over 32 years ago, after a regional process of consultation with over 40,000 citizens of the Caribbean Coast at a time when the country was still at war defending itself from the US-funded contras, many active in what was then referred to as the Atlantic Coast.

The ongoing implementation of the Autonomy process has been an exercise in building a new national identity enriched by cultural diversity and an instrument to safeguard cultures that were in danger of disappearing. It has entailed institution-building at the regional, municipal and community level. Above all, it has been a process of national reconciliation. And this has enabled dramatic improvements to the lives and standard of living of the people of the Caribbean Coast, especially in the last fourteen years when significant government investments have yielded progress in health, education, energy, communications, water and sanitation that people had never dreamed of just a few decades ago.

I have many personal memories of working over the years in different parts of the Caribbean Coast. The first visit was in mid-1980 during the rainy season when I flew by helicopter with Ministry of Health (MINSA) medical staff to Waspam to deliver vaccines to communities only accessible by river route where children had been dying of diphtheria. The vaccines were then loaded in coolers to small wooden boats to go upriver to communities that had never ever been visited by government officials. Today, every child and adult in the Caribbean and in the entire country is vaccinated in yearly campaigns, free of charge. Most of the children did not have birth certificates- people did not legally exist- but they do now.

Another memory is driving a Toyota truck back to Managua during the rainy season in the late 90s from Siuna, part of the mining triangle in the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN). The road was a river of mud at least 6 feet deep, so I drove on the edge thinking that at any minute the truck was going to fall into the center. The road to Siuna from Managua is now paved. Twenty years later, in December of 2018, it took only six hours for me to drive from Managua to Bluefields in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS) on an almost completed modern highway. Next year I plan to drive from Managua to Bilwi, passing by to see friends in Siuna as soon as that highway is finished. These things were unimaginable in 1980 or even in 2005.

One regret from those times was that I never saw the city of Bluefields and its typical gingerbread wooden houses before it was physically devastated by Hurricane Joan in 1988. I was actually in Puerto Cabezas, in the RAAN taking the last flight out before the hurricane struck the Coast. What I do remember from that time, however, was the incredible capacity of the country's emerging system of emergency preparedness planning and response which has only become stronger over the years.

The development of Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast has been truly remarkable and could serve as an example for many other countries, especially the United States. At the time of this writing, the Covid-19 per capita infection rate among the Navajo Nation has now surpassed that of New York state (The Guardian, May 26, 2020), the center of the pandemic in the US. This disproportionately

high rate is attributed to chronic structural and economic inequalities such as overcrowded housing, understaffed hospitals, lack of running water and limited internet access resulting from the US government's failure to comply with treaty obligations to provide adequate funding for basic services in exchange for vast amounts of tribal land. The United States has a lot to learn from Nicaragua's hard work to truly incorporate its multi/cultural populations in every aspect of social, cultural and economic life while institutionalizing Autonomy.

The Revolution Has Transformed the Lives of Nicaragua's Caribbean Peoples

By Adolfo Pastrán Arancibia, Informe Pastrán, in Radio La Primerísima, January 10th 2020
http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/276706/la-revolucion…
Translated by tortillaconsal on 11/01/2020 http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/8429
https://afgj.org/nicanotes-the-revolution-has-transformed-the-lives-of-nicaraguas-caribbean-peoples

On January 10th, this year, the government of President Daniel Ortega completed thirteen years in office. Many things have changed in the country in political, social and economic terms, with great strides in competitiveness, human development and poverty reduction via a welfare state. One of the historical achievements in this period is that the Sandinista Front under the Ortega administration has managed to unite the Pacific with the Caribbean after years of isolation, with a vision of nationhood and the future, incorporating into national development abandoned indigenous communities faced with the structural poverty of centuries, a historical social debt**.**

This Sandinista government has invested more resources for development and infrastructure investment in the Caribbean than any other. Between 1991 and 1996, only $38.9 million was allocated under the Violeta Chamorro government; $60.9 million under the Arnoldo Alemán government; $102.2 million under the Enrique Bolaños government. From 2007 to 2011, the Ortega administration invested US$ 209.1 million, from 2012 to 2016, US$ 424.8 million, and between 2017 and 2019, US$ 487.8 million, achieving a jump of 1,385.6% in road infrastructure; 2,180% in drinking water and sanitation; 638.4% in electrical energy coverage; 1,050% in health and hospital infrastructure; 841.3% in education and new schools; 719.7% other sectors, improving the quality of life of Caribbean inhabitants and creating new opportunities for development, which has been recognized by multilateral financial organizations.

Water and Sanitation. The national water authority ENACAL has executed investments in the two regions, Bilwi and Bluefields, with works already completed. In Bluefields alone, US$ 30 million has been invested in bringing drinking water to thousands of families who have piped access to this vital liquid for the first time, and another US$39 million in sanitary sewerage works between 2020 and 2022. In Bilwi, the drinking water project was completed with an investment of US$ 36.2 million in a mega-project and another 12 million dollars in sanitary sewerage, works recently verified by a mission of ambassadors from the European Union who are cooperating with the projects.

Education. In education, it is the government that has built more public schools and institutes in the Caribbean, modernized and equipped classrooms with technology, and brought education closer to urban, semi-urban and rural areas.

Energy. In 2006, in the Northern Caribbean Region only 17.6% of its population had electricity, today it is 61.6% and in the Southern Caribbean, only 39.3% had electricity, today it is 62.9%. Corn Island, for example, now has 100% electricity. One of the priorities of the Government through the Ministry of Energy and Mines and ENATREL has been to strengthen the country's

electricity sector and extend coverage to the entire Caribbean, where the benefits are self-evident. Nicaragua changed its electricity generation matrix by moving from 70% to 40% of the use of fossil resources and from 30% to 60% with renewable resources, an achievement recognized both by investors and international organizations. As part of that effort, the first and only solar plant in Latin America was installed on Corn Island and then another in San Juan del Norte, where 7.3 million dollars were invested.

With the PNESER Caribe 2007-2023 program, US$ 579 million will be invested. This includes rural electrification, ensuring energy supply to rural settlements, renewable energy generation plants, identification of energy demand, energy efficiency, transmission reinforcements and modernization of the electricity system. Between 2007 and 2018, US$124.28 millions of investments were executed, with US$ 454.74 million planned for 2019 to 2023. In the Northern Caribbean region, 50,000 inhabitants benefited and 36,000 in the Southern Caribbean region.

Progress is also being made installing 10 small solar plants on the North and South Caribbean coast, in Mulukukú, Siuna and Waspam, and another in Rama Cay, with a cost of US$ 4.3 million. Photovoltaic Systems for the Production Sector were installed in 108 centers in Bocana de Paiwas, Mulukukú, Prinzapolka and others. An emblematic work is the construction of the 138 KW transmission line between Siuna-Rosita-Bilwi and a special tower in the section of the Wawa River, guaranteeing the integration of Bilwi and Waspam to the National Electricity Generation Grid. For the South Caribbean, bids for the 138 KW Gateada-La Esperanza Transmission Line of 77 km have already been tendered and are being evaluated which will improve voltage at the Sub-Station in La Esperanza and Bluefields, as well as provide better service to communities in Kukra Hill, El Rama and Bluefields.

Transport. Highways and land connections on the Caribbean coast have improved the transit and stability of land transport, improving the safe transportation of its population and opening a range of opportunities, especially for the economic growth of these regions.

Last year, the Nueva Guinea-Bluefields highway was inaugurated, reducing the trip from Managua to just 6 hours, a journey that 50 years ago took 6 days, and the road to Kukra Hill and Laguna de Perlas is now practically complete. Starting this year, the MTI is contemplating the construction of four bridges over the Rio Blanco – Mulukuku – Siuna section, strengthening the North Caribbean Coast land corridor to promote the region's high productive and tourism potential. With these main roads and other land connections between municipalities, sovereignty and national security have been strengthened. The interconnecting highways of the Caribbean Coast with the Pacific area represent a fundamental strategic advance. Now, real progress can finally be made in the studies and designs for the construction of the Port of Bluefields to facilitate foreign trade.

The government is also making progress on the Southern Caribbean Coast land corridor, which has a length of 519 km and crosses the country from East to West. It connects the Caribbean Coast from Bluefields to the port of Corinto on the Pacific Ocean. Meanwhile, the North Caribbean Coast land corridor is now 557 km long and currently under construction up to Siuna. It is an important transportation route linking the Northern Caribbean with the departments of the center and west of the country as far as the Port of Corinto. Ten new municipalities, previously isolated for decades, will now be connected to the main road network.

Health. After more than 10 years waiting under neoliberal governments seeking to be able exercise the right to health in accord with the coastal autonomy legislation, in 2008 the Sandinista government approved Models of Intercultural Health Care for the North and South

Caribbean Coast, making cultural adaptations to the national Family and Community Health Model.

In the period from 2007 to 2019, over US$ 17 million was invested in 181 health infrastructure projects with 62 new projects, including 3 primary hospitals in Prinzapolka, Mulukukú and Corn Island, which are fully equipped and staffed by specialized personnel with the capacity to perform surgeries. In addition, the construction of the Intensive Care Unit at the Bluefields, 16 maternity homes, 11 health posts, 3 warehouses for medical supplies, 8 housing units for medical personnel, as well as 2 SILAIS headquarters. In addition, 119 health units were repaired and expanded, including health centers and posts, hospitals, drug warehouses, maternity homes, and staff housing.

These investments have meant increased free health care for Costeños. If we compare 2007 with 2019, we find that patient consultations in hospitals have increased 41% from 114,980 to 162,351. Health care center consults have increased 80% from 1,213,954 to 2,179,722. Patient discharges from hospitals doubled from 21,718 to 44,214, a 104% increase. The number of surgeries performed at the 9 hospitals was almost five times higher, from 8,055 to 38,729, representing a 380% increase.

The number of pregnant women treated in the first three months of pregnancy increased 77% from 6,575 to 11,613. The number of women who received four or more prenatal care sessions doubled from 5,840 to 12,158, an increase of 108%. In 2007 there were 9 maternity homes and 1,617 pregnant women were received; in 2019 the number of maternity homes increased to 25 (double) and 10,182 pregnant women were received, an increase of 530%. The number of births in 2007 was 12,179, of which 6,692 (55%) were born in health units; in 2019 there were 17,579, of which 14,784 (84% of the total) were born in health units. Post-partum care also increased, from 8,289 to 19,566 for a 136% increase. All of these actions contributed to a decrease in maternal deaths, which fell from 30 in 2007 to 16 in 2019, a 47% reduction. This has been made possible by the increase in prenatal care, the reception of pregnant women in maternity homes and the increase in institutional coverage of childbirth care, which shows the willingness of the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity to provide their Caribbean peoples with the care they deserve.

In terms of cervical cancer prevention, the number of women who had PAP smears taken increased fivefold, from 12,566 in 2017 to 65,108 in 2019, an increase of 418%. Children under one year of age received 55,256 growth-enhancing and developmental care sessions in 2007 and 71,908 in 2019, representing a 30% increase, and children between the ages of one and four received 96,591 sessions in 2007 and 112,614 in 2019, representing a 17% increase.

As of 2013, hemodialysis services are provided in the regional hospitals of Puerto Cabezas and Bluefields on the Caribbean coast. In addition, cancer treatment has been provided at the Bluefields hospital since 2017, avoiding the need for the coastal population to travel to Managua to receive these services. The Caribbean Coast also now has psychosocial care centers to promote mental health in the population, prevent addictions and violence and care for people with mental illness. In the Northern Caribbean, there is an orthotics and prosthetics workshop to meet the needs of people with physical-motor disabilities. In Bilwi/Puerto Cabezas, a modern regional hospital is being built, with highly complex equipment.

Development of the community economy. Since 2013, the Ministry of Family, Community, Cooperative and Associative Economy (MEFCCA) used 18-month to 2-year investment plans in four projects, NICARIBE, PROCACAO, PAIPSAN and NICADAPTA, facilitating the

capitalization and participation of 31,481 actors in the four territorial delegations MEFCCA operates in the Caribbean regions. The number of participants per region: Las Minas: 11373, RACCN: 11252, RACCS: 8536, Alto Wangki: 320. Between 2013 and April 2019, 31,481 people have participated in MEFCCA's Caribbean Coast projects, with funding of US$ 60 million. These productive investments in agriculture, fishing, agro-industry and small businesses, cocoa, coffee among others, have been implemented through 102 investment plans in 733 communities in the two multiethnic regions of the Caribbean. The region of Las Minas is where the greatest investment of projects has been concentrated, the greatest number of protagonists in 347 communities, followed by the RACCN with 211, RACCS with 162 and Alto Wangki with 13 communities.

In the poverty reduction strategy, the small business entrepreneurship program in the countryside has been implemented, which consists of granting loans to families to start a new source of income. As of 2019, 2,164 protagonists in the north and south regions, Las Minas, Alto Wangki and Bocay have benefited from about US$ 2.5 million. As part of the poverty reduction policy, from 2007 to 2019 the government delivered rural production kits to 28,428 indigenous and afro-descendant families on the Caribbean coast consisting of pigs, chickens and cows to boost the family economy.

The development of MEFCCA programs with the participation of community and territorial authorities, both Indigenous and Afro-descendant has strengthened the organization of Caribbean communities. The MEFCCA programs have had a social impact on their protagonists, integrating in a direct participatory manner the different ethnic and afro-descendant populations, consolidating the social cohesion of the community.

Promoting the cultivation of vegetables in particular has had a positive impact considering that it was not integrated into the productive activities of many communities. This has contributed to food diet diversity and generate income when they sell their productive surplus. In the Waslala – Siuna corridor, the prejudice against producing these diverse crops in the area was eliminated. The PAIPSAN project has had a direct impact increasing the production of basic grains, tubers, pigs, vegetables and eggs via the capitalization of the family economy with a production value of US$30.9 million over the life of the program. The promotion of strategic and sustainable crops in the Caribbean, such as cocoa, coffee and coconut, has had a direct impact on the consolidation of the family economy with technological transfers and an agroforestry system that guarantees increased productivity among small producers in harmony with the environment.

All these socio-productive investments have had an important impact on the working environment of the family economy providing more than 94,443 jobs via MEFCCA projects and 2164 jobs via other business start-ups, for a total of 96,607 jobs, in addition to the 28,428 family protagonists who, through the Rural Productive Kits program, changed the dynamic of the family economy in both Caribbean regions, improving the well-being of 733 participating communities.

NicaNotes: Nicaraguan President Addresses the Summit of Caribbean States on Climate Change, 4/10/19, https://afgj.org/nicanotes-nicaraguan-president-addresses-the-summit-of-caribbean-states-on-climate-change

The eighth summit of the Association of Caribbean States was held in Managua March 28-29 with the participation of twenty-five member states and nine associate members. One of their reasons for forming twenty-five years ago was to improve their response to natural disasters. Given the Caribbean is more prone to disasters and every nation has suffered from more and more of them, the group met to create an action plan on how to respond to Climate Change and its consequences.

Its member states are Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. Aruba, Curaçao (France, on behalf of French Guiana, Saint Barthélemy and Saint Martin), Guadeloupe, Netherlands, on behalf of Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius, Martinique, Sint Maarten, Turks and Caicos Islands.

Below is President Daniel Ortega's speech on Climate Change at the closing session of the Summit.

Climate Change is a theme that has to do with the survival of peoples on planet earth. Development cannot be disproportionate as it has been because it only benefits the well off. Development has to be sustainable. Development without frontiers, like that which we have come to know – unlimited development, becomes destructive development, which, it is true, favors and enriches the countries that historically managed to put themselves at the forefront of development. They used their development first to fight over hegemony in the world, to wage war among themselves. From there came slavery. Slaves snatched from their homes and communities and put up for auction, put up for sale, by slave traders representing the business interests of the colonialists.

The impoverished countries have been enslaved by the consequences of globalization. We are enslaved by the global international situation because we don't have the resources to confront the damage our peoples have suffered like the pillaging of our natural resources. When the colonizers came, they were looking for riches and they took them for themselves. The greed of the rich governments has resulted in destruction since they prefer to invest in wars. They don't want to invest to protect themselves, but they don't hesitate to invest and spend billions on the arms race that has been unleashed, billions for death, for destruction.

The countries that make up the Association of Caribbean States have become aware of their role in favor of the environment. There can be no peace in our countries when we are victims of the way in which the rich countries are exploiting natural resources, the way in which they are developing the global economy, the way in which they are not becoming aware in the countries that have the power, the strength, to contribute to the reorientation of all of our countries, our decisions, our actions, around the agreements that were made in Paris."

We must not only defend those agreements, but also seek to commit ourselves beyond them in order to achieve that great objective which has to do with security and with the human rights of our peoples. Even though it is a complex world, a difficult and violent world it is also a world

where the peoples demand peace. This battle must be fought in favor of our peoples and in favor of humanity. We have a starting point (excessive pollution), which goes against the most valuable thing that the planet has, which is the human species.

Interview with Valdrack Jaentschke, now Minister and Advisor to President for International Relations and the Caribbean with Alberto Mora, Channel 4, March 29, 2019

Alberto Mora

We welcome the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Compañero Valdrack Jaentschke; thank you, Brother, for being with us this morning to speak a little about the Meeting being held in Managua on the 25th Anniversary of the Association of Caribbean States, an Association that started in 1994, whose meeting in Managua ends today.

We wanted to ask you what issues you have touched on; among the objectives, according to what we have been able to learn, are strengthening Integration, a Common Economic Space, marine conservation, promoting sustainable development, and issues like Transport and Tourism. What have you been working on during this meeting, Valdrack? Welcome.

Valdrack Jaentschke

First of all, thank you Alberto, good morning. This meeting marks the 25th Anniversary, I believe that in itself it is an important first for the Association. This Association is the largest Sub-regional Group in the Hemisphere, it includes 25 Member States, 9 Associate Members that are countries that have not yet achieved independence or else are in that process; it has 28 Observer States, 6 Founding Organizations and 4 Organizations.... Founding Organizations are, like SICA, CARICOM, CABEI, and ECLAC.

It is an Organization that was built around the fundamental logic of building a platform for Cooperation, you might say Integration, among the countries that share the Caribbean Sea. But the Caribbean Sea is not only a physical, geographical matter, which is important, that already is very important, but it is also a whole Culture, a whole Identity, a whole process of belonging, let's say, to the Caribbean Sea, regardless of the languages we speak. It is a space that reproduces a History, an original American history, an African history, even a European history, but at the end of the day it builds a civilization.

I think that one of the most important things for us is to have recognized the Caribbean character of Nicaragua. I'll focus on Nicaragua and then talk about the Association. The Constitutional Reforms of 2015 recognize Nicaragua with borders in the Caribbean, it states. Before it stated the Atlantic, those who thought they bordered the Atlantic... No, no, we are Caribbean! And that is so much a sense of permanence and not just for those of us who are Afro-Caribbean or who speak one or more of the languages spoken in the Caribbean; it is so also for the entire population. Nicaragua is a State that is involved in the Caribbean, because that has implications especially for the main theme of this meeting.

The main motto of this meeting is, "Uniting efforts in the Caribbean to confront Climate Change". Why Climate Change, and the Caribbean Sea? Because one of the most vulnerable places is the Caribbean Coast, and not only the Islands, but the low coastal areas, which are 2 categories identified by the Experts as the most vulnerable on the Planet; that is, once the sea rises the first thing that will disappear are the Coasts, the Islands.

As you know that most of the islands have hills, even mountains, when the sea rises the first thing that go are where the populations are settled, because on the islands the populations are mainly settled in the coastal areas of the islands themselves. But there are also zones from Surinam, Guyana, the same Venezuela, passing through Central America.

Central America is one of the most vulnerable, remember that this isthmus is very precarious in terms of its age, even in terms of how long has actually existed, when it emerged from the Sea. And the Caribbean coast of Central America is one of the most vulnerable; in Suriname, there are places that are practically below sea level; Guyana itself has places or cities that are almost at or below sea level. And here, our Caribbean Coast is very vulnerable to that, to rising sea levels and you are going to see that the sea is going to reach practically up to the Cordillera Yolaina, if you don't take care.

So, rather than talking about the technical detail , 1.5 degrees or 2 degrees, the Association gives us the chance to discuss what the technical specialists have discussed in the specialized spaces addressing Climate Change, of Climate Change, like the COP, so as to place the discussion in a space of policy formulators or policy decision makers who are the Heads of State, the Heads of Government, Foreign Ministers, who in one way or another have technical advisers , but they have to have the awareness of what we are dealing with; namely, by 2050 this Region will lose many of its coasts.

You have, for example, the phenomenon of the Sargasso algae, which reproduce rapidly in a subtropical climate, which reproduce rapidly with the rise in temperature. It seems that we are talking about technical things, but this seaweed affects the coasts, and I'm not talking about a little amount arriving, a small amount, but it arrives by tons and tons and destroys the coasts.

In the Varadero itself in Cuba one sees, there they presented the big trucks and the heavy machinery removing them from the coast to return. This is a consequence of Climate Change. But also, the other issues that have to do with human settlements, water, production; in the case of Central America the issue of drought.

So, then you start with a discussion that seems quite technical... Well, we have to limit the World to 1.5 degrees, say the experts. It doesn't hold one's attention, you end up saying what does that mean? It means that if the World today is 1 degree above what it was at the beginning of the industrial era, when it reaches 1.5 degrees above the bench line, that is when industrial production began, there is going to be so much warming that it is going to affect us all. And that is what the Association gives, the Association of Caribbean States gives you the policy space, for policy formulation, for policy decision makers, to build awareness and start to make the decisions based on cooperation, policy decisions.

For example, the Caribbean, the 25 States, the most vulnerable region of the Planet, do not have a common, unitary position in the discussion of the UN Climate Framework Green Fund money, for example. We do not have a common position, that is, we are building that in the UN Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), and there you have it! GRULAC includes South America, but here in this meeting are 25 States in which there are large States, large States economically: Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia are large economies, extremely well-organized economies and societies, Cuba too, and then medium-sized economies and also much smaller economies. So, it is not a question of the size of the island, but of its contribution to the regional economy and the possibility of being affected by those consequences of Climate Change.

Then, when Nicaragua assumed the Pro Tempore Presidency last year, in Margarita Island, Venezuela, President Comandante Daniel suggested that we had to find a fundamental reason to make this Association relevant. And it was up to us to preside over a decision taken in 2016 in Havana, at the previous Summit, to strengthen, revitalize and restructure the Association. It was up to us to lead the Association of Caribbean States in this process.

For example, we built a directorate for mobilizing resources that we didn't have. We argue that if the Association is going to be relevant for a small country, it has to offer access to what other countries have, start with our own resources, right, because it is an enormous Region from the economic point of view, from the demographic point of view, from the geographical point of view.

This sharing among us is one of the first objectives. In the Association of Caribbean States Founding Statute, it is established as a Cooperation and Integration Organization; but Cooperation is not only the mobilization of resources, it is not only seeking resources externally, it's working first among ourselves; on our capacities, discussing Transport for example.

Here you have to go to a northern country to return to a Caribbean country, or you have to go to a southern Country to return to a Caribbean Country, and you do not have a regional airline for the area. But not only that, economic maritime activity, does not exist! One cannot talk about roads, we have to talk in terms of boats. And that makes life more expensive, it makes it difficult for people to move about.

The paradox of this is that, many years ago, 50, 70, 80 years ago, moving about between the islands by ship was enormous; that is to say, the movement of people from Corn Island to Grand Cayman, to El Limón, to the islands of Honduras, to Roatán Bay, to San Andrés, was great. People had relatives everywhere.

One day I was invited, I think I told you, I was invited to the inauguration of a big coastal transport project in Central America, as if it were a great invention. I told you the story of my grandmother; my grandmother had nine children distributed in four different places, and when she wanted to, she would get on a boat, take 2 or 3 days, and wake up in one or other of those places.

That movement of people ceased to exist, because the coastal shipping lines were no longer profitable from the new perspective of the big shipping lines. But we're talking about a ship that would go six times a year to San Andrés, yes, carrying excursions and taking goods for sale... My mother tells us, for example, that the sale of Corn Island produce, coconut oil and those things, they did when the boat went; she stored produce, then went and brought the things, like shoes, like dresses, etc.

That trade that existed 50, 70, 80 years ago and maybe even further back, but it doesn't exist now, and that is also a weakness, and one of the Association's policy concerns is transport, another is sustainable tourism.

Alberto Mora

Is it very difficult to make progress on this issue, which among most important?

Valdrack Jaentschke

It is difficult, because some of the islands, I think they are maybe four Islands, including Saint Vincent, are owners of an airline very similar to the one we have here, we are not going to say the name because I might get fined for doing so, but it is the one that goes from here to the Coast, very similar the planes and everything. But they have found it difficult to make it profitable, first, for a lot of people it is very expensive, and then for themselves it is difficult in economic terms. They are in a specific discussion about that airline, it is called LIAT, we can mention that one; but the big discussion is about going back to the sea, back to water transport which is the cheapest in the world, in other words, water transport is the basic option.

Alberto Mora

But this also depends on the interest of entrepreneurs; the State is not an investor.

Valdrack Jaentschke

That's exactly it. Products come from the northern ports and do not get moved from island to island, that is the big discussion. There were past experiences in which you had a boat that was based locally and went everywhere; then you say: so, it should be simple; but when it comes to implementing it, it becomes difficult. In other words, there are challenges that we have to solve, and these are the challenges we are discussing.

For example, the issue of trade, you have CARICOM with its commercial structure, the Central America Integration System (SICA) with its commercial structure, so to speak, and the big countries that I don't like mentioning specifically, and getting them to talk to each other is difficult, that is, that they talk about getting into details, about tariffs, and on which products. This conversation is difficult between two groups of States that share a sea, that share a space, a culture, a history and a geography. And it’s this of discussion the Association can help resolve.

Alberto Mora

On tourism, is it easier? Has progress been made?

Valdrack Jaentschke

We've made progress. Nicaragua has been President of the Special Committee on Tourism for several years, at different times, and if you task me one of the things that came out of that discussion then for example one thing was to facilitate the issue of cruise ships here. If you remember, they didn't come here, no one thought we would ever see them.

Now, I'm not going to tell you that it is the ACS that resolved the issue of cruise ships; the issue of cruise ships was resolved by the cruise ship companies when they saw that it was worth it... But the discussion of Nicaragua as a destination involves several things, right? but among them, for example, I remember several years ago, when we were President of that Committee we organized a Meeting between cruise ship companies and destination countries.

The discussion of cruise ships visiting the other side of the Caribbean where there is a lot of tourism, where there is much more than ours, is whether the cruise ship leaves you out, or not; which is not a discussion we can decide; for us, from the point of view of tourism development, for us it is important. But it also involves many things, like the issue of repetition, and that is for

specialists I know very little about that. But that is a continuing discussion that we have, transport, tourism, trade.

And one topic that was very important is reducing the risk from disasters. On that we have made significant progress in putting the Caribbean Organization, which is called CDMA, and our regional organization in Central America, CEPREDNAC, which I believe includes, if I am not mistaken, Doctor Gonzalez, the will perhaps correct me, Mexico.

Those two organizations were in the same space, with the same hurricane, because the hurricane enters there and leaves here, and they didn't talk to each other! They just didn't talk, they didn't formulate things, they didn't talk. One of the things that we managed to insist on is, come on, let's sit down and talk and start formulating what we know; their specialties, their manuals... And our experience has been very well regarded in that area.

Alberto Mora

Let's look as other aspects that have to do with sustainable development that run through all this because it is a general issue; let's also talk a little about countries' representation, we have seen that Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs have arrived; that is to say, everyone has been present at this summit meeting, which represents for the city of Managua an important reason to be content.

Valdrack Jaentschke

It is a recognition for Nicaragua, it is a recognition of the work done to strengthen the Association, not only during this Presidency, but for many years there has been recognition for Nicaragua, because at the level of our people there's recognition, first, that is of interest for the Association, but also for the country.

I think it is very useful for us for other people see what is happening in the country in positive terms of the progress we have made, of the interest in strengthening Peace. But also, to underline, because they really think that in this country we do not have a population similar to theirs, when we do, so they will say to you: Where do you come from? Because they will say that and then we joke about it. But it is a boost for Nicaragua, it is a recognition for Nicaragua as a force within the Association of Caribbean States, and as I was saying, it is the largest sub-regional or sub-hemispheric group, as you might put it.

Alberto Mora

Yes, it's not insignificant, 25 member States, and the role of associated States.
Valdrack Jaentschke

The associate Member States, they're independent. It is important because they are working hard for recognition of their independence, their autonomy, so the Association gives them a space to have that recognition. And they are treated as what they are, Associate Members, who have a lot to contribute as well.

You have countries like Martinique, whose Prime Minister is here; like the British Virgin Islands which in this case is the first time they are participating because they just joined the Association last year. It was hard for them because they had to negotiate their participation with their own authorities.

Alberto Mora

Decision-making, monitoring and compliance mechanisms?

Valdrack Jaentschke

The Association is managed by a Council of Ministers of which we were President this year, today we are going to hand over. There is already a recommendation from the Council of Ministers, that was given yesterday, which recommended to today's plenary meeting that Barbados assume the presidency.

This is very important because in recent years it has been difficult for the Caribbean island countries to assume the Presidency, they assume the Vice-Presidency and suchlike, because they are small, their foreign ministries are very small and it's hard for them, but Barbados is a very important and very interesting force in the Region.

Barbados has always been a very big force in integration, in strengthening CARICOM integration. It has very strong, very strong positions around that, historically; and Barbados has now decided to assume the Presidency. Yesterday the Council of Ministers recommended that it assume the Presidency and it is going to be supported, because in the Council of Ministers it has to be supported.

The Group is complicated, because the Association is also divided into 4 Subgroups: SICA, CARICOM, the big countries I mentioned, they are called the Group of Three, and a group of countries, Panama, Dominican Republic and Cuba; when the Association started, the Dominican Republic was not part of SICA, now it is part of SICA, but back then they were countries not any of the other groupings. So, those four sectors or groups of countries have to be represented in the Council of Ministers.

You asked what the decision-making process is like. The Executive Board is the decision-making body and has a General Secretary who is a national of an island country, Saint Lucia, and she is a well-known person in the Caribbean world, in CARICOM, she has made great efforts to bring the Regions together from her experience in CARICOM. In other words, you previously had General Secretaries who were more Spanish speaking, a Dominican, a Colombian, a Guatemalan, and I personally believe that communication with the CARICOM Countries was more difficult as a result.

Having a General Secretary who comes from one of the CARICOM Countries facilitates a lot, and one can say that much of the fresh participation by CARICOM Countries and having the meeting come to Nicaragua has to do with the leadership of Dr. June Soomer.

This year you are going to have an Association in which not just the majority of its members are Caribbean, but it is the first time that you are going to have a Caribbean country President and a Caribbean country General Secretary.

Alberto Mora

What is expected of this Meeting, will there be a Declaration, are you discussing one?

Valdrack Jaentschke

There is a very interesting Declaration that was adopted yesterday by the Council of Ministers, recommending it for adoption at the level of the main Meeting that is today. It is a very interesting Declaration because it speaks of building Leadership in the face of Climate Change; it has, as a comrade from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines says, their ambassador who was participating in the preparatory meetings: The Declaration is divided into the issues of Climate Change and the economic issues that are great challenges for our countries.

For example, the issue of correspondent banks... What does that mean? Many banks in the Caribbean countries have been declared Tax Havens, by the North, and it is difficult for them to mobilize resources; so, they have established a firm position to address that, and even positions on demands for reparations for the African slave trade, and in that there was a discussion and it also includes action on the issue of colonies and on indigenous peoples.

CARICOM has proposed a Reparations Commission and you will see how difficult it was to reach a consensus on that, or to build a consensus with countries that feel they are being signaled, right? So, those issues are in the Declaration.

Now, what is the Declaration for? It serves as a political guide in international spaces; that is to say, it is a document for reference when we are discussing in other spaces where unequal interests exist. As I told you, the differences between countries, differences of size, culture, education, language, means that countries have different interests; you sit down with 35 actors that have 35 different interests, so then the important thing is to bring them together, to find themes, means, mechanisms so as to reach agreement.

For example, the countries that prioritize Climate Change, the countries that talk about policy formulation, the countries that talk about building Leadership, I believe that all this will help us to have greater influence in the more technical and specific spaces discussing Climate Change and on the issue of access to resources.

For example, there is an issue of losses and damages that looks easy to bring up, but there is a category that developing countries have been pushing for politically, which is that the countries that are going to contribute to the Green Fund recognize that it's not just a question of measures for adaptation or mitigation of Climate Change, in other words, adjusting to what is coming, but recognition that our countries have suffered losses and irreversible damage.

In countries like Dominica, not a hurricane, but a tropical storm once destroyed that country, left it completely destroyed. It suffered that level of destruction, and as you know, they say these natural phenomena are becoming stronger and stronger; they suffered that level of destruction and you also saw what happened in the island in Antigua and Barbuda, Martinique I think also suffered the same, Puerto Rico does not belong to the ACS but you saw the experience they had. This category of destructive catastrophe has to be recognized in order to help the countries to rebuild that.

In our case, we had for example Hurricane Mitch, or Hurricane Juana on the Caribbean Coast, which destroyed Bluefields in a catastrophic manner. Those losses and damages the big, rich countries do not want to recognize because they say: No, that is to start investing in things like infrastructure, like rebuilding structures.

Alberto Mora

Yes, it's not easy; when it comes to resources, it's not easy.

Valdrack Jaentschke

They quickly send water, blankets, that's fast... Here comes a plane, they say. We ask what's coming? They say we'll get water, blankets and some mattresses. But that doesn't solve your losses and damages when your infrastructure has been destroyed.

For example, Mitch destroyed our infrastructure. Recently we just finished rebuilding one of the bridges destroyed by Mitch, I think that happened in 1998 and it is now in 2019 when the bridge that goes from Muy Muy to Matiguás was rebuilt. Because the prevailing concept is that it is difficult for other States to repair or rebuild the public structures that destroyed by these phenomena.

Alberto Mora

But that was because, as you know, they looted everything. Remember?

Valdrack Jaentschke

That's right. But in addition to the fact that tour resources were looted, on which I agree with you with that not very common political description… but a thief is a thief! The truth is that so much was looted that only now is the government of President Comandante Ortega is rebuilding.

Alberto Mora

It's a delicate subject.

Valdrack Jaentschke

But in this matter of losses and damages, remember that Nicaragua was also comes the country that stubbornly insisted: This world cannot exist at 1.5 degrees. I believe you have interviewed Paul Oquist on this subject.

Alberto Mora

And it's not that far off now, is it?

Valdrack Jaentschke

But not only that, from the start Nicaragua said: We did not sign the Paris COP because what they are signing is a lie. Now we are making progress and we really have respect from around the world on this issue, and the Caribbean countries see this experience of Nicaragua as very positive. Even the organizational capacity we now have in our families and communities, they see that as very positive, because really their societies are not as well organized as they might be to face this kind of things.

Those are the kind of things that we discuss, but what comes out of it? It's not that at the end there is going to be a great deal of resources available or suchlike... No! It raises rhe issue of Caribbean unity, the issue of overcoming the conflictive environment that exists throughout the Hemisphere, to have a space in which we can agree on issues that are very pressing, whether it be reducing risks from disasters, whether it be transportation, whether it be tourism, whether it

be the capacity to promote and revitalize our culture and identities. So progress on all that I think has been one of the great advances of this organization.

Selected NicaNotes Briefs 2019

Caribbean Coast Regional Elections a Great Success. The Sandinista Front for National Liberation won majorities in both autonomous regional council elections on Sunday. In the North Caribbean Autonomous Region (RACN) the FSLN won 30 of 45 seats followed by the Miskito political party YATAMA with 13 and the Constitutional Liberal Party with 3. In the South Autonomous Regional Council (RACS) the FSLN won 34 seats with the PLC in second place with 9 and Yatama winning 2. Each Council is composed of 45 seats. The councils will elect regional governors. The opposition Alianza Civil, which led last year's failed coup, criticized the election claiming that "conditions did not exist for free and fair elections." There was no violence reported during voting on Sunday. (Radio La Primerisima, 3/4/19, 3/5/19, El Nuevo Diario, 3/6/19)

FSLN Sees Political Gains in the Caribbean- Carlos Alemán will be the governor of the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region after obtaining 32 of 45 votes on the Regional Council, while Professor Rubén López, also a Sandinista, will play a similar role in the South. The eighth regional elections in the two Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean, in which 19 political parties participated, had 15 electoral districts in each Region. Three regional councilors were elected in each region. The electoral roll for this occasion was composed of about 350,000 voters. (Informe Pastrán, May 6)

President Ortega Confirms that Nicaragua Will Build a Canal- During the commemoration of the 39th anniversary of the Nicaraguan Army's naval force, President Daniel Ortega ratified the will of his government to build an Interoceanic Canal. He recalled that the possibility of building a canal was studied by the United States government, whose studies and historical documents are housed in the Library of Congress in Washington. This study was conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "It is not madness to think of a Canal for Nicaragua – the powers from England to Spain wanted to dominate the route to become owners of the Canal. Then the US intervened and occupied Nicaragua and imposed a treaty on Nicaragua so that it could not make any agreements with other countries," said President Ortega. "With the Nicaraguan people we have the commitment to make the Canal a reality for Nicaragua. We are in a phase of preparing again the environmental studies that had already been presented, but we had to make adjustments," he said. "A canal would strengthen global trade, give Nicaragua a source of income that would allow greater development and growth, and therefore, improve economic conditions for all Nicaraguan families," he said. (Informe Pastran, 8/14/19)

PARLACEN Recognizes that Nicaragua is an Example on Restitution of Rights to Indigenous
The Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) approved "The Rights of Our Peoples" declaration on August 26 that seeks to guarantee the restitution of rights of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples of the Central American region. The PARLACEN President, Irma Amaya said Nicaragua is an "example on restitution of rights for Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples." She detailed the progress Nicaragua has made in education, women's rights, the implementation of the Intercultural Health Model, as well as the right to and respect for communal property. The Declaration will be presented at the next Summit of Presidents of the Central American Integration System (SICA) for the approval of the Heads of State. (Nicaragua News, 8/27/19)

Expanding Electricity in Caribbean Communities. The Minister of Energy and Mines, Salvador Mansell, announced that an Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) delegation visited Nicaragua to evaluate the progress of new energy projects in the country. "The delegation was pleased to confirm the successful construction of the new solar energy plant on Corn Island that will be inaugurated

next month. The US$5.9 million plant was financed by the Nicaragua Government with support from the IDB," Mansell said. (Nicaragua News, 5/25/19). Mansell also informed about the installation of a solar panel system on the banks of the Prinzapolka River, Northern Caribbean Autonomous Region began this week and explained that 100 solar panels will be installed, benefiting 32 communities in the Prinzu Awala indigenous territory. The US$22 million investment is part of the National Program for Sustainable Electrification and Renewable Energy (PNESER), being implemented by the Nicaragua Government in all 153 municipalities. (Nicaragua News, 9/1319)

Major New Hospitals on the Caribbean Coast.
On October 10, the Nicaragua Ministry of Health inaugurated a new hospital in Mulukukú, benefiting 50,000 inhabitants. The new 3,350 m² hospital has an outpatient unit, emergency room, gynecology and obstetrics, pediatrics and surgery departments among others. The new US$911,000 hospital was financed by the General Budget of the Republic and is part of the Family and Community Health Model being implemented throughout the country. (Nicaragua News, 10/10/19)

On November 6 the presidential health advisor, Dr. Sonia Castro announced that the government plans to build 15 new hospitals in the coming years throughout the country, of which six are already in the process of construction. At this point there are already 18 hospitals, 15 primary hospitals, one departmental and two national hospitals. "From 2007 to 2019 we have built 18 hospitals to serve the people for free and with the best specialists," said the presidential advisor. She said that the Bilwi Hospital will be the first modern center on the Caribbean Coast. On November 12 the Primary Hospital of El Cuá, in Jinotega, was inaugurated with a large health fair. The new hospital will treat more than 60,000 people from Cuá, Rancho Grande, San José de Bocay, Pantasma and Wiwilí, Jinotega. (Radio La Primerisima 11/7/19, 11/12/19)

Celebration of 32nd Anniversary of Autonomy Law. Vice President Rosario Murillo remembered the 32nd anniversary of Law 28, the Statute of Autonomy of the Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. "We are proud of this law that recognizes the ancestral rights of the original peoples, afro-descendants, and mestizos that inhabit the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. Since the enactment of the Autonomy Statute in 1987, Nicaragua constitutionally recognizes that it is a multiethnic, multilingual and multicultural nation. In this new stage we have been promoting a greater deepening of those rights, accompanied by the indispensable advances in progress such as improving living conditions, infrastructure, health, education, roads for the communities of our Caribbean Coast," she reiterated. A major advance in 2019 was completion of the road that connects the Pacific with the Caribbean Coast. Thirty-seven thousand square kilometers of ancestral lands have been recognized by the government after demarcating and titling indigenous and Afro-descendant communities' lands for their use, joy and enjoyment. "In the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua 32 years ago we said Autonomy is Revolution and we continue saying it," Murillo said. (El19 Digital, 10/31/19)

Nicaragua's Natural Environment – Conservation, National Development and Climate Change

Stephen Sefton

Like all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Nicaragua faces the ever-present challenge of ensuring economic well-being for its population while conserving the natural environment on which its peoples' well-being depends. Driving that relentless overall dilemma is the complex interaction of diverse social, economic, cultural and political factors and concerns. That interaction is now ever more urgently dominated by global climate change.

At a national level some trends are clearly desirable and relatively straight forward in policy terms, for example shifting the country's energy matrix towards renewable sources. Other trends are much more controversial, confused and problematic, like expansion of the agricultural frontier, the exploitation of mineral resources or the proposed interoceanic canal. Nicaragua is blessed with abundant natural resources in terms of water, forest and biodiversity and also, to a somewhat lesser extent, minerals and geothermal energy. However, historically its geographic location has been a geopolitical curse attracting the intervention of predatory colonial and neocolonial powers, principally Spain, Britain and the United States.

In that overall context the Nicaraguan government has made significant progress in terms of developing renewable energy (67% renewables in 2019) and in conserving its water and wetland resources and protecting them from pollution. Better water management has helped enable the country to expand access to drinking water from 65% of the population in 2006 to over 90% in 2018. An important aspect of protecting water resources has been promotion by government agricultural bodies encouraging better use of pesticides so as to reduce contamination.

Government policy promoting conservation and reforestation has strengthened the institutional capacity of municipal and regional authorities to defend their local natural environment. Guaranteeing land rights in over 31% of its national territory (55% of the two Caribbean Autonomous Regions) to indigenous and afro-descendant peoples has helped slow the encroachment of protected areas by illegal farming and logging. Over the 13 years of Sandinista government a permanent social movement addressing environmental issues has grown. In recent reforestation campaigns, over 200,000 volunteers have participated in planting trees.

Much of the deforestation in Nicaragua is the result of encroachment on woodlands by cattle farming which has expanded thanks to the government’s successful policies to achieve food sovereignty. To address the environmentally damaging effects of cattle farming, government policy has promoted more efficient use of pasture, a strong emphasis on silvopastoral [forest and pasture] practices combining cattle rearing with reforestation and a systematic national program of community woodland management. These policies also aim to strengthen the country’s overall resilience to climate change.

Similarly, government support for fire-fighting and fire prevention has greatly reduced the incidence of forest fires and focuses of potential fires. This and other policies have also promoted better protection of wildlife. Perhaps the best example of wildlife protection has been the work carried out to protect turtles breeding in the five marine protected areas on Nicaragua's Pacific coast. In terms of its biodiversity, Nicaragua has over 14,200 species of fauna and over 6000 species of flora. Another example of protection of that biodiversity has been the production of thousands of kilograms of seed of dozens of scarce or endangered species of trees.

In 2019, Nicaragua published its National Policy on Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change and created the National System of Response to Climate Change. This year 2020, Nicaragua will begin to implement a Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, an emissions reduction program on the Caribbean Coast to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, by promoting sustainable forest management and protection of ecosystems. Internationally, Nicaragua has taken the lead in demanding more ambitious commitments from rich countries to help mitigate climate change.

Nicaragua has played a leading role in the UN Climate Change conferences, arguing strongly for measures to limit global warming to 1.5°C if possible but certainly no more than 2°C. Nicaragua has been at the forefront of demands from low income countries for rich countries to fund environmental losses and damages at the same level as funding for adaptation and mitigation. Likewise, Nicaragua has been resolute in affirming the fundamental principle of shared but differentiated responsibilities. Nicaragua participates actively in global climate change mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund.

Natural resources

At the start of this century the National Autonomous University's Center for the Investigation of Water Resources calculated that Nicaragua has potential water resources amounting to almost 40 cubic meters per capita, higher than, for example, Brazil (32m^3), the US (9m^3) or Switzerland (7.5m^3). Of Nicaragua's two great lakes, Xolotlán has an area just over 1000 km^2 while Cocibolca, covering an area of over 8600 km^2, is the largest lake in Central America and the third largest in Latin America. Both lakes are affected by sedimentation caused by deforestation and erosion, contamination from urban sewage, and industrial waste and pollution from agricultural fertilizer and pesticide chemicals. Along Nicaragua’s southern border much of the agro-chemical contamination results directly from agricultural activity in Costa Rica.

In terms of forest resources, Nicaragua has two main reserves, the Bosawás Biosphere and the Rio San Juan Biosphere. Bosawás is made up of five natural reserves and a national park which in 2019 covered 1.2 million hectares. The Rio San Juan Biosphere is made up of four reserves, including the Indio Maíz Biological reserve, two wildlife reserves and two national monuments covering, in 2018, 696,000 hectares. Net deforestation in Bosawás is running at over 36,000 hectares a year; in Rio San Juan the net deforestation per year is currently over 28,000 hectares. Nicaragua's territory also

contains the Ometepe Biosphere Reserve, an island of two volcanos located in Lake Nicaragua, and almost half of the enormous Seaflower Marine Biosphere Reserve of Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast.

Improving management and conservation of water resources and addressing deforestation caused by the encroachment of agriculture and cattle farming are the two main environmental challenges facing Nicaragua's society and economy. Implicit in those challenges is protection of the rights of indigenous peoples to their land and their way of life. Nicaragua's national territory covers 130,494 km², of which indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples have legal title to over 30%. Thus, deforestation caused by expanding cattle farming, agriculture and unsustainable logging also has immediate adverse direct effects on indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

Although slightly less important than conservation and sound management of forests and water resources, management of mineral resources is also an issue provoking controversy and conflict. Nicaragua's authorities have been relatively successful in controlling mining operations between local communities and foreign mining interests, like B2Gold and HEMCO. B2Gold operates the *El Limon* mine near Malpaisillo and another mining operation between la Libertad and Santo Domingo in Chontales. Another big mining project of B2Gold was rejected by the government in 2015. HEMCO operates a big mining project in Bonanza in the northeast. Their activities cover around 350 km_2, equivalent to about 0.3% of national territory.

Nicaragua currently produces well over 200,000 troy ounces of gold, but the industry also covers extraction of materials like sand and stone for construction. Around Managua a granular volcanic material is extracted, while elsewhere rivers and other locations are exploited for deposits of sand. In areas like San Juan de Limay, stone is mined for producing ornamental sculpture and in Santa Rosa del Peñon for gypsum. Nicaragua's authorities also experience problems regulating the informal medium, small and micro-artisanal mining operations which can pollute or divert local water sources. Such activities are generally more difficult to control than large-scale mining and their regulation can depend unduly on the quality and commitment of local municipal officials and central government delegates.

Nicaragua's geothermal energy began to be exploited under the 1980s revolutionary government. But investment was barely sustained and often privatized under the neoliberal governments from 1990 to 2006. It has developed much more since the Sandinista government began to diversify the country's energy matrix after resolving the electricity generating crisis of 2005-2007. The overall potential envisioned is of 1700Mw along the volcanic cordillera running from Cosiguina through Momotombo and down to Ometepe. Installed nominal capacity of the two privately owned plants currently operating totals 153Mw with an effective capacity of 92Mw. Total nominal generating capacity is around 1619Mw with an effective capacity of 1322Mw.

Wetlands are also a major environmental resource. The Miskito Keys and their associated coastal belt are among the most important as recognized by RAMSAR, the

agency responsible for managing the International Convention on Wetlands. Others include the deltas of Estero Real and Llanos de Apacunca near Chinandega; Lake Apanás near Jinotega; the Guatuzos wetlands on the southern shore of Lake Nicaragua west of Rio San Juan; the Rio San Juan Wildlife Reserve; the wetlands in Bluefields Bay; the San Miguelito wetlands north of San Carlos; the Moyoa wetlands south of Matagalpa; and the marshlands near Tisma, Masaya. These wetlands total around 406 km^2 and are home to numerous species of fauna, reptiles, aquatic birds, fish, plants, flowers and insects contributing to Nicaragua's astonishing 7% of the world's biodiversity.

Since 2012, another area of great environmental significance is the Seaflower Marine Biosphere Reserve just 145 km from Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast that is part of Nicaragua's maritime territory. In its 2012 judgment on Nicaragua's claim against Colombia, the International Court of Justice adjudicated a large area of this important Marine Biosphere Reserve to be part of Nicaragua's maritime territory. Nicaragua's authorities have consistently stated their commitment to protect and defend the integrity of the Seaflower reserve in coordination with Colombia, although Colombia has still not formally recognized the ICJ's judgment.

In all these areas of environmental concern, Nicaragua's right wing opposition and their foreign supporters have unscrupulously exploited every opportunity to unjustly malign the Sandinista government's intentions and unfairly deprecate its environmental policies. The clearest example of this has been the still continuing campaign against Nicaragua's sovereign decision to plan for an inter-oceanic canal, establishing the corresponding legal and administrative framework, and agreeing commercial terms to research, plan for and ultimately carry out the project. That decision has been ferociously manipulated and its details misrepresented and falsified, whereas the pros and cons of that mega-project merit careful attention.

The offensive against the plans for an interoceanic canal have included violent protests by the Anti Canal Movement led by a land owner from Nueva Guinea, Francisca Ramirez. She was later joined by a group led by Medardo Mairena who was convicted in 2018 of organizing the notorious massacre in El Morrito on the shore of Lake Nicaragua above the Rio San Juan. Western NGOs like Amnesty International and Global Witness tried dishonestly to link these often violent right-wing organized anti-canal protests to violent property conflicts in the area of Bosawás, so as to falsely imply a systematic campaign of violent repression by the Nicaraguan government.

That relentless propaganda campaign from 2015 onwards culminated in the cynical exploitation of a fire in the Indio Maíz reserve that immediately preceded the violent failed coup attempt of April 2018. The right-wing opposition falsely claimed that the Sandinista government did nothing to combat the fire and that it devastated a large area of the reserve. In fact, concerted efforts by President Ortega's government coordinated with neighboring countries managed to contain the fire until it was extinguished with the timely arrival of seasonal rains. The fire of 2018 affected around 58.8 km^2 (0.018%) of

the Indio Maíz reserve's 3180 km2 in an area still recovering from the devastation of Hurricane Otto in 2016.

Clearly, legitimate concerns do exist about Nicaragua's environmental policy. However, environmentalists addressing those concerns often tend to promote a neocolonial agenda too easily dismissive of equally legitimate needs national development needs. For Nicaragua's authorities and policy strategists, the main issues are how to manage the illegal expansion of agriculture and cattle farming so as to protect forests, and how to successfully improve management of water resources. Related issues are defense of the land rights of indigenous and afro-descendant peoples and how to regulate mining activity to protect local populations and their environment.

The texts, articles and graphics that follow illustrate how Nicaragua's Sandinista government is trying to address these issues, especially the promotion of renewable energy.

Climate change

Nicaragua was one of the only governments to reject the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, arguing it lacked both ambition and sufficient commitment.

Nicaraguan government's position on climate change

Press Release- June 2nd 2017

The Government of National Reconciliation and Unity communicates to our People, and to the International Community, that in representation of our President and our People and Government, Dr. Paul Oquist Kelley, in Paris, expressed the official and fair position of defending our Planet and our Country from the increasingly destructive impacts of Climate Change.

Dr. Oquist then underlined the historical responsibility of the Developed Countries for the Emissions that have most impacted the Climate, producing deterioration and destruction, and seriously affecting all the inhabitants of the Planet, and in particular, the poorest.

Dr. Oquist explained that the hundred poorest countries in the world have caused barely 3% of the emissions, while the ten most developed countries cause 72% of global CO2 emissions.

The Nicaraguan Government, in the name of our People, demanded then, and demands today, a realistic, truly responsible Proposal, with accurate and well-founded approaches, imposing "common but differentiated responsibilities," demanding strict commitments from the most polluting countries to reduce their emissions, and with compensatory resources for the so-called "Adaptation."

Nicaragua, with a small economy and a government that develops policies and programs to overcome poverty, is not among the polluting powers; it has no responsibility for climate change, and has acted with true commitment, promoting renewable energies, efforts that have been recognized by the relevant international organizations, and has even been described as a "green energy power."

By not signing the Paris Agreement on April 22, 2016, Nicaragua assumed a clear position in defense of the Planet and Life, urging conscience and responsibility on the whole World. Nicaragua,

for its part, has continued to develop a set of policies that from our alternative energy sources have allowed us to transform the energy matrix and reduce dependencies on fossil fuels.

Reconciliation and Unity, we ratify our inalienable option to defend, with consistent policies and practices, Mother Earth, the Climate, the Environment, the Planet, and Life.

Our considerations continue to demand a Climate Agreement with greater commitments regarding emissions, and with financing for adaptation and/or mitigation, based on the concept of compensation for those most affected, and the most vulnerable, among whom are Central America and the Caribbean.

The increase in temperatures with all its catastrophic consequences is today the great risk, and Nicaragua's lucid and coherent position is more valid than ever.

Managua, June 2, 2017
Government of Reconciliation and National Unity
Presidency of the Republic

Nicaragua **did sign the Paris Agreement** *in 2017 but continues to insist on the issue of differentiated responsibilities and climate justice on which Dr. Paul Oquist expounded in the COP-25 summit in Madrid in 2019.*

Nicaragua's intervention at the COP-25 in Madrid

by Dr. Paul Oquist Kelley Minister-Private Secretary of National Policy, Presidency of the Republic of Nicaragua, December 11, 2019

Madam President
Your Excellencies, Ministers
Special Guests

The President of *The World Bank has highlighted that our country has the best production of renewable energy in all Central America.*

Dr. Paul Oquist, on behalf of our President and our People and Government, has urged the developed countries, speaking at all International Forums, to increase their commitment to mitigate the effects of Climate Change in favor of future generations, Mother Earth, and Life itself.

With the responsibility, care and commitment that characterizes our President of the Republic and our Government of National the Republic of Nicaragua, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, and the Vice President, Compañera Rosario Murillo Zambrana, send their greetings and best wishes for the success of this COP, which aims to achieve a higher level of commitment and climate action.

Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities are not political positions but objective realities. To maintain that we are all historically responsible for climate change would be tantamount to saying that we all participated equally in the Industrial Revolution, as well as in the massive accumulation of capital that resulted from it. This, when most of our countries suffered at that time from the yoke of colonialism and neo-colonialism, as well as from the slave trade and the exploitation of slave labor, which also contributed to the historical accumulation of those responsible.

Maintaining that we are all equally and universally responsible for greenhouse gas emissions today, that is, the 100 countries with the lowest emissions, which account for 3% of the total, have the same responsibility as the 10 countries with the highest emissions, which have 72% of the total, is equivalent to saying that most of the countries with less than a ton of CO2 equivalent per capita, have the same responsibility as the countries that have 18 tons and 16 tons per capita.

My country, Nicaragua, contributes 0.03% of total world emissions, with a per capita of 0.63 tons. Despite our minimal level of responsibility, we are actively working on mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage, because we love Mother Earth and are concerned about the future of our country and the world.

Nicaragua has gone from 25% renewable energy in 2007 to 62% in 2018, while electricity coverage has expanded from 54% of households in 2007 to 95% in 2018. We have committed ourselves to the 30x30 initiative to restore 2.8 million hectares of degraded land, the product of a historic and active agricultural frontier. We have committed in the Forest Carbon Partnership to capture 11 million tons of CO2 in the next 5 years. We are also adapting a dry corridor to the new reality of climate change.

This effort has been carried out under conditions of an average annual growth of 4.7% between 2011 and 2017, the third highest rate among Latin American and Caribbean countries. This has been accompanied by great progress in social matters, including the reduction of the maternal mortality rate from 92.8 per hundred thousand women to 34.1, and the reduction of the infant mortality rate from 29 to 12 per thousand children born. Chronic school malnutrition was reduced by 66%. General poverty was reduced from 47.9% to 24.9%, and extreme poverty from 17.3% to 6.9%.

Very important in this world, inequality was also reduced. The GINI for consumption in Nicaragua went from 0.41 to 0.33. Nicaragua, in 2007, was ranked 90th in the Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum in Davos, now in 2019 Nicaragua has risen from 90th to fifth place, just below Nordic countries. The original population and people of African descent of the Caribbean Coast and Upper Rio Wanki or Coco, received the delimitation and titling of about 37,800 square kilometers of their ancestral lands, in 23 territories, each with its own territorial government and control of its own resources.

However, Nicaragua, like 35 other countries in the world, has seen its capacity to respond to climate change and to achieve sustainable development objectives diminished, affected by coercive, unilateral, extraterritorial and illegal measures, which even criminalize third parties who do not comply with the illegal measures. Only the sanctions approved by the United Nations Security Council are legal in international law. The international system of bank transfers is key to imposing these unilateral and illegal measures, which violate the human and legal rights of individuals, organizations and countries. There are also covert actions to destabilize governments and coup attempts, some successful and others not.

In the Middle East, several countries have been invaded or bombed in wars of aggression. The Nuremberg court ruled that this type of war is the supreme violation of international law and human rights, because it contains the sum of all the evils of war. Even countries suffering the consequences of climate change see their future response capacity destroyed by catastrophic disasters and the lack of international compensation mechanisms. All these phenomena have affected the respective response capacities of developing countries.

Our Climate Change Convention and the Paris Agreement are incomplete, as they do not include an effective mechanism for financing response and recovery from loss and damage. Mitigation reduces the risk of loss and damage, adaptation reduces the impact of specific threats of loss and damage, and loss and damage itself is the end result of the climate change we are seeking to minimize. Thus, we propose that losses and damages be raised to the same level of mitigation and adaptation, so as to receive resources.

The President of Nicaragua, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, in his message to the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, said that the only equitable and effective way to finance losses and damages is for the countries and companies that have caused the problem and benefited from the use of carbon for their capital accumulation to compensate the countries that suffer the consequences of climate change without having caused it, in the proportion of their responsibility.

We have the data from 1880 to date for both countries and companies. Some think this is a very radical proposal, but it is not. The concept that he who causes damage to another must compensate him for the damage, is called tort in ordinary law, is also found in the Napoleonic codes and in the Sharia law. So too, all ethical systems, and all religions of the world, contain the concept. However, the most despised and feared term in these negotiations is the word compensation.

Developing countries currently need enormous financial resources in the future to deal with mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage. In Copenhagen in 2009, financing of US$100 billion per year, starting in 2020, was proposed. We should not accept the use of accounting records of past expenditures as a part of that US$100 billion; we cannot finance our projects with them.

Nor can we accept that the market mechanisms of Article 6 of the Paris Accord replace the $100 billion per year. We must not accept the postponement of the date after having waited ten long years. What is needed from 2020 onwards are new, fresh, liquid resources that are equally accessible to all developing countries. If these funds appear, they should be channeled through the financial mechanism of the Convention, namely the Green Climate Fund, GEF, Adaptation Fund, and the Least Developed Countries Fund.

2019 will be remembered like 1848, 1871, 1968 and 1989, when the street became significant in world politics. Climate change, is one of the drivers of this phenomenon in many countries with youth in the forefront. Sixteen year olds marching in the streets today will be 18 in two years, and no one is going to talk about apolitical, passive, disinterested youth anymore. A highly motivated, voting youth can change the correlation of political forces in many countries, being decisive in countries now divided into equal or similar parts.

There is still a year before COP26 in 2020 but there is neither a working group advancing the $100 billion/year nor a road map. Only United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has

asked President Emanuel Macron of France and Prime Minister Andrew Holness of Jamaica to investigate the issue.

If there is a failure to meet the $100 billion a year commitment by 2020, it could be called the Fraud of the Century. In reality, more is needed and 100 billion has to be just a starting point. The myth of the 100 billion has the aggravating factor that it reduced climate spending in the critical decade after 2010, and we are now suffering the consequences of that reduction in climate action efforts. What we cannot do, at this point, is to have another lost decade for climate finance and action.

Selected NicaNotes News Briefs on the Environment

Renewable electricity production increases as does access
In 2018, Nicaragua produced 58.9% of its electrical energy from renewable resources. That is compared to 25% in 2006. On some days 80% renewable generation was achieved. By type, burning sugarcane biomass produced 216.3MW, hydroelectric: 149.5MW; geothermal: 154.5MW; wind: 186.2MW; and solar: 13.4MW. The investment in electrical generation has had a huge impact on the population. In 2006, barely 53% of households had access to electricity. At the end of 2018, a nearly universal 95.6% had access including many tiny rural communities. Presidential Advisor Paul Oquist stated that the combination of renewable energy production and reforestation will keep 11 million tons of carbon out of the atmosphere over the next five years. (Informe Pastran, 7/1/19)

Nicaragua among Top Renewable Energy Generating Countries in the World
Nicaragua is among the top ten countries that continue to switch to electricity generation from renewable projects, according to the report entitled "Renewables 2019 Global Status Report." According to data from the Nicaraguan Energy Institute (INE), at the end of 2018 wind energy constituted a nominal installed capacity of 186.20 megawatts (MW). Solar energy nominal capacity was 13.96 MW. Wind energy represents 13% of the nominal installed capacity while solar energy has a share of 1%, according to official INE data. The nominal installed capacity of the National Interconnected System (SIN) in 2006 was 746.20 MW, but reached 1,482.37 MW at the end of 2018, showing an increase in installed capacity of 98% in twelve years, according to INE data. Plans for expansion include the construction of four new wind projects ranging from 40 MW to 64 MW. Additionally, there are seven photovoltaic projects, including one under construction (El Velero, 12 MW); the rest are projects of 30 MW each. (Informe Pastran, 7/1/19)

Nicaragua Ending Dependence on Fossil Fuels
On August 1, the President of the Nicaragua Electricity Transmission Company (ENATREL) and Minister of Energy and Mines (MEM) Salvador Mansell reported that, "In just 12 years the Nicaraguan energy grid has managed to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels from 72% to 39.9%, an achievement recognized by international investors as well as actors in the global energy sector." The Minister said that work is underway on a memorandum of understanding with Soventix Caribbean SRL, a German company, for the construction of a 100 MW solar plant in the western part of the country. (Nicaragua News, 8/5/19)

Nicaragua Increases Clean Energy from 24% to 52% in Eleven Years
The week of July 29 saw the first national congress on Financing Climate Change related programs. Multilateral organizations and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations participated alongside leaders from all parts of the country. Minister of Finance Ivan Acosta stated "We have not been waiting on the issues of the COPs (Conferences of the Parties) and we have not had to wait for international financing: we have made a great effort to move forward with our own resources. Since 2007, President Daniel Ortega has mobilized resources through investment to

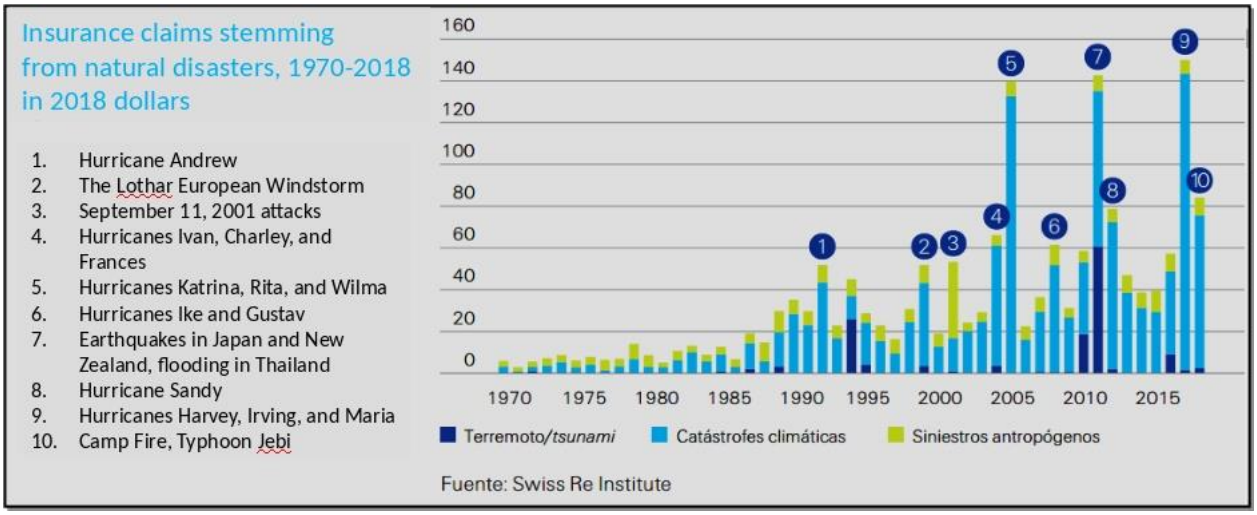
generating clean energy. Nicaragua had the maximum growth in the world moving from 24% of clean energy to a little more than 52% of clean energy generation contributing to mitigation, but more is needed and that is the importance of this congress, to define the relevant issues of climate finance." Minister of Environment and National Resources Sumaya Castillo said that caring for the environment has been a priority for President Ortega and Vice President Murillo for many years and since 2007 they have prioritized the defense of, care for, and conservation of Mother Earth, including the forests and natural resources. (El19Digital, 8/1/19)

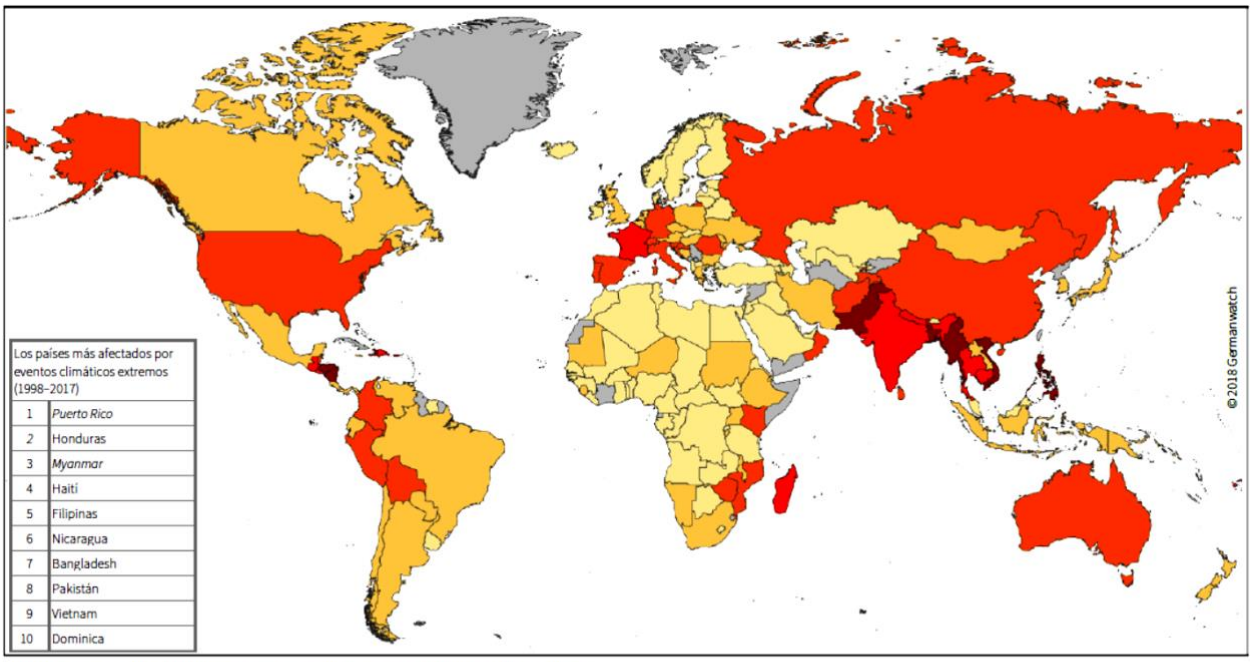
Geothermal Energy Growing and Profitable

The generation of geothermal energy grew during the first half of 2019 in Nicaragua, demonstrating the high potential of the country and the favorable climate to invest in this sector. The company Polaris Energy of Canada reported that the geothermal plant San Jacinto-Tizate of Nicaragua generated more than US$35.8 million in revenue during the first six months of 2019, US$3.4 million higher than the amount recorded in the same period of 2018. Polaris representative, Marc Murnaghan, expressed his satisfaction with geothermal generation in Nicaragua and stressed that there is a high potential for this resource. The Nicaraguan government reported that studies are being prepared to take advantage of geothermal energy potential in several regions of the country, particularly the Mombacho and Casitas volcanoes. (Informe Pastran, 8/14/19)

Nicaragua Active on Climate Change at the United Nations

Dr. Paul Oquist Kelley, Minister and Private Secretary for National Policies, participated in the Ministerial Meeting on Climate Change at the UN last week. Dr. Oquist thanked Greece for making an important, timely initiative, which he said is a great contribution to counter the negative impacts of Climate Change. He also expressed the support of the Nicaraguan Government for this initiative. Oquist pointed out that hurricanes that were once characterized by insurance and reinsurance companies as "100 year-events" have already occurred in 2015, 2017 and 2019, that is, instead of every 100 years, every two years. After years of indecision it is necessary to raise this issue to a strategic level at the next COP-25 and to dedicate significant resources to it. Thus, the basic themes of the Framework Convention on Climate Change should be Adaptation, Mitigation, Losses and Damages. (El19Digital, 9/22/19)





En cursiva: Los países en que 90% de las pérdidas / los casos mortales ocurrieron dentro de un año/ o un evento.

Indice de Riesgo Climático Global: Ranking 1998–2017

1- 10 | 11 - 20 | 21 - 50 | 51 - 100 | >100 | Datos no disponinibles

Fuentes: Germanwatch y Munich Re NatCatSERVICE

Nicaragua to Invest US$110 Million in Nature Reserves

Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA), Javier Gutiérrez, announced that US$110 million dollars will be invested in the conservation of Bosawás Nature Reserve and the Indio Maíz Biological Reserve. The financing comes from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) Green Climate Fund and the General Budget of the Republic. The initiative is part of the Bioclimate Project that MARENA is implementing to contain deforestation and forest degradation in the country. Nicaragua presented the Bioclimate project at the Preparatory Meeting of the UNFCC 25th Climate Change Conference (PreCOP25) held in San Jose, Costa Rica on October 7. (Nicaragua News, 10/10/19)

Agreement Will Improve Protection and Management of Wildlife Reserve

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) announced it has signed an Agreement with the "Juan Ramón Rodríguez" Agricultural Cooperative for the management and protection of the Chocoyero-El Brujo Wildlife Reserve located between Ticuantepe, La Concepción and Crucero municipalities in the department of Managua. Cooperative President Félix Pedro Carballo said, "We are very committed to the care, management and protection of the Reserve, guaranteeing greater sustainability, attracting more visitors and improving income generated by tourism services." He added, "There are more than 180 species of flora and fauna in the Reserve, including 24 different species of bats and countless parakeets." (Nicaragua News 10/26/19)

Nicaragua Increased Renewable Energy from 26% to 62%

Nicaragua's OAS Ambassador Ruth Tapia participated in the Panel on "Decarbonization of Development in the Americas," held Oct. 29 in Washington DC. In her speech, Ambassador Tapia said that Nicaragua has a firm commitment to environmental protection and has transformed its energy grid from 26% renewable energy in 2007 to 62% in 2019. The Ambassador added that Nicaragua has created an Emission Reduction Program that aims to lower carbon dioxide emissions by 11 million tons between 2020-2025, reducing deforestation and forest degradation on the Caribbean Coast by at least 50%. She said that forceful political commitment of member states is required to mitigate the effects of climate change and limit

temperature increase to 1.5 degrees. The event was organized by the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) with the purpose of establishing a framework for collaboration between member states to facilitate exchange of best practices in decarbonization and setting energy efficiency standards. (Nicaragua News, 10/30/19)

Nicaragua to Represent Latin America on Forest Carbon Board

Nicaragua was elected to represent all of Latin America and the Caribbean on the Executive Committee of the Committee of Participants of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) at a meeting held Nov. 11-14. Vice Minister of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) Javier Gutiérrez said, "This election recognizes Nicaragua's commitment to sustainable management of forest resources not only in our country, but in the region in general." Nicaragua is applying the Emission Reduction Program that seeks to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 11 million tons between 2020 and 2025, reducing deforestation and degradation of Caribbean Coast forests by at least 50%. World Bank representatives congratulated Nicaragua for designing a program that applied prior, free and informed consultation with the territorial governments of the Caribbean Coast and meets all international standards for forest protection and emission reduction established in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC). (Nicaragua News, 11/14/19)

Committed to Environmental Protection

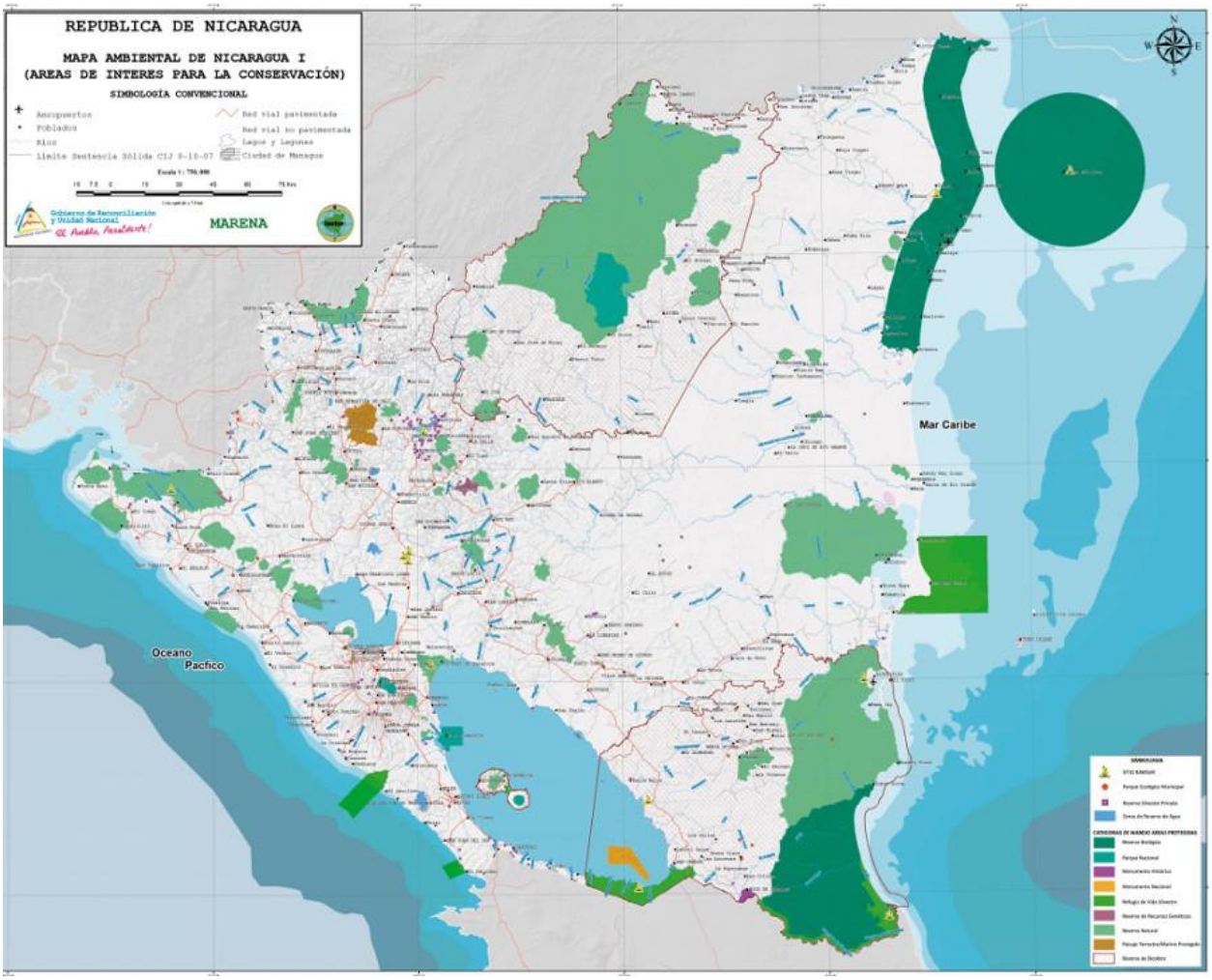
The Nicaraguan Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA) and the Mayoral office of Managua began the process of oxygenation of Lake Tiscapa, an old volcanic lake in the center of Managua. The US$433,290 investment installed oxygenation machinery that will remove sulfur, methane and chemical particles from the lagoon. It is funded from the Municipal budget with support of the Netherlands. The National Autonomous University (UNAN) Center for Aquatic Resources Research (CIRA) will monitor the process continuously. (Nicaragua News, 11/22/19)

Greater Use of Wind Energy

On Nov. 26 the Nicaraguan Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) highlighted a report by the digital magazine Clean Energy XXI on the potential of wind energy in Nicaragua. The report notes that 26% of the energy consumed nationally comes from wind and the country has potential to generate more than 1,000 MW of wind energy. MEM Minister Salvador Mansell said, "Currently with the support of the Nordic Development Fund, feasibility studies are being carried out in León, Carazo, Madriz, Matagalpa and Jinotega departments to assess the potential for wind systems that would be connected to the national electricity grid, contributing to the efforts of the Nicaragua Government to transform the energy grid of the country." (Nicaragua News, 11/27/19)

See Map Below

ÁREAS DE INTERÉS PARA LA CONSERVACIÓN



El Nancital Receives Certification as an Ecological Park

The authorities of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA), delivered this Saturday the ecological park certification to the people of El Nancital, in the municipality of Acoyapa, department of Chontales. El Nancital is a group of 27 islands, a unique paradise virtually unknown to tourists. The archipelago is located 34 kilometers from the municipality of Acoyapa in the department of Chontales in Lake Cocibolca. During a boat trip near the El Nancital islands there are great views of two volcanoes: La Concepción and Las Maderas. See photos: (Radiolaprimerisima, 12/13/19)

Protecting the Environment

During the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP25) held from December 2 to 13 in Madrid, the Nicaraguan Minister Secretary for National Policies Paul Oquist proposed that “the losses and damages caused by the effects of climate change be raised to the same level of importance as mitigation and adaptation actions to facilitate access to resources by the most affected countries.” He also advocated for the creation of a regional office of the Green Climate Fund in Latin America and the Caribbean that would facilitate cooperation between the Fund and countries of the region. (Nicaragua News, 12/13/19)

Nicaraguan Women Take their Rightful Place

Jill Clark-Gollub

One of the most striking accomplishments of Nicaragua society in recent years is its remarkable progress toward closing the inequality gap between men and women. The World Economic Forum ranks Nicaragua 5th in the world in its 2020 Global Gender Gap Report, behind only the Nordic countries, and by far the leading country in the Americas for gender equality. The WEF's Gender Gap Index ranks countries according to progress at closing gaps in **economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment**, because:

> "Gender parity has a fundamental bearing on whether or not economies and societies thrive. Developing and deploying one-half of the world's available talent has a huge bearing on the growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies and businesses worldwide." https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality

This progress is the result not only of equality mandated by the Nicaraguan Constitution and by various laws, but also policies and programs targeting historically disadvantaged groups, including women, as well as the relentless efforts of social movements.

Women's **economic participation** has benefited from the **Zero Usury** program that helps the self-employed and small business owners, a majority of whom are women, have access to subsidized loans and grants administered by the Ministry of the Family, Community, Cooperative, and Associative Economy. At the end of 2018, over 812,000 women were organized in more than 4500 groups using the solidarity loan model and benefiting in total from over US$30 million by means of over 137,000 loans since 2007.

There is also a strong tradition of farming and business **cooperatives** that enjoy support from government programs. Among those programs, the CRISSOL and Healthy Patio programs have benefited over 292,000 women producers. In 2010, the country's Law 717 created a fund to guarantee women equal rights in purchasing land. Rural women have also benefited both economically and in health from the **Zero Hunger** program that specifically prioritizes women in over 113,000 families by ensuring they receive ownership of farm animals and farming inputs distributed to rural families by the program.

Women's **education** has advanced since 2007 because of Nicaragua's system of free public education for all from preschool through university, enhanced by school lunch programs, the provision of backpacks full of school supplies for school children, and public and private scholarships for travel by rural students to study centers. The significant reduction in the nation's poverty rate has certainly played a role in ensuring that these educational benefits are accessible to young girls, and the increased

availability of Child Development Centers has helped working mothers and mothers who are students pursue their own life plans.

A major component of improved **health** for Nicaraguan women is the drastic reduction in maternal mortality, from 115 per 1,000 in 2006, to 47 per 1,000 by the end of 2018, or a 59% decrease. This is not only due to a vastly improved and expanded public health system, but also a national network of maternity houses run by the Ministry of Health which ensures that all rural women in the final weeks immediately prior to giving birth are attended by qualified health professionals. The government has also prioritized testing women for cancer, in particular via mass application of the Papanicolau test for cervical cancer with appropriate follow-up and increasing the availability of testing for breast cancer.

In terms of women's **survival**, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Nicaragua has the lowest rate of femicides in Central America and the Caribbean. Still Nicaragua was not immune from the regional increase in femicides last year. Consequently, the government reopened the Women's Police Stations in January of 2020 as part of the national campaign to end violence against women.

And for the last indicator included in the WEF's Gender Gap Report, **political empowerment,** Nicaragua has received international recognition. In their Women in Politics Map 2019, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women rank Nicaragua third in the world for female representation in the cabinet, as 10 of the 17 Cabinet Ministers are women (58.8%). And the current list of Deputies to the National Assembly shows 49 men and 42 women, as seen here. There are not only gender equity policies throughout the country's public administration, the government also promoted legislation passed by the National Assembly mandating gender parity for electoral candidates at the municipal, regional and national level.

Beyond the Statistics: Real Women's Lives

I have had the privilege of spending time with rural women in Nicaragua during study delegations in 2019 and 2020. I learned how women who are organized in social movements have been advocating tirelessly for their rights to own land and the means of production; to receive an education; to enjoy equal pay and equal recognition with men; and to live their lives free from gender violence. The women of the *Fundación Entre Mujeres* (FEM) work in 17 rural communities of northern Nicaragua. They shared with us the inspiring story of how a dozen peasant women founded the organization in 1995. Tired of being invisible, just relegated to the kitchen and child care, they wanted to own land to farm so they could control their own finances. They also immediately saw a need for education and protection from violence against women. These issues have become the center of their work and their lives, along with a devotion to healthy living and healthy, sustainable agriculture.

Also, in January of 2019, through a delegation organized by Friends of the ATC (Rural Workers Association), I met the peasant women of the Gloria Quintanilla Women's Cooperative in Santa Julia, Managua Department. Following are excerpts of life testimony given by some of the members of the cooperative, as included in the delegation report. This gives you a glimpse of how the statistics on improved gender equality are impacting real women's lives.

Testimonies from the Gloria Quintanilla Cooperative

Lola, the first woman who spoke, explained the history of both Santa Julia and Nicaragua from the 1930s through the mid-1940s. During this period, the area was a coffee plantation owned by a German who essentially enslaved his workers, paying men 3 Córdobas a day and women 1.5 (less than $0.25). Families had to share extremely small rooms and people slept on boards as there were no beds. In the lead-up to World War II, Somoza claimed the land and the conditions actually worsened with water being rationed and food given only to workers, not their whole families. Women were treated terribly as they were raped, hit, and forced to stay silent. Many did not go to school and had no medical care.

With the Triumph of the Revolution in 1979, the workers organized, forming a community. Lola described this experience: "From that time on, we were able to organize and we felt like we were free — both women and men. We didn't have to sleep like animals anymore and we could meet and form a community and that's how we were able to organize ourselves little by little for health care." But there was still much inequality between men and women — e.g. regarding property rights, for which the women still fight today. There were many single women tired of machismo; they told the rest of the men they could either leave or stay and support their struggle. The women often did not think about themselves, but gave everything for the community and they improved their lives.

In 2008, the women founded the Gloria Quintanilla Cooperative. One of the basic rules was that men were not allowed to hurt women. The 35 families have grown to 75 families and today the property is owned in the name of the women. According to Lola, the men who stayed love and respect them because they carry the world on their shoulders and educated themselves. Lola emphasized the importance of training young people to ensure the future of the community. She said that many different student groups or other organizations have come to the cooperative to support them. One women's group from a university came and told them that they could make more money by selling coffee instead of just the coffee berries. Lola explained that they call it "coffee with love" since their product is organic without chemicals and made with love. Before, the women had to roast the coffee over the fire; now, they have a grinder and a label detailing their story. The women put different logos on the coffee packaging to show whose land the coffee came from.

A certain percentage of the profits earned goes to their children's meals, as children from one year old to kindergarten receive food from the community. Some of the older children get food from the government. The cooperative also supports the development of their young women from who go to Managua to get training. Aside from coffee, each woman grows six to eight different crops and has different roles within the cooperative — e.g. some put on the labels, some roast the coffee. The women are still working on their journey to better themselves, their community, and their children.

The women have also been struggling for land titles and water rights. In March 2017, they finally drilled a well, but the municipal government could not provide enough money. The budget for the well was US$200,000 and it was done by the state water company. Lola said that they have almost completed this project; they just need one more type of electrical wire, which costs US$20,000. Currently they receive water once every eight days from Ticuantepe. With more water, they could grow rice. They still have to buy oil, rice, sugar, salt and matches, but everything else they can produce themselves.

After Lola finished, **Eloisa**, the president of the cooperative, 53 years old, and had started off unable to read or write, told her story. Growing up, Eloisa was forced to migrate through the municipalities and was unable to go to school. She often told her children about this experience because she wanted them to remember how difficult the times were back then. In the 1980s, when the Sandinistas won the elections, their lives changed. Eloisa set the goal for herself that her children should not suffer the way she did and she feels that she is meeting the goal with faith in God and the support of the other women. Eloisa emphasized her gratitude toward God, Lola, and the ATC. "Because even before the Sandinista Front came into power, the Association of Farm Worker's (ATC) was working with us," said Eloisa. "José Adán (Rivera) and Edgardo (Garcia) were out there fighting even though they were wearing homemade sandals, winning over our people. That is where we were born. That is who we are. That's how we are going to die."

Because the women were organizing and empowering themselves, Eloisa started not feeling afraid anymore. Before she was shy and afraid to speak; when she began to feel empowered and motivated, she agreed to become the deputy coordinator of the community and then eventually the president of the cooperative. Eloisa's message was that women should not let themselves be mistreated. She has seen major changes since the women took the reins of the community, which she tied to the support of the FSLN: "That's what this government has brought to us, rights for women, and rights for children. The community would not have what it has today without the energy and dedication of the women. Now they feel heard, brave, and proud."

Eloisa concluded by stating that she is proud to be a campesina or peasant woman, because campesinas are the reason city people can eat. "I am proud to say I am from the *campo* (countryside) and born in the *campo*, that I smell of smoke from our kitchen," she told us. "I am very proud to be in the *campo*. Even if they gave me a house in the city, I would not take it because I am from the *campo* and will die here."

We finished this day's session with the testimony of **Lea**, an educator who was the only young woman in the cooperative when it was founded in 2008. She was 18 years old at the time and was the secretary of the cooperative. The cooperative told her to finish high school to help and teach the members how to read and write. For example, she taught Eloisa. Many say they learned how to read and write thanks to her, but Lea tells them that they achieved this themselves. The women's motivation got them to learn and now there is about 80% literacy. Today Lea gives classes to other people in the community and her dream is that her mother who helped her and her siblings get an education, will learn to read and write. She hopes to get her college degree as a full-fledged teacher to help the community.

Lea explained that the knowledge the women gained through struggle, effort and suffering has been transferred to the young women who are grateful to the community. She told us that she has been to Cuba and Honduras to represent the cooperative and the ATC and will be going to Venezuela in February. She said "the ATC has never abandoned us and we are the daughters of the ATC."

On the second day, **Claudia**, at 22 years old the youngest member of the Gloria Quintanilla Cooperative, discussed her transformation from someone who "didn't even know how to pull up one bean plant" to an important part of her organization. Before joining the cooperative, she would walk past meetings and think that the women "had nothing to do." And when she was invited for the first time, Claudia didn't want to be asked about her opinion on anything. She continued attending meetings and began enjoying the conversations about gender. Eventually the cooperative invited her on a trip to Managua and she started to become active. Now she gives tours whenever there are groups visiting Santa Julia and participates in the ATC's workshops.

When Claudia was 15, she became pregnant and was unable to finish high school — a common experience for Nicaraguan women. The workshops with the ATC and the cooperative on gender, along with men being supportive of women in Santa Julia, empowered her to continue her studies. "I would travel with my huge belly to El Crucero to study," said Claudia. "I would have to put a huge backpack on to balance the weight of my belly. I finished my third year of high school. The next year I wanted to finish. I wanted to finish two years in one year, but they don't offer that here. I had to go to Managua where there is a government program that allowed me to finish in one year."

Asked about what she wished students in the United States understood about her experience, Claudia said "everything," but more specifically a few transformations: 1) From living in the city to living in the countryside; 2) From being an adolescent to becoming a mother; 3) "From not being a part of a social movement to joining a social movement."

Irma, a 74-year-old who "feels brands new," then spoke about her experiences from the time of the Somoza dictatorship until today. Irma has given birth to 18 children and has 50 grandchildren, 40 great grandchildren, and no "complaints with the current

government." She told the delegation, "We used to go to bed at 9 PM and get up at midnight. We almost didn't sleep. I would make 2 kilograms of tortillas every day for 300 coffee pickers. When a brigade would come, we made them for 600 people." When Irma was young, she picked cotton on the plantation in Santa Julia and also migrated to Chinandega and other places to find work. She didn't earn enough to even buy a pair of sandals and thus had to work barefoot. "When Daniel entered as president, that is when we all woke up," said Irma. "Why? Because the ATC helped us and now we have been able to change our lives."

To conclude the testimonies, **Nora** provided an in-depth history lesson on the victory over Somoza, the Sandinista Revolution, the era of neoliberalism, the return of the FSLN to power, and the formation of the Gloria Quintanilla Cooperative. "The Sandinista Front changed our lives," Nora said. "Under Somoza everything that we consumed was rationed, even water. With the Sandinista Front, women were valued more, so our salary was larger. What has helped us along the way is to be organized in a movement, and the key to our organization is the ATC." After the victory of Violeta Chamorro and the defeat of the Sandinista Revolution [in 1990], their collective farm fell apart due to mismanagement and exploitation by those with more learning. The women had to struggle with the ATC to reclaim the land, as Nora explained: "Thanks to the help of the ATC we carried out protests and demanded that the land be redistributed among us. We demonstrated for several weeks around the University, in the sun and in the rain. I had a small child who I carried in my arms so that I could be a part of the protest. Thanks to that long struggle and the initiative of the elders who said we had to hold on through the year, we were able to resist the pressure to sell the cooperative and we had it divided into parcels so we could all have part of the land. While it isn't divided perfectly, we can now say that we each have 4 *manzanas* (manzana = 1.72 acres) of land for coffee cultivation. This is a source of pride for us."

When asked about the impact of Daniel Ortega's election in 2007, Nora described a series of improvements: wage increases and equal pay for men and women, a breakfast program at the elementary school, and a program to provide school children new shoes and backpacks. She asked, "How can we say it is a bad government when it is a government that has been giving us the things we have been struggling for all along?"

Find the full report from the Friends of the ATC Food Sovereignty and Agroecology in Nicaragua Delegation, January 2019 here.
Consider visiting Nicaragua with a study delegation! The Friends of the ATC sponsors groups on a regular basis, which can be found through their website here. Jubilee House Community also sponsors delegations and has volunteer opportunities: https://jhc-cdca.org/

Interview of Emérita Vega, January 2019. Translated by Susan Lagos.

My name is Emerita Vega. I was born Sept. 22, 1948 in the community Marlon Alvarado, near the town of Santa Teresa, Carazo, Nicaragua.

My childhood was very sad. I grew up in the period in which Nicaragua was governed by the Somoza family. I was raised in extreme poverty, the same as all the poor people of that time here in Nicaragua. I am the second of ten children. I had no time to play because here we had no water, and we had to go fill buckets five kilometers away. We had no electricity either, so we used a bottle with a rag soaked in diesel for a light. The roads were just trails where the horses could drown in the mud holes in the rainy season, and we all went barefoot. Our houses had straw or grass roofs, and the walls were sticks or sorghum stalks. There wasn't any school, so we were all illiterate. Later a school was provided but only to third grade, so I learned to read and write. At age twelve I had to go work in the city to help my parents raise my younger brothers and sisters. I worked as a maid, and in those days, there were no laws to protect us. We had no day off, nor vacation time, nor extra pay at Christmas; we were like slaves. That's how I grew up, and when I was nineteen, my father died, so I continued working to support my younger siblings.

It wasn't until July 19, 1979 with the triumph of the Popular Sandinista Revolution that we poor people saw a change in our lives. It was like waking up. It wasn't until then that we had any rights, for example a right to land. Through the agrarian reform we were given an area of land to plant. That land had always belonged to a rich landowner, where we were the badly paid laborers. Now thanks to the Revolution we could work this land for our own benefit, which has helped a lot to change how we live. Now we have good roads all year round, electricity, and easy access to water. As for food, we people in the countryside produce our own food and we can survive.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) lost the elections in 1990 because people were tired of so much war, scarcity of necessary items, loss of our loved ones; and people were influenced by the propaganda that if Doña Violeta [the US-chosen candidate] won, the war would be over – that's how the neoliberals returned to power.

With Violeta Chamorro, Arnoldo Aleman and Enrique Bolaños [the three presidents from 1990 to 1996], we regressed. They wanted to take away the [constitutionally mandated] 6% of the budget that is for university education, including scholarships for people who can't afford it. Young people protested to claim their rights, and some were killed and wounded. The roads weren't maintained so they became unpassable again. The famous "blackouts" were extended times when there was scarcely electricity six hours a day. In the hospitals and health centers there were no medicines. In the schools, we had to pay for tests, and many extras. Everything slid backwards and people got tired of it.

In 2007 Daniel Ortega returned to power through the elections which the FSLN won, and a new period began in which the government works with all the sectors: private business, farmers, the medium and small-sized businesses, the unions, etc. There began to be many benefits for the people such as the "bono productivo" [production package of the Zero Hunger Program] which is given to poor people with land. This consists of a pregnant cow, a pig, ten hens, two rolls of barbed wire, 2 bags of cement, 8 sheets of zinc roofing, etc. I am one of many who received this bono. Another bono is when 10 sheets of zinc roofing and 2 lbs. of nails are given to families whose roof is in bad shape. Other bonos are the school lunch program, free health care, a backpack and notebooks to start the school year, and the bono for those graduating from high

school, housing for needy people, university scholarships nationally and internationally for students.

Thanks to all this, all young people can study. In my family, all the young people are professionals. For example, my brother Antonio Vega, is a farmer. He has 4 children who have graduated from the university: one civil engineer, two doctors, and one psychologist. This would have been impossible if it weren't for the 6% law which provides room and board as well as tuition for students from families who can't afford it. And that is thanks to this Revolution and the FSLN under the direction of President Daniel Ortega that all this is possible.

That is why the opposition parties know that through elections they won't return to power, since the majority of the people are content with this government. And that's why they have had to use tricks, lies, and false statements to destabilize the country, taking advantage of the internet to wage a media war, but they can't fool us because we can see what is really happening here, but they may be able to fool the people in other countries. https://afgj.org/life-under-the-dictatorship-vs-life-under-sandinismo

Selected NicaNotes News Briefs

Nicaragua Successful in Reducing the Gender Gap
The latest gender gap index published by the World Economic Forum places Nicaragua as the only Central American country where the government has overcome the gaps in equity issues by implementing policies where women and men have the same conditions to perform in political, economic and social positions. "There has always been a stigma in society about the capabilities of women in the workplace and if Nicaragua is implementing policies to open this field to women, they must continue to be replicated, not only in institutions, but also in companies", said Alfredo Tejeda, an expert on Human Resources at the Nicaragua Catholic University. (Informe Pastran, 1/11/18)

Nicaragua's Family and Community Health Model Awarded
The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) awarded the "Childhood and Mother Friendly" certificate to the "Milton Rocha" Health Center in Kukra Hill municipality, Nicaragua Southern Caribbean Autonomous Region. The ceremony was attended by Minister of Health Carolina Dávila and UNICEF delegate in Nicaragua María Delia Espinoza. "UNICEF extends this certification to health centers that promote comprehensive care of children in all stages of growth, as well as prenatal care for mothers," the UNICEF representative said. The Minister of Health stated that the award gives recognition to the Family and Community Health Model implemented by the Ministry of Health. "With this certification, the Nicaragua Southern Caribbean Region has 5 centers recognized by UNICEF," the Minister said. (Nicaragua News, 8/23/19)

Nicaragua Rated Third in Gender Equality in the World by the United Nations
UN Women, a United Nations organization dedicated to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, released a list of the 10 countries with the best gender balance in the world. Nicaragua ranked third. Vice President Rosario Murillo emphasized October 4 that this is a triumph for Nicaraguan women. "We are heroic, we are hard-working, we are intelligent, we are capable and we are recognized in the world as women protagonists of our rights in Nicaragua," she said. According to data from the UN Women in Politics map and the Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019, worldwide women accounted for 24.3% of all legislators and 20.7% of government ministers in January 2019. Read report here: https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/learn/knowledge-resources/here-are-most-gender-balanced-cabinets-world-today (El19Digital 10/4/19)

Vice President Laments Deaths of Women
October 2 Vice President Rosario Murillo said that from January to October 1, 2019, 17 femicides were registered, three fewer than in the same period last year. “There is a disaster that we are facing every day and it is the scourge of crimes against women’s lives, crimes that represent a lack of respect for women. In Nicaragua we have lower numbers than in the rest of Central America, but that is no consolation – this crime against humanity, against women, should not exist. The government of Nicaragua is working to prevent these crimes against women. We have set up a commission precisely to anticipate, to detect situations that could lead to men killing women. It is difficult, because this happens in the homes, but we have to work and we always ask for the support of the pastors, of the churches, who know the relationships of couples, if there is violence between the couples, who alert us to be able to work with the Family Ministry and try to prevent these murders,” the Vice President stated. (Radiolaprimerisima, El19Digital, 10/2/19)

Nicaragua Congratulated for its Gender Equity and Balance in the Nicaraguan Cabinet
Nicaragua participated in the International Seminar on Violence against Women, held October 8-10 in the Dominican Republic with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to foster dialogue between representatives of the national statistical offices of Latin American and Caribbean countries and to exchange experiences in the collection of data on violence against women and its impact on public policy formulation. During the Seminar, Nicaragua was congratulated for its important achievements in gender equality and restitution of women’s rights, highlighting the recent publication of the UN Women and Inter-Parliamentary Union “Women in Politics” map, which noted that the Cabinet of Government in Nicaragua is made up of seven men and ten women, making it 58.8% female and third in the world in terms of gender balance. (Nicaragua News, 10/14/19)

Millions of Dollars Provided in Loans to Nearly 400,000 Women
Last week, the director of the microloan program called “Zero Usury,” Leonor Corea, reported that in the last 12 years financing totaling US$23.9 million has been provided to more than 380,000 women in 140 municipalities throughout the country to establish and expand small businesses. Corea said that, “In 2019 financing has been provided to 15,000 women, which reflects the program´s contribution to the revitalization of the national economy.” (Nicaragua News, 10/28/19)

Nicaraguan Women Recognized by UN-Habitat for Solar Oven Project
The Nicaragua Government reported that last Friday the “Golden Adobe” Award honored the Nicaragua Women’s Solar Project Foundation (FRUPOSOMUNIC) with first place in the “Urban Innovation” category for the Solar Oven project in Catarina, Masaya department. The United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) selected projects that promote innovative, socially and environmentally sustainable strategies. (Nicaragua News 11/5/19)

Permanent Campaign for a Nicaragua Free of Violence against Women
The Women's Police Stations will be re-launched as part of an effort to protect women's lives, Nicaraguan Vice President Rosario Murillo said Jan. 31. A government commission headed by Attorney General Ana Julia Guido is being formed. Vice-president Rosario Murillo explained that in 2019, 21 cases of femicide were registered, the lowest figure in the region. Murillo reported that 81% of the victims were housewives and the murders occurred at home. "The Attorney General's Office, the Police, the Human Rights Office, Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Women's and Family’s Ombudsman, are working together to prevent deaths," she added. (Radiolaprimerisima, 1/31/2020)

Indigenous and Afro Descendant Women Present Projects in Mexico
An Intercultural Forum for Leadership Strengthening with Indigenous and Afro-descendant Women of Central America and Mexico was held last weekend in Mexico. Nicaraguan delegates Keña Leal and Larisa Escobar presented two community development projects based on the legal framework of the Autonomy Statute of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast. The “Miskito Mairin Pawanka” project promotes economic empowerment of Miskito women through the planting of diversified vegetables in

the Wangky Twi Tasbarraya community, Waspam municipality. The other project addresses Climate Resilience and works with 30 Indigenous and Afro-descendant youths in Waspam promoting climate change-adapted cultivation. Both proposals were recognized for promoting development of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, in compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. (Nicaragua News, 2/29/20)

Thousands Walk in Support of Nicaraguan Women's Rights
Sandinistas took to the streets around the country Feb. 8 ratifying the progress on gender issues being made by the Sandinista Government. With the chant "We dream big in Nicaragua," Janice Ruiz said that women support the government: "Here we are, the women of Bilwi, reaffirming the determination we have to continue moving forward with this government that has restored the rights of all women, we raise a single cry for the future: 'Thank you President Ortega for all the effort and support for the Miskito, Mayangnas, mestizo and Creole women.' (Canal 8, 2/8/20)

The Government has provided 320,000 Women with Loans over Thirteen Years
More than 320,000 women have received loans through the government's Zero Usury program over the past 13 years, reported director Leonor Corea. Over the 13 years the interest rate has remained at 5% per year. In 2019 91,500 women were served and in 2020 they expect to benefit 97,200 women. 80 percent of loans are for strengthening businesses and 20 percent for starting new enterprises. She said that 13 years ago the amounts of loans were between 1,850 and 5,500 Córdobas, currently loans are between 5,000 and 20,000 Córdobas. The terms are 6, 8 and 12 months, before they were 3, 6 and 8 months. (Radiolaprimerisima, 2/14/20)

Nicaragua Has Lowest Number of Femicides in Central America and the Caribbean
On Feb.14 the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) Gender Equality Observatory presented the conclusions of the Regional Report on Femicides in the hemisphere. The report states that Nicaragua with (0.7) has the lowest rate of femicides per 100,000 inhabitants in the Region and is among the 3 lowest rates on the American Continent. (Informe Pastran, 2/14/20)

Women's Police Station Re-opened
As part of the national campaign to stop violence against women, on Feb. 13 the Women's Police Station in District II of Managua was reopened. Commissioner Fernando Borge, second in command of Managua, stressed that this station has women officers trained to receive the complaints of women, and to investigate and provide proper accompaniment to each complainant. Timely action is provided by each institution, including the Ministry of Women and the Ministry of the Family. The Ministry of Education also provides school counselors to help eradicate and reduce gender violence. "This is a permanent campaign for women's rights and for a Nicaragua free of all types of violence against women," said Borge. (Radiolaprimerisima, 2/13/20)

Nicaragua Takes more Actions to Reduce Violence Against Women
The Nicaraguan Ministry of Women, the Women's Police Stations, and the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) are carrying out a series of meetings with merchants in city markets to address concerns about gender-based violence as well as to provide information about the legal instruments that are available to guarantee the rights of women. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Latin America and Caribbean Gender Equality Observatory, have stated that Nicaragua has the lowest rate of femicides in the Central American region with 0.7% per 100,000 inhabitants and has the third lowest rate among all countries in the Americas. (Nicaragua News, 2/24/20)

Nicaragua’s Popular Economy: The Face of Five Centuries of People’s Resistance

By Yorlis Luna

Introduction

In 2018, 1% of the population accumulated 82% of the world's wealth, while the 8 richest people had the equivalent of all the wealth of more than half the world's population, or 3.7 billion people (OXFAM, 2018). Another relevant fact was that a global tax of only 1.5% on these fortunes could guarantee the budget for the schooling of all children in the world. By 2020, the richest 1% owned the same amount of wealth as 89% of the population (OXFAM, 2020). The data show a Dantesque reality: more and more the pyramid of social wealth is becoming microscopic at the top and infinitely thicker at the bottom.

In fact, these are the worst figures of social inequality in all human history, in the face of which, several United Nations rapporteurs for Human Rights declared "the world today is richer, but more unequal than ever" (Alfarargi et al, 2018). These gaps may be aggravated by the current health, economic and food crisis as a result of the coronavirus. This unfortunate panorama is the other side of the coin of the transformations of the last 30 years of the capitalist economy, in which the few have amassed unimaginable fortunes in short periods of time at the cost of the deterioration of quality and conditions of life of millions of families. Inequality caused by tax evasion, corruption, and the speculative financial economy. This economy has reached gigantic dimensions and currently represents 125 times more than its support in the productive economy (López, 2016).

The productive economy was the praxis of capitalism in its historical cycles. This economy includes the transformation of the productive factors - natural resources, labor or capital - into goods or services, where the money that circulates has its material support in the productive fabric. Meanwhile, the speculative economy is based on commercial operations aimed at creating and taking advantage of fluctuating price contexts. It is based on financial engineering, Big Data analysis, stock markets and large operations; it generates currencies on currencies without any link to the productive economy, "paper on paper that benefits only the richest", a recent phenomenon that emerged due to the economic deregulations of the 1980s, neoliberalism and the law of modernization of commodity futures in the United States and other related laws in the world (Keiser, 2019).

The speculative economy is consumed by large corporations that advocate neoliberalism: the dismantling of the state, deregulation and privatization of everything. They participate in global geopolitics through local lobbies and pressure on governments, promote coups d'état, push for the elimination of labor and environmental laws, free trade agreements, and speculation in national debts through vulture funds, among others. With the vulture funds, financial capital buys debts of countries or

companies, they buy-sell-buy them, increasing profit uncontrollably. Thus, a Nicaraguan debt bought for 1.14 million was settled at 87 million in 2001, at a profit of 7,500% (Naba, 2016).

In the United States, financial speculation on housing has created the crisis of the millions of "homeless". The banks stripped many of these families of their homes, which were bought at low prices by the corporate real estate sector and are now offered at high prices that are impossible for the working classes. In the state of California alone, there are at least 150,000 people living on the streets, while for every homeless person, there are 13 empty houses off the market and 4 unoccupied properties in the hands of corporations (Schatz, 2018). Beyond these figures, there is the desperation of families and their children with cold, hunger, insecurity and hopelessness.

The world produces more food and calories than it needs. Up to one-third of all this food is wasted while there are around a billion people who are hungry (WFP, 2020), a situation caused in large part by speculation in the global agri-food system, controlled from planting to consumption by large corporations. This translates into social exclusion, poor nutrition, disorders and diseases, and is a key factor in the current ecological and civilizational crisis (Delgado, 2010).

In this economy, technology plays a decisive role through Big Data, and the automation of all types of activities. Workers are not needed, nor are taxes, and the role of the state is to look after their interests, so the state gives money to the banks and richer people, and keeps that speculative economy (Keiser, 2020). In this way, many countries are judged or analyzed under the logic of this economy and an apparent stability, but in practice they erode the pillars of the productive economy and generate vulnerabilities. In this way, it becomes meaningless to continue promoting capitalism in all its forms, because it goes against people, nature and life. It has already demonstrated its failure, leaving behind the classic premise that, in order to advance in the construction of different societies, everyone must go through capitalism, as a productive stage.

Rather, there is an urgent need for a continuous search for other ways to rebuild societies, moral relations, solidarity and the common good for the majority. This text reflects on the popular economy as a process of building economic alternatives from below that are sustainable, resilient, and socially just. It also describes how the people of Nicaragua and the Sandinista government are walking together towards building it in the midst of a hostile context of economic sanctions by the US, large losses resulting from an attempted coup two years ago, and international economic recession.

The popular, self-managed, associative and solidarity-based economy

The popular economy is made up of individual and associated self-employed workers, rural and urban, primary production and small-scale agro-industry; family businesses, cooperatives and associated companies in different areas of the economy and society: agriculture, livestock, trade, services, transport, savings and credit, fishing, housing, tourism, etc.

Unlike the capitalist economy in its speculative phase, described above, which is controlled by corporations of a few unknown people, in the popular economy people buy and sell to ordinary people, with visible faces and tangible bodies, who have family lineages and histories, known social nuclei, who with their work and contribution reduce production costs, prices and marketing circuits. It is a productive economy whose benefits circulate among ordinary people, in national economies, instead of being channeled by transnationals and global value chains (McCune, 2019), in the speculative financial economy.

Capitalism as a system has failed and it is not in its interest to satisfy the basic needs of housing, food and employment, but the popular economy is what satisfies people's need for employment, housing, food, recreation and family, community and social welfare of those excluded from capitalism's benefit. There, the great majority find the food, work, provision and support to reproduce daily life.

In both kinds of economies, there is a management of capital, but their internal logics, objectives and means to achieve it are different. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the activities and operations of the popular economy are also motivated by personal, family, small business or cooperative interests, it has the opposite ends and means to those of the capitalist economy. Capitalism creates employment to maximize profit and accumulation; the self-employed and the actors of the popular economy use accumulation as a tool to provide employment; moreover, people own their time and the results of their work. "Thus, while capital must expand, self-managed labor is flexible: it can produce commodities or shift to the direct provision of use values, in order to resist market pressures" (McCune, 2019), creating local self-management and social democratization.

Across the world, the gender gap is widening every day and capitalism is far from reaching gender equity. In contrast, popular economy and popular markets have historically been led and managed by women. Popular markets are not the residues of the past, they are the beacons of the future, which teach and proclaim in daily life "the human possibilities beyond capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy. They are concrete utopias, they exemplify the art of resistance practices" (Souza, 2014).

The logic of the popular economy is old and pre-capitalist. The archaeology and the chronicles of the Spaniards refer to what would be the genesis of this popular economy: the extraordinary pre-Hispanic markets, with people from all over who came to exchange goods with the presence of specialized people to ensure justice and morality in business dealings. The street vendors who traveled long distances between villages, educated and socially respected people, with extensive knowledge of history, geography, economics and languages (Cobos, 2013).

Markets and street vendors survived, despite continuous attempts to eliminate them, as well as the people, culture, spirituality and languages that sustained them. They evolved, maintaining their roots, according to historical contexts, with complex networks, which now make up the popular economy. Thus, at present the people who recreate the

popular economy are descendants of indigenous, black, peasant, mestizo and popular sectors (Villegas, 2010).

Therefore, its basis is the family, self-management, the community fabric, local and ancestral knowledge that is inherited from generation to generation. The popular economy is made up of networks of people with millennial, oral and empirical knowledge about nature: the sea, animals, the moon, seeds and their sowing, fishing, hunting, gathering and shepherding; the production of construction materials, clothing, utensils, medicines and body care.

In this economy, there are values beyond the simple productive and commercial relationship. For example, in Nicaragua, the small-scale miners in Santo Tomas, Chontales, believe in not being overly ambitious and not going to work with family or friend problems because otherwise the vein of gold is hidden. Similarly, in small peasant production, there is the popular custom of having a great celebration with the first harvest, so of the tender corn, yoltamales, güirila and atoles (typical foods made from corn) are prepared and shared with family, friends and neighbors. And for the fishermen of Tipitapa, Managua: if the fishing was good, the norm is to share so that it goes well again. Also in the cities: when families make typical dishes, the custom is to cook more than necessary, have it for several days and share it with neighbors. That is to say, in this economy, there are relationships of cooperation, solidarity and mutual help, and a search for an ethical conception of life, the result of the people's search for strategies for physical, family and cultural survival (Coraggio, 2015).

In many places, development agencies and politicians have attempted to co-opt and promote the popular economy as an “alternative” in wake of the failure of neoliberalism and globalization to provide employment. Promoting "entrepreneurship", based on recognizing the greater efficiency of the popular economy, but simultaneously celebrating the values of competition and individualism; these powerful sectors distort its true nature. The neoliberal playing field is rigged against the popular economy, however, so its results in neoliberal countries are weakened, vulnerable and precarious (Coraggio, 2015). For example, in Colombia, 71% of the enterprises fail in the first five years (Giraldo, 2019), a result largely due to the profoundly neoliberal historical and social context.

Neoliberalism has been a total failure socially and environmentally, and has an abysmal economic track record, but it has been successful politically and a near-total triumph in ideological terms. Under neoliberalism, when a member of a small family business has a need and there is no public health, the accumulated profit is destined to solve the health problem, then they lose their economic footing and this spreads into all aspects of life. It is a "save-yourself-if-you-can" model, actively working against the networks of solidarity, self-management, and social justice that the popular economy needs to express all its potential as an economic alternative (Coraggio, 2015).

On the contrary, the popular economy, in order to widely provide social welfare, participation, self-management capacity, local empowerment and direct popular

democracy requires public policies and political will to redistribute social wealth and create decent living conditions for the vast majority (Coraggio, 2015). In this way, public policy functions to permit the development of self-management, associative and solidarity, weaving the hope of overcoming the capitalist world, the current systematic crisis and historical contradictions between capitalism and socialism, providing coherence between political subjects, their ends and means (Núñez, 2015).

This is the direction in which public policy is heading in Nicaragua, hence Nicaragua's popular economy is the strongest in Latin America and presents different results from other countries. Indeed, for over a decade Cuba has been moving toward an economy of associated, self-employed producers, protected from exploitation by socialist labor, environmental regulation and the power of people's assemblies. Nicaragua incorporates the popular economy into the National Social Security System, frees it from taxes, capitalizes it through investment, access to credit, creates decent points of sale for it and creates the conditions for good marketing, guarantees public security, promotes association with an economic environment and legal system that is favorable to cooperatives. The government management is carried out through a dialogue with the representatives of the popular economy, attending to their demands and guaranteeing accompaniment and a good business environment for the popular economy.

Nicaragua: the strongest popular economy in Latin America

The popular economy in Nicaragua provides 70 percent of employment, 42.3 percent of value added and 59.3 percent of income, excluding remittances. (Núñez, 2015, 2019). It is an economy is sustained by the will, stubbornness, drive, energy, dreams and creativity of working families.

In Nicaragua, the popular economy has its roots in A. C. Sandino, who is the founder of cooperativism in Nicaragua. He and his soldiers initiated the first cooperative project on the banks of the Coco River in 1934, "visualizing a strategic project of social justice to rebuild Nicaragua from below" (Salazar, 2012), laying the foundations of an economic and political model that would break the bonds of humiliation, contempt, capitalist and oligarchic domination in the people. He created sought the democratization of economic, political, social and cultural power.

Decades later, during the struggle against the Somoza dictatorship, it was the informal sector of urban self-employed workers and small peasants that swelled the ranks of the 1979 insurrection (Núñez, 2000). For 10 years, the revolution disputed the economic power of the oligarchy, freed the productive forces and placed a part of the national wealth in the hands of the common people. This created the conditions for the popular economy to resist the subsequent context.

From 1990 through the subsequent 16 years of neoliberalism in Nicaragua, there was an onslaught against the popular economy from the neoliberal governments, the re-armed Contra, the banks, the transnational companies and the business groups of the national oligarchy, with the objective of violently recovering the wealth redistributed during the revolution. Cooperatives and associations were violently attacked, and

carried out resistance to maintain their lands and means of production. Of the more than 3,000 cooperatives registered in the 80s, only 801 were registered by 2001 (CIPRES, 2008); the popular markets lacked investment and were threatened by organized crime, free trade agreements and their agro-industrial chains; credit was offered with predatory conditions and the medieval debt prison was reinstated; like so many countries undergoing neoliberal transformation, peasants made an exodus to the cities, while criminal groups proliferated in Managua's working-class neighborhoods.

The popular economy resisted as an alternative for the survival of families. The working class lived those years in continuous resistance: strikes by transporters, huge demonstrations by peasants and popular worker strikes characterized that era, actions that allowed the defense of livelihoods and basic rights (Chamorro and Uttings, 2015). The survival strategy was the restructuring of the cooperative movement through the formation of second- and third-tier organizations, the unionization of part of the workers in the informal sector, the increase in fair trade networks and the search for and implementation of projects for economic empowerment promoted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) linked to mass organizations and the social organizational fabric of the 1980s (Chamorro and Uttings, 2015).

This was a key process for the reincorporation of those demobilized from the Sandinista army as well as the counter-revolutionary armies, which were also confronted with the ravages of the neoliberal policies initiated in 1990. The alliance built between the Association of Rural Workers (ATC), the National Union of Associated Producers (UNAPA), the pro-Sandinista National Committee of Retired Officers and the Association of the Nicaraguan Resistance (Contra) laid the agrarian foundations for peace and reconciliation in Nicaragua.

Since the return of the Sandinista government to power in 2006, the debt prisons that afflicted the popular sectors were eliminated, the era of cooperatives was declared, and the popular economy was recognized as the economic engine and generator of Nicaragua's true wealth (CES, 2018), while its protagonists were recognized as full subjects of law and human being as the center of the economic and social model. Part of this process was the restitution of basic rights: health, education, recreation, housing, public security, among others. This becomes the indispensable state complement for the development of the popular economy with dignity.

When Sandinismo returned in 2006, the cooperative sector created a Common Agenda that incorporated demands such as financing of the sector (Chamorro and Uttings, 2015), generating conditions for the use of the factors of production and the productive culture of the country. Over the 14 ensuing years, this agenda has been gradually fulfilled. An enabling legal framework was created for the popular economy and a combination of rural-centered public policies was implemented, which redefined life in the countryside, prioritized, recognized and valued the contribution of production and the peasant family economy to national development (Núñez, 2015).

In Latin American countries such as Chile, Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, street vendors are beaten by police, their work spaces are destroyed and they are expelled from public places: parks, avenues and around institutions, under the pretext that they make the city look bad. In contrast, in Nicaragua the eviction of street vendors from public places was prohibited by order of the executive. In addition, a political priority has been the creation of hundreds of dignified markets at a national level for the popular economy, where the state guarantees good conditions for the sale, construction of public recreational spaces, that internally have restaurants of all sizes that venders rent at low cost.

The transformation of Lake Managua and its surroundings is an example of this model. Before 2006, the lake suffered such pollution that rotten odors could be smelled from many blocks away. Managua's wastewater entered the lake directly, increasing the amounts of nitrogenous, fatty and carbohydrate compounds present in the lake water. The pollution threatened the livelihood of the thousands of fishing families living around Lake Managua. It was an unvisitable place and no one thought of going there to spend time with their families. The air was unbreathable, with prostitution and drug addiction, delinquency and dangerous bars; the lake was a tragedy, full of polluted foam, a short distance away, vultures circled over Nicaragua's largest garbage dump, known as "La Chureca", with hundreds of people living in and literally eating the garbage from it for years. Malnourished children, inhabitants of the dump, played on the lake's shores, which were the stinking backdrop of all imaginable crimes. Thus, the city of Managua, "By-the-Water" in Nahualt, was ashamed and turned its back on the lake for which it was named.

The transformation began with the cleaning of the garbage in La Chureca and remediation of the lake, through public and private co-investment in a sewage treatment plant in the city, which currently produces bio-fertilizers. At the same time decent housing was built for families living in the midst of the garbage and their integration with decent jobs in a formal trash recycling center as well as other economic sectors. This allowed progress in the ecological recovery of the lake, eliminating bad odors, and transforming the lives of the lakeshore families and fisherfolk communities.

After the clean-up, the Sandinista government created Salvador Allende Port, a public space with gardens, parks, children's games, nearly free admission, security and restaurants of all prices, on the same site. This place has state investment in the construction of very attractive sites with traditional “rancho” architecture, where many families have opened restaurants and food stores, pay the state a rent, manage their own business while the state is responsible for security, maintenance and improvement of infrastructure, manage cultural agendas and outreach.

Currently, with an investment of more than $12 million (Murillo, Romero and Saballo, 2015), Salvador Allende Port is the main tourist attraction of Managua, receiving 31 to 35 thousand people a week (el19digital, November 23, 2019), in holidays up to 42 thousand (el19digital, December 4, 2019). In the conception and design of the place, it provides recreation for families, so many come to enjoy the view, green spaces, games, leisure and distraction without the need to consume or pay to enjoy them. Initially it was

a small area, which has been extended to more than 5 kilometers on the lakeshore. It also includes a water park, an area of museums, historical monuments and a walkway with a mock-up model of old Managua. This area is an example of how public investment combines with the popular economy to achieve ecological and social changes in a specific territory.

This economic model, involving public management to create favorable conditions for the popular economy, has grown from the surroundings of the lake to include the Plaza of the Revolution and Old Managua, Bolivar-to-Chávez Avenue and all its markets and restaurants, the huge Luis Alfonso Velázquez Children's Park, the National Park of Fairs and its municipal headquarters, An aquatic center with an Olympic-size pool, a baseball stadium, the recreational, sports and productive spaces of the public sector throughout the country. In other words, planning the presence and proliferation of worthy sites for different types of small and micro businesses, restaurants, snack shops, artisan crafts, flower sellers and others. It became a transversal logic in national and municipal investments.

Under the same logic of cleaning, organizing and dignifying life, the cities, villages of the interior and thousands of popular neighborhoods, where most of the protagonists of the popular economy live, were transformed. Thus, for the first time in their history, these neighborhoods were provided with potable water and sanitary sewage networks, paved streets, electric light and public lighting, schools, parks, hospitals and clinics nearby, aid to improve their housing, state service offices, and police presence. In other words, they gradually emerged from precariousness, public abandonment and insecurity, raising the self-esteem and morale of people and their territories and achieving living conditions with greater dignity. This is in contrast to many Latin American countries, where popular neighborhoods lie in abandonment and not even the police dare to enter, or when they do it is with violence.

On the other hand, recognizing the popular economy as a subject of law, implied the creation of optional insurance, which has allowed self-employed workers to enjoy social security and a minimum pension at the time of retirement. It also created the possibility of paying a minimum amount to complete the number of weeks contributed and have access to social security, among others. This goes hand in hand with policies for investment, expansion and improvement in health and education, sports, culture, water and sanitation, electrification, rural roads, road maintenance, transport and public safety, at all levels and in all directions. In this way, the protagonists of the popular economy can work with peace of mind, with guarantees of their rights and basic needs covered.

Two emblematic programs of direct investment in the sector of the popular economy have made an extraordinary difference, during two blocks of time. From 2006 to 2014, among the government policies with the most direct impact on the popular economies were the Food Production Bond or Zero Hunger, Zero Usury and micro-credits. By the end of 2015, almost 150,000 women had received some variant of the package of poultry and inputs. Zero Usury microcredits finance women’s small businesses such as

the sale of clothing (23.6 percent), fresh and homemade products such as tortillas, fruits, vegetables and meat (19.36 percent), grocery stores (14.4 percent), sale of cosmetics (9.8 percent) and food (9.55 percent), empowering and influencing women's economic autonomy (Chamorro and Utigns, 2015).

From 2014 to 2019, the Zero Usury Program, under the management of the National Technological Institute, strengthened its articulation with formal training programs provided by the institution, and linked to inter-institutional projects that include capitalization of entrepreneurs in the countryside and the city. Meanwhile, to combat hunger, over $130 million USD has been invested in farms: seeds, bio-inputs, application of sustainable technologies and practices, agro-ecology, irrigation and water harvesting. Not with a welfare vision, but focused on the real empowerment of families and their insertion into a food sovereignty national policy. In addition, more than 80 projects were implemented for the diversification of production of bean seeds, dry rice, bamboo, bananas, fruits and vegetables, handicrafts, genetic improvement of pigs and sheep, fish farming, shrimp farming and wood value addition. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of small-scale landowners in the countryside and homeowners in the city received titles.

In the same period, 180 popular markets have been built or improved; new or drastically improved parks are found in all neighborhoods and towns where food, clothes, crafts, and others are sold at fairs. For example, the fairs in the 22 de Mayo square (in front of the national palace), the farmers' market next to the MEFCCA and the weekly municipal fairs. In the last five years there have been at least one peasant fair per municipality per week and the country has 153 municipalities, which means that at least 7,754 fairs have been held annually, with a total of 38,770 fairs up to 2019. The municipal fairs generate income ranging from 5,000 to 300,000 Córdobas per day.

Another emblematic program is the National Program of Technical Education in the countryside, directed by INATEC and the institutions of the National System of Production, Consumption and Commerce, which in this period has trained more than 98 thousand young and adult farmers (Rye, 2020) in agricultural technologies and sustainable agriculture, and also in other aspects that make life in the countryside attractive: baking, beauty, sewing, motorcycle repair, etc.

Also making life in the countryside better is the almost total electrical coverage, and the internal road connection in the rural areas improving and facilitating the lives of peasants who can transport their harvest on good quality roads, new shorter routes between the main cities and their municipalities. In 2019, the connection between the Pacific and the Atlantic was completed, overcoming more than 500 years of isolation, and recently the internal route of the rice area known as Malacatoya was inaugurated, connecting the Pacific departments with the south-central zone of the country. That is to say, bringing Managua, Carazo, Rivas, Granada, Boaco and Chontales closer together, reducing by more than 60% the time used to get from the Pacific to the Central Region, greatly reducing the production costs associated with the transfer of people and

products; and of a large part of the rice consumed in the country, as well as the production of milk, vegetables and basic grains in the area.

All these policies created conditions for the consolidation of the popular economy as a generator of 65% of employment and national wealth, and had a positive impact on the local agri-food system, made up of small-scale peasant production and its family marketing networks, in cooperatives and micro-businesses. Thus, in less than 12 years, local food production grew by 76%, greatly reducing food imports. **Currently, small-scale peasant and family production has 62% of the land and is responsible for the production, slaughter and marketing of 91% of pork, 45% of chicken and eggs, 45% of rice, 80% of honey and cocoa, 100% of beans, corn, fruits and seasonal vegetables, for a total of 85% of the country's food** (Rye, 2018; 2019).

In addition, cooperatives and their membership tripled, with more than 5,100 cooperatives and more than 1.2 million people linked, participating directly in the creation of 18% of the GDP, representing more than 20% of the Economically Active Population (EAP), producing and exporting 25% of the coffee, 90% of the organic coffee, 60% of the cattle and generating more than one million liters of milk, 80% of the sesame, 18% of the savings and credit and 95% of the national transport (Alemán, 2018). Artisanal fishing, both individual and cooperative, doubled, the tourism sector tripled, trade grew enormously and the eastern market (the largest popular market in Nicaragua and Central America) doubled in size. The growth of the popular associative, self-managed and solidarity economy is a key pillar in the reduction of public insecurity, poverty and extreme poverty, achieved by the country and recognized by international organizations.

Throughout this process, it should be noted that the Sandinista government has guaranteed the incorporation of women as active participants and managers of the popular economy and public management. Thus, in Nicaragua there are thousands of women who have emerged from anonymity of their work as ants in their communities and territories, are valued and are constantly in the process of empowerment, economically and socially. For this reason, the World Economic Forum recognized Nicaragua as one of the countries that has most reduced the gender gap, occupying fifth place in the world in terms of gender equity.

The popular economy in Nicaragua has a woman's face. Women participate in all aspects of life, owning 53% of small tourism businesses and 48% of the 6,300 small businesses in the sector; they are 44% of the people associated with cooperatives, they dominate the popular markets, small local businesses and are the majority in the public management of the Nicaraguan government, at all levels. These women, from the heart of the village, are building daily learning from their own experiences and life stories, and with their feet on the ground they are confronting patriarchy. This has not been easy for them because day by day they have had to face and overcome the stereotypes and prejudice of machismo that resists change. In order to face this challenge, women are learning to manage their own labor, make decisions and believe in themselves.

The popular economy in 2019

Life in Nicaragua continues unabated, despite the economic and social consequences of the failed coup attempt of 2018. Economic sanctions, and a continuous and fierce campaign to scare off tourism and investment in the country are part of the strategy. Direct and indirect economic losses exceeded one billion dollars, equivalent to 10% of GDP. The most affected sectors were fishing, with a contraction of 12.2%, hotels and restaurants 9.7, and trade, with 4.5 (CEPAL, 2018). Annual GDP fell by about 4%, more than 200,000 jobs were lost and one in four businesses closed (Capelán, 2019).
The Nicaragua right-wing exalted in this economic data with a kind of fatalistic morbidity and pleasure, predicting an economic contraction of between two and 11% in 2019.

They prophesied the worst food and social crisis in the last 30 years, unless Nicaragua gave up its sovereignty to the corporate sector or to Uncle Sam. To their disappointment, neither happened. Although it is true that the economy was hit, Nicaragua was neither included on the United Nations map of countries with hunger in 2019, nor were Nicaraguans participants in such sad events as the Central American migrant caravans of tens of thousands of people moved by hunger, violence and hopelessness. In 2019, the world was moved on seeing Hondurans, Salvadorans and Guatemalans flee horror to live through horror.

Those hoping for a total economic collapse were disappointed thanks to the strength of the popular economy, nurtured by 12 years of conscious management. Thus, in the midst of a sea of international sanctions and a chaotic and hostile context, the popular economy in Nicaragua sailed against the tide and showed its capacity for resilience and recovery (McCune, 2019).

In 2019, a fiscal reform was implemented in order to guarantee economic recovery and advance in the redistribution of wealth through greater sources of income for the state, which would allow it to continue advancing in the restitution of rights to the Nicaraguan people. And a reform was carried out in the social security system, to guarantee the sustainability of the Social Security Institute. This reform was carried out in spite of the disconsolate anger of business sectors associated with the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), which described the reform as a "threat" to the sustainability of their businesses.

This private business sector, which benefited greatly from the 12 years of Sandinista governance and the unparalleled economic growth between 2007 and 2018, was openly a participant in the attempted coup d'état and therefore directly responsible for its economic consequences. This business sector only generates 15% of jobs, does not have a great weight in the economy, in the generation of employment, nor in the welfare of families. For this reason, the fiscal reform was oriented to strengthen the popular economy, increasing from 1 to 2% the income tax to medium enterprises of higher income, and from 1 to 3% to large taxpayers, just over 400 companies, while maintaining the income tax at 1% for the more than 100,000 micro and small enterprises that are part of the popular economy. In addition, this reform identified the aspects and legal traps that encouraged tax evasion of large taxpayers and modified

them. Likewise, the reform to the social security system makes large employers contribute 3.5% more to social security, from 19.5% to 23% of salaries. However, companies with 50 workers or less increased their contribution by only 2.5%, while workers were not affected and the previous ceiling on taxable income, which was a gift for people with very high incomes, was removed (McCune, 2019).

In addition, prices, inflation and interest rates remained stable, there was no default crisis, damage to public infrastructure was repaired and social programs continued. Spending on health and education remains a priority, clocking in at 56% of the national budget; and 30% of government spending continues to support public-sector employment and wages (Capelán, 2019).

All social investment programs, projects and targets were maintained, as were advances in roads, highways, rural electrification, construction of hospitals, schools, transport subsidies, and energy. New programs for land and housing were started, such as the Bismark Martínez program, which in its first phase delivered more than 10,000 lots to families for the construction of their homes. All this, despite the fact that the economy is in a Latin American regional context of crisis and stagnation, which grew 0.5% and 0.1% in the first and last quarter respectively, as part of the effects of a global economic slowdown, new formats of international financial operations, local circumstances and low prices of raw materials (CEPAL, 2018). Countries without economic sanctions and large economies and ample natural resources such as Mexico, Argentina and Brazil also faced economic contraction.

The country is on the road to economic recovery. The decline of some sectors such as tourism meant the rise of other sectors such as the primary sector, especially food production which increased 5% in 2018; in 2019 it increased 4 6%, milk, 7% meat, 3% vegetables and basic grains were maintained; from 2019-2020 production of bananas increased 10%. This is because the popular economy is multifaceted and flexible like the peasant economy. For example, the significant drop in tourism in Solentiname, El Castillo and Rio San Juan forced families with small tourist businesses to find alternatives in agriculture and to plant fields that had been abandoned, with basic grains, small livestock and in the beach areas of the Pacific to strengthen agriculture and fishing.

This is the primary base that supports the entire production chain. When primary production is increased there is a cyclical upsurge since it is a form of direct injection that activates the real economy and creates conditions for all other levels of the productive chain. For example, from 2019 to 2020, total reported area devoted to banana production increased by 10%. The banana is a product that goes to the international and national market, homes, small neighborhood food stores, processors, and fritangas, from which many families are sustained. So it is no surprise that 2019 closed with 9,067 new microenterprises that employed nearly 50 thousand new people. In other words, despite the economic sanctions, the daily life of the family continues to be protected and recreated by the popular economy itself.

Conclusions

In the first half of 2020, the Nicaragua right-wing continue to fanatically sell the image of a Nicaragua in total crisis, although internally the country is experiencing another reality and is moving towards recovery. For example, at the time of writing, in Brazil, Colombia and El Salvador, the "cacerolazos" and protests continue, in spite of the curfew and militarization, because they closed the popular markets damaging the popular economy and closed the borders in the midst of the pandemic without having sufficient national food production, so that food shortages, increased prices and hunger affected the homes and stomachs of the poorest.

In contrast, in Nicaragua, no draconian measures were taken against the popular economy, Nicaraguans produced their own food and in the years 2018 and 2019 agriculture grew at a rate of 5% and 4% per year, respectively, a base that maintained the availability of food in the midst of the global health situation and is not on the latest world map of hunger as a pre-impact of the Covid (FSIN, 2020). In this way, the health situation of the coronavirus has made evident its immoral and double discourse and the strength of the Nicaraguan economy based on the popular economy.

A characteristic of this new period is that the participation of the organizations and leaders of the popular economy in the political model has been consolidated, occupying the leading role previously occupied by COSEP in the discussions on economic and social policy, with the social economy having more tacit support. In this way, joint plans are prepared, such as discount festivals in popular markets, spaces such as "Nicaragua Designs" are created for the continuous training of entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship schools are set up according to the needs of the sector and adjustments are proposed to government programs, as in the case of the adjustment to ProRural by the MEFCCA, in the number of people who make up the solidarity or family groups, thus, 2-4 people have access to credits of up to 100 thousand Córdobas ($3000), unlike the initial model of the Zero Usury program that forced the formation of large groups, which later had problems recovering the credit and where the group was of the same family.

Actions, trainings and spaces for reflection have also been implemented in the territorial tissues to strengthen individual and group initiatives, according to the realities of the territories, seeking the greatest social integration, reflecting on the behaviors, values and habits that we have internalized, because it is not possible to build another economy and another society if we do not overcome the basis of a competition of all against all and of the "every man for himself" that neoliberalism proposes (Coraggio, 2015).

All this has been accompanied by a strong campaign in the media to support the popular economy and to promote a culture that values and respects it, taking it out of the detached and pejorative, of the marginal. Exalting the implicit values beyond commercial relations, the participation of the family and well-being of the community, creativity, dedication, vocation, talent and love. Key elements to develop a political identity for their own development that already has a strong component in the individual and social perception of entrepreneurs towards their own guild (Chamorro, 2007).

In Nicaragua the popular economy is neither a discourse, nor an economy for the poor, nor is it backward, rather it is the economy of the workers who build their own lives with their hands, it is an economy that cannot be analyzed under economic standards from the speculative capitalist western thought and in crisis, that reduces wealth only to money and purchase capacity because beyond the merchandise there are things not measurable like exchanges, solidarity, hope, faith and dignity of the families. Without the popular economy, the capacity of resistance of the Nicaraguan people and government in the face of continuous destabilization attempts and imperial aggression would be weakened. Hence, the popular economy is capable of building and rebuilding new horizons of autonomy for people, political sovereignty, justice and the common good for societies.

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Related NicaNotes News Briefs

Trump signs NICA Act

US President Trump signed the NICA Act into law on Dec. 20 after a souped-up version of the original bill passed the two houses of Congress. The law conditions US votes on multilateral loans from the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and other financial institutions. (El Nuevo Diario, Dec. 20)

New Textile Plant in Mateare

Nicaragua Textile Association (ANITEC) President Dean García said the Alpha Textile Group that produces clothes for international brands like Levi Strauss, is investing in a new textile plant in Nicaragua. “The textile sector is working with great optimism and stability. We believe this new Alpha Textile Group plant in the Mateare Municipality, is an investment that will have a positive impact in the sector,” Garcia said. (Nicaragua News, 1/31/19)

New Investment in Ports

President of the National Port Authority Virgilio Silva announced the building of new infrastructure projects in 2019. “More than US$163.2 million is being invested in the Puerto Corinto Modernization Project and US$275 million in the construction of a new port in Bluefields funded by the Nicaragua government with support from the Inter-American Development Bank. (Nicaragua News, 2/11/19)

Support to Fight Poverty

The Ministry of Finance and Public Credit announced that the Export-Import Bank of Taiwan approved a US$100 million loan to ensure greater resources for social spending and to support the fight against poverty in Nicaragua. (Nicaragua News, 2/18/19)

New loan for infrastructure

The Nicaragua government announced that the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) approved a US$201.8 million loan for infrastructure projects. The loan includes US$176.6

million for the Highway Construction Program and US $25.2 million for the Airport Modernization Project in the South Caribbean Autonomous Region. (Nicaragua News, 2/25/19)

Nicaragua has the Fastest Growth in Energy Coverage and Generation in the Region

Nicaragua has invested US$2.8 billion in the electricity sector over the past 10 years, said Salvador Mansell, president of the National Electric Transmission Company. Coverage has grown from 54% to 95%, the fastest growth in Central America. “In 2006, the last of the 16 years of three neoliberal governments that preceded the Sandinista return to power, the country generated 754 megawatts; Nicaraguan currently produces 1,534 megawatts,” Mansell said. (Informe Pastran, 2/21/19)

New Tax Law Goes Into Effect

The recently passed tax reform went into effect on February 28 with the objective to guarantee social programs that help combat poverty. Tax exemptions are guaranteed for inputs for production and basic necessities. The reform stipulated an increase in the minimum Income Tax (IR) from 1% to 3% for large taxpayers and from 1% to 2% for medium-size businesses. Taxes on alcoholic beverages were also increased. (Radio La Primerisima, 3/2/19)

Highway to Caribbean Coast inaugurated

The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (MTI) announced that the Nueva Guinea – Bluefields highway was inaugurated. “The new US$115 million highway was financed by the government, with support from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.” (Nicaragua News, May 1)

IDB pleased with Solar Energy Plant on Corn Island

The Minister of Energy and Mines, Salvador Mansell, announced that an Inter-American Development Bank delegation evaluated the progress of new projects. “They were pleased to confirm the construction of the new solar energy plant on Corn Island that will be inaugurated in June. The US$5.9 million plant was financed by the Government with support from the IDB,” Mansell said. (Nicaragua News, 5/25/19)

Economic Recovery Firm

Minister of Finance and Public Credit Iván Acosta announced that the economy began a recovery process in July 2018. “The main drivers of this growth are agriculture, industry and commercial activity. Another key factor is the performance of the National Financial System, which increased its liquidity by 30% in February of this year,” Acosta said. In a report issued May 16, Fitch Ratings stated that the Nicaraguan economy has begun recovery. “The worst part of the recession is over. Growth projections are expected to improve next year,” the Fitch Rating report said. (Nicaragua News, 5/22/19, 5/23/19)

Nicaragua Elected Member of the Economic and Social Council of the UN by 184 Countries

On June 14 Nicaragua was elected by the UN General Assembly to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), one of 10 countries representing Latin America and the Caribbean. Nicaragua obtained a large majority of votes, 184 out of 190 voting and present. ECOSOC is one of the main organs of the UN. It is responsible for the follow-up to the UN conferences and summits, including the 2030 agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the High-Level Policy Forum. (Radio Ya, 6/15/19, Canal 2, 6/17/19)

Multi-millionaire Mexican Businessman Carlos Slim Supports Nicaragua

In a meeting in Mexico with Presidential Economic Advisor Bayardo Arce, Carlos Slim said that his businesses in Nicaragua are long term and he has no plans to close them down. Slim is the owner of the biggest telecommunications company in Nicaragua – Claró. (Informe Pastran, 6/17/19)

Government Supporting Small Farm Families

The Ministry of Family Economy provided loans to 250 farm families, with an investment of US$75,829 for new enterprises in poultry and pig breeding to improve the family economy. They are

also promoting new creative ventures, such as the production of amphibians including red eye frogs, arrow frogs, geckos and salamanders, all for export. (Informe Pastran, 6/21/19)

Tax Concertation Law is Necessary Because of the Attempted Coup
Bayardo Arce, the government's advisor on economic affairs, announced on June 26 that "The Tax Concertation Law is being reviewed: Business groups and companies are being invited to consult on how they are doing and what experiences they have gained and what contributions they can make to the law." Arce stressed the need for tax reform. "We need to collect taxes so that someone who has been unfairly aggressive with us, such as the Secretary General of the OAS, will say, as he just said in Colombia, that we govern well, that we have education, health and infrastructure programs that are advancing amid the difficulties." Arce said that after making adjustments to the tax policy Nicaragua will be able to advance. "As for the unilateral, arbitrary and illegal sanctions imposed by the U.S. empire on some public officials and activities to block loans to Nicaragua," Arce said that "the Nica Act is already being applied." This law blocks disbursements to Nicaragua from international financial organizations. Arce argued "Unfortunately our world is full of very confused people, after having the example of Sandino, after living Independence, I don't understand how some people consider as normal the policy of sanctions. We were forced to reform taxes in order to collect money and fill the gap created by blockades that were requested by bad Nicaraguans in order to block us, because it doesn't cost them anything." (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/26/19)

Million Dollar Investment in Water and Sanitation in Chontales
The government is investing US$14 million in drinking water and sanitation projects in the department of Chontales. (Radiolaprimerisima, 7/26/19)

More than Sixty Businesses of People with Disabilities Promoted in Expo-Fair
On July 27 and 28 the Expo-Fair promoted the business ventures of individuals with disabilities who inspire others by their example. The sixty entrepreneurs from across the country offered products like handicrafts, wines, jewelry, textiles, and natural medicine. (Canal 8, 7/27/19)

Nicaragua Ending Dependence on Oil Derivatives
On August 1, the President of the Nicaragua Electricity Transmission Company (ENATREL) and Minister of Energy and Mines (MEM) Salvador Mansell reported that, "In just 12 years the Nicaragua energy grid has managed to reduce its dependence on petroleum derivatives from 72% to 39.9%, an achievement recognized by international investors." Work is underway on a memorandum of understanding with Soventix Caribbean SRL, a German company, for the construction of a 100 MW solar plant in the western part of the country. (Nicaragua News, 8/5/19)

World Bank Says Nicaragua has the Best Execution of Projects
A World Bank mission that is in Nicaragua evaluating the progress of road infrastructure projects, has recognized that "Nicaragua has executed the best World Bank project portfolio". Projects such as the extension of electricity coverage, hospital services and infrastructure as well as roads are part of the current Portfolio that has contributed to the reduction of poverty and improvement of international competitiveness of the country. During this visit, new projects to be financed in the coming years will be identified. (Nicaragua News, 8/12/19)

Nicaragua's Economy Recuperating
At about a year since the coup attempt was overcome, FSLN National Assembly Deputy José Figueroa describes how the economy is being reactivated. "We have been successfully executing a public investment program, highway construction, family and community health model, and a strategy of 43 health projects, a portfolio of 99 education projects and we will end 2019 with 97% national electricity coverage. We have expanded water coverage to 92.5% in urban areas, and legal land titles were provided to 138,000 families." A tax reform has been implemented with more than US$134 million to ensure the 2019 – 2020 Budget. Tourism is gradually recovering; 80% of tourism

enterprises generate employment, progress and well-being for families," he said. (Informe Pastran, 8/7/19)

Multi-million Dollar Investment in Wind Energy by Amayo (phase III)
The Amayo Consortium will invest US$100 million dollars in the third phase of a wind-energy project in the department of Rivas with a capacity to generate 37.8 MW of energy. Inkia Energy of the US and Centrans of Guatemala form part of the group. (Radiolaprimerisima, 8/7/19)

More Assistance for Micro, Small and Medium-Size Businesses Exports
The Association of Producers and Exporters (APEN) is supporting 6,177 families in the agricultural sector and 822 artisans from the departments of Matagalpa, Jinotega, Masaya and Carazo to export their products to international markets. The micro, small and medium-size agricultural and artisan companies have 47% leadership of women in economic activities and are being trained in the improvement of product quality, including redesigning their packaging to comply with requirements and expectations of international markets. (Nicaragua News, 8/9/19)

New Businesses of Every Kind in 2019
The Sandinista government's commitment to promote micro, small and medium enterprises to boost the creative economy for economic recovery shows families are improving their lives with cooperation from Taiwan through 16 productive programs. From July 15 to August 15, 1,173 new enterprises were created. Of these, 117 are sales of food products, making a total of 1,419 so far this year (sale of buttermilk, fast food, tortilla factories, bakeries, fruits and vegetables, butchers, among others); 640 medium and small businesses, for a total of 4,295 so far this year (grocery stores, used clothing, miscellaneous, sale and repair of cell phones etc.). In addition, 78 workshops, for a total of 423 so far this year (cabinetmaking, carpentry, construction, mechanics, refrigeration, welding); and 277 service businesses, totaling 1,121 so far this year (clinics, veterinarians, barber shops, beauty salons, transportation services, gas stations); 1 financial services business, totaling 32 so far this year (bank branches, remittances and loan centers); 60 tourism businesses, adding a total of 502 so far this year (restaurants, bars, tourist centers, hostels, hotels, etc.). All these undertakings have generated 5,865 jobs from July 15 to August 15, for a total of 40,040 new jobs so far in 2019. (Informe Pastran, 8/19/19)

Employment Increases in Free Trade Zone Sector
The General Secretary for Labor Affairs of the Trade Union Confederation of Free Trade Zone Workers, Pedro Ortega, announced Aug. 13 that more than 3,500 new jobs were created in the Free Trade Zone sector in the first half of 2019. "124 thousand Nicaraguans currently work in textile companies, call centers and others," Ortega said. (Nicaragua News, 8/14/19)

Small Businesses to Represent Nicaragua on Central American Business Council
The Nicaraguan Council of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (CONIMIPYME) officially represented Nicaragua before the Central American Business Council. During the First Mesoamerican Business Forum, held in Honduras, CONIMIPYME participated on behalf of Nicaragua, through its director Leonardo Torres. "We were appointed Nicaragua's representatives to the Central American Business Council," said Freddy Cruz, economist and member of the CONIMIPYME directorate. In addition, Nicaragua was selected to host the IV Mesoamerican Forum of SMEs in 2020. (El 19 Digital, 8/26/19)

Food and Agriculture Organization Recognizes Nicaragua's Progress
Members of the National Assembly shared the review and updating of the Policy for the Promotion of Agro-ecological Production in Nicaragua with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). At the meeting FAO representatives recognized the progress Nicaragua has made in the production of organic crops. "Here there are many advanced field experiences that have many

years of work; for example, organic coffee and other export products," said Emma Siliprandi, FAO Agriculture Officer in Rome. (Informe Pastran, 8/28/19)

Nicaragua Ensures Food Security
The Ministry of Farming and Agriculture (MAG) announced that Nicaragua has achieved food security in 2019 due to increase in yield and productivity of agricultural commodities and sectors. The MAG Minister, Eduardo Centeno said "Food Security is a fundamental part of the National Human Development Plan. The promotion of planting and production in the second harvest, as well as livestock restructuring, the use of better technologies, expansion of community seed banks and genetic improvement influenced the attainment of this objective." (Nicaragua News, 8/28/19)

Marine Technology and Experimental Center Inaugurated in Pearl Lagoon
The new "Caribbean Pearl" Technology and Experimentation Center was inaugurated September 19 in Pearl Lagoon, Southern Caribbean Autonomous Region, making it the first of its kind in the Caribbean. The Center will contribute to the revitalization of the regional economy, sustainable management of marine resources, developing the capabilities of fishermen and aquaculture producers. The US$1,141,000 investment came from the Southern Caribbean Regional Government and the Pearl Lagoon Communal Government, with support from China-Taiwan and the International Development Fund for Agriculture (IFAD). (Nicaragua News, 9/20/19)

Multilateral Organizations Continue Financing Projects in Nicaragua
In August 2019 bank deposits increased and the balance of gross international reserves increased. Of the total public external debt balance, 70% (US$4.28 billion) corresponds to debt with multilateral creditors. (Informe Pastran, 9/10/19)

Nicaragua's International Reserves Grow
Central Bank President Ovidio Reyes said on Oct. 7 that with the growth of international reserves, the country is financially stabilizing. Reserves grew from US$2.127 billion in March 2019 to US$2.255 billion on September 30, 2019. Reyes noted that if you add some US$500 million held by private banks, the country is able to face any unforeseen event. The BCN has lowered interest rates from eight to six percent. He said that this is due to the accumulation of liquidity and low demand for credit. (Radiolaprimerisima, 10/7/19)

Fairtrade Finland Supports Small-Scale Producers
The Nicaragua Ministry of Family Economy (MEFFCA) and the Finnish organization FAIRTRADE FINLAND, are supporting small-scale producers in their efforts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, and to strengthen their advocacy capabilities in the face of environmental challenges. (Nicaragua News, 10/2/19)

Bank President Says Nicaragua Has Perfect Project Portfolio Execution Rate
During the ceremony for the new offices of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) last week in Managua, CABEI President Dante Mossi reaffirmed the commitment of the Bank to support development projects. "Nicaragua is a significant partner that has a perfect execution rate of its project portfolio and serves as an example for other countries on how to plan investment projects and implement them efficiently." The Nicaraguan Government and CABEI are currently carrying out 29 projects including hospitals, roads, electricity, water and sanitation. (Nicaragua News, 10/14/19)

CABEI Lauds Poverty Reduction, and Access to Education, Health, Electricity
October 8, Minister of Finance and Public Credit Iván Acosta and Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) President Dante Mossi, signed two new loan agreements totaling US$585.4 million for improvement and expansion of highways, potable water and sanitation systems in seven Nicaraguan cities. The CABEI President said, "Nicaragua has made important social

advancements recognized by multilateral organizations such as access to health and education, electricity coverage, poverty reduction, eradication of extreme poverty, among others. The Bank has supported and will continue to support economic and social development in the country." (Nicaragua News, 10/9/19)

New Investment in Ports
First Executive President of the National Port Company Virgilio Silva said new investment in ports "will improve conditions for the transfer of materials between ships and land. Puerto Corinto is being modernized and is now in the dredging phase and 2020 will begin with engineering and equipment purchase. This work has a cost of US$116 million with funds from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) and has generated about 450 jobs. (Radiolaprimerisima, 10/9/19)

Strengthening Food Security
On October 15 three committees of the National Assembly approved an Update to the Legal Digest on Food Sovereignty and Nutritional Security Law (SSAN). Congressman Walmaro Gutiérrez, President of the Economic Committee, said, "The Update establishes the obligation of the Government to promote policies that contribute to food security as part of the National Human Development Plan and sovereignty of the country." Likewise, the representative in Nicaragua of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Paola Valle stated, "Nicaragua has a modern legislative system and these new norms will reinforce legal certainty and strengthen institutions...as well as the new climate change response system." She also said the new standards are excellent inputs for the FAO 2020 Report on the legal contribution by Nicaragua to sustainable development goals. (Nicaragua News, 10/15/19)

Public Investment Plan Exceeds Expectations
Minister of Finance and Public Credit Iván Acosta said the execution of the 2019 Public Investment Plan (PIP) will exceed expectations and compliance: "the PIP for 2019 is US$506,171,270 and that between January and October there has been a 53% execution rate, equivalent to US$357,297,367." Acosta noted that the year will close with a projected 95.5% compliance. (Nicaragua News, 10/15/19)

First National Handicrafts Fair in Masaya
Masaya, the cradle of Nicaraguan Folklore hosted the first National Handicrafts Fair entitled "With the Face of the People" which is the beginning of a series of exhibitions of products made by Nicaraguans to raise quality and marketing. Businesses in this sector generate more than 51,000 jobs. Artisans from León, Chinandega, Río San Juan, the Southern Caribbean and the 9 municipalities of the department of Masaya participated in this first fair. (El19Digital, 10/20/19)

Millions of Dollars Provided In Loans to Nearly 400,000 Women
The director of the microloan program called "Zero Usury," Leonor Corea, reported that in the last 12 years financing totaling US$23.9 million has been provided to more than 380,000 women in 140 municipalities to establish and expand small businesses. (Nicaragua News, 10/28/19)

Nicaragua Leads Central America in Livestock and Exports
Nicaragua's livestock sector has had a good year, not only in expansion of livestock-raising, but also in beef export. FSLN Deputy and cattle producer Douglas Aleman called Nicaragua "the king of meat in Central America. Thirteen thousand families operate 164,000 farms with an official census of 5.57 million head of cattle and 650,000 direct jobs. Aleman observed, "…we have a production of 5 million liters of milk per day. Currently 75% of production is destined for export." There is a vision, a State policy, with better infrastructure like roads, electrification, drinking water, communications, sanitary controls, bovine traceability; all this helps production and marketing." According to the Center for Export Procedures (CETREX), in the first nine months Nicaragua exported 87,744 tons of beef, generating US$362 million, second in exports to green coffee. (Informe Pastran, 10/28/19)

Cordoba Stronger Against the Dollar
The Central Bank of Nicaragua decided on October 28 to set the rate of devaluation of the Cordoba against the U.S. dollar at 3 percent annually, which is a reduction of 2% compared to the prevailing rate of devaluation of 5 percent. “This decision is adopted in the context of an adequate macroeconomic policy framework and adequate indicators, which include: balance in public finances; surplus in the current account of the balance of payments, adequate level and coverage of international reserves; and stability in the financial system.” The Bank added that reducing the devaluation will help stabilize aggregate spending for the economy by reducing costs and improving the purchasing power of wages. (Radiolaprimerisima, Informe Pastran 10/28/19)

Nicaragua Creating Public Policies to Eliminate Child Labor
in the conference on the Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labor Regional Initiative being held from October 22 to 25 in Lima, Peru Minister of Labor (MITRAB) Alba Luz Torres said, “Nicaragua has been working on the elimination of child labor through public policies and effective social programs for the eradication of poverty and the restoration of the rights of children.” (Nicaragua News, 10/26/19)

Nicaragua Design and Expo Huge Success
The eighth edition of Nicaragua Design and Expo 2019 concluded Oct. 27 with awards for the best designer and to participants in the design competition and fair. Camila Ortega Murillo is director of Nicaragua Design, the most important fashion event in the country with national and international designers and more than 60 national and international models. Ortega Murillo said the awards are to highlight the work, perseverance and creativity of the participants. (El19Digital, 10/28/19)

Standard and Poors: Economic Outlook is Stable
The economic rating agency Standard and Poors Global Ratings announced November 8 that the economic outlook for Nicaragua is stable, meaning the economic system of the country is recovering. This positive economic outlook is due to the macroeconomic policy implemented in the country stabilizing liquidity conditions. They highlighted the recent measure that reduced the currency devaluation from 5% to 3%, thereby improving the purchasing power of Nicaraguans. (Nicaragua News, 11/10/19)

Nicaraguan Women Recognized by UN-Habitat for Solar Oven Project
The Government reported the “Golden Adobe” Award honored the Nicaragua Women’s Solar Project Foundation (FRUPOSOMUNIC) with first place in the “Urban Innovation” category for the Solar Oven project in Catarina, Masaya department. The UN Human Settlements Program selected projects that promote environmentally sustainable strategies. (Nicaragua News 11/5/19)

Construction and Infrastructure Expanding
This week the digital “Downey Magazine” published an extensive report on financing for infrastructure in Nicaragua. Public spending for the development of sustainable infrastructure is generating demand in the market for construction and infrastructure companies that prioritize the use of advanced technology and standardization of modern construction methods. “The efforts made by the government to modernize and renovate the infrastructure of the country, maintain growth in the manufacturing sector and expand municipal public services will contribute to growth in spending within the construction sector. (Nicaragua News, 11/15/19)

Growth in Exports
Nicaraguan exports generated US$3.967 billion between January and September 2019, representing 2.1% growth in comparison to the same period in 2018 according to The Export Procedures Center (CETREX). (Nicaragua News, 11/21/19)

IMF Support for Government Economic Policies
On November 20, the International Monetary Fund published its economic report pertaining to the Article IV Consultation which measures the current economic prospects of Nicaragua. The report says the cumulative economic strengths and macroeconomic policies established "have contributed to preserving macroeconomic and financial stability in the face of difficult circumstances." The IMF recognized the efforts made by the Government to comply with recommendations of the International Financial Action Task Force (FATF), to protect the integrity of financial transactions and mitigate exposure to illicit funds. (Nicaragua News, 11/21/19)

Artisanal Miners Join Social Security
This week the Social Security Institute (INSS) reported that 103 artisanal miners organized in 24 collectives dedicated to gold mining in Santa Cruz de la India and other communities in the municipality of Santa Rosa del Peñón were enrolled in Social Security (INSS). Membership guarantees comprehensive medical care for miners and their families, and pensions when they retire. (Nicaragua News, 11/22/19)

Government Supporting Small Farm Families
The Ministry of Family Economy (MEFFCA) is supporting 300 small farmers in the departments of Nueva Segovia, Madriz, Matagalpa and Boaco by allocating US 88,757 for raising chicken and pigs. This is part of the Creative Economy promoted by the government. (Nicaragua News, 12/2/19)

Nicaragua's Phytosanitary System Recognized
During the launch of the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH 2020) held yesterday in Rome, headquarters of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu said, "Nicaragua has one of the most advanced phytosanitary systems that uses comprehensive sanitary checks at all its borders, applying rigorous sanitary controls for the certification of export, import and transit of food." (Nicaragua News, 12/4/19)

Banks are Stable and in Clear Recovery
The financial rating agency Fitch Ratings announced on Dec. 6 that the profitability of Nicaraguan banks showed a 4.2% growth in deposits from July to October, signaling recovery. (Nicaragua News, 12/10/19)

New Laws to Secure Petroleum for the Nicaraguan People
The National Assembly approved a law to nationalize the distribution of petroleum products. The law establishes that the inventories of the company Nicaraguan Petroleum Distributor (DNP) become the property of the State. The law will guarantee the continuity of the supply of petroleum products. It declares all inventories of petroleum products owned by the DNP to be "of sovereign security and national interest" and will be administered by institutions authorized by the Ministry of Energy and Mines. In a related matter, the National Assembly also approved the "Law of Reforms and Additions to the Special Law of Exploration and Exploitation of Hydrocarbons" that grants fiscal incentives for the development of the oil industry. This Law will accelerate exploration and exploitation of petroleum or natural gas. The Equinor company's studies gave positive results off the Pacific coast. (Informe Pastran, 12/16/19)

Private Sector Registered Increase in Exports
Last week the Nicaragua Producers and Exporters Association (APEN) presented its annual exports report of companies that are members of the Association. They will close the year with US$ 2.6 billion in export revenues, representing a 2% increase compared to 2018. "Over the last three months there was a US$80 million increase in exports due to international prices of agricultural products and metals with a positive impact on exports. (Nicaragua News, 12/10/19 and 12/12/19)

Tourism in Nicaragua: Breaking with the Defunct Idea of Development

By Daniel McCurdy

While the major Western international news media continue to peddle fake news about a “dictatorship”, a “regime” and a “crisis of democracy” in Nicaragua, they ignore one of the most important threats that the Sandinista government poses not only for Nicaragua, but also the world. However, it isn’t that the Sandinista government is a threat to “democracy”. What the Nicaraguan government is being demonized for is something much more important to the corporate interests represented by the US government. The Nicaraguan government, and specifically the Sandinista movement, is a threat to one of the most important ideological babies of the West: Development.

The fact is that government policies in Nicaragua throughout the last fourteen years have not exactly followed text-book western or globalist recommendations. Sandinista government policies have taken their own path. An alternative path (or paths). A path that seeks to reconcile humans with nature, re-embedding the economy and politics in the biosphere while respecting Nicaraguan culture(s) and tradition(s). Nicaragua isn’t a ”threat” to peace. Nicaragua is a “threat” to the status quo of “development” and the international political and economic systems that are destroying the environment and the ability of communities to survive and live plentiful and abundant lives. In other words, the Nicaraguan government is burying “the age of development”. This is why the international media really call it a threat.

Breaking with the Development Idea

The predominant western concept of development has its roots in the 1940’s, after the end of World War II, when the “US needed to make entirely explicit their new position in the world...consolidate their hegemony and make it permanent”. In 1949, President Truman officially launched the era of ‘western development’ in a speech saying “‘we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.’”

To ‘develop’ in the western hegemonic sense is, as Arturo Escobar puts it, “to escape from the undignified condition called underdevelopment....in order for someone to conceive of the possibility of escaping from a particular condition, it is necessary first to feel that one has fallen into that condition. For those who make up two-thirds of the world’s population today, to think of development - of any kind of development - requires first the perception of themselves as underdeveloped, with the whole burden of connotations that this carries.” Beyond its uses in science to metaphorically describe the growth of plants and animals, or an organism reaching its full form, ‘development’ was co-opted by the west for violent imperial purposes, converting a certain interpretation of history into a program with an inevitable destiny. ‘Western development’ imposed a “unilinear way of social evolution”, giving “global hegemony to a purely Western

genealogy of history, robbing people of different cultures of the opportunity to define the forms of their social lives"[1]

Western-style development has spread around the world, engendering the expansion of a transnational economic complex, often at the expense of the poor and powerless, rather than the formation of thriving societies. While it has greatly benefited middle and upper class urban citizens as well as the rural elite, more often than not it has jeopardized and stressed the land, the living spaces and the cultural traditions of indigenous people, small farmers and the urban poor.[2]

An integral part of the discursive repertoire used in Western 'development'[3], the cannibalistic essence of economic growth feeds on both nature and communities, shifting unpaid costs back to them. Unfortunately, the shiny side of development is often accompanied by the dull side of displacement and dispossession. Thus, to justify development with the need for greater equity is ignorant at best and deceitful at worst.

The problem is that development can mean just about anything given that it's a generally empty idea, easily susceptible to co-optation and manipulation. For decades, "developed" countries have violently instructed "underdeveloped" and "developing" countries on ready-made recipes for "economic success" and "growth" - two other questionable concepts - producing societies of mass consumption, outrageous pollution, exploitation, bull-shit jobs[4] along with social and environmental catastrophes.

There have been some exceptions along the way. But those efforts usually get choked, if not marginalized, by the West. What makes those efforts outliers is their attempt to delink the desire for equity from economic growth (or at least stop believing in that fantasy) and re-link equity to community, diversity, integrity and culture-based notions of well-being.

From Spanish colonization in the 15th century to US imperialism in Latin America in the early 20th century, Nicaragua was molded to serve the interests of the catholic church, the local oligarchy and those of foreign commercial powers primarily through a network of exploitation of human labor and land for capital accumulation through export-agriculture. Development, in the 'western' sense, wasn't part of the colonialist-imperialist discourse until the end of World War II, when it was transformed into the imperative of the new US-led world order - especially in the 'fight' against 'communism', in which the

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[1] For more on the history of development, see: Escobar, Esteban. "Development." In *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, edited by Wolfgang Sachs, 2nd ed., 145–60. London ; New York: Zed Books, 2010.

[2] Sachs, Wolfgang. "Preface & Introduction." In *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, edited by Wolfgang Sachs, 2nd ed., 145–60. London ; New York: Zed Books, 2010.

[3] For other words that are part of the development discourse, see: *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, edited by Wolfgang Sachs, 2nd ed., 145–60. London ; New York: Zed Books, 2010.

[4] Graeber, David. *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*. London: Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2018.

US justified its imposition of a “unilinear way of social evolution” through ‘helping’ other countries ‘develop’.

A break from this mold was first attempted on a national scale in Nicaragua after the 1979 Sandinista Revolution. However, besieged by a colonialist and imperialist history of economic, political and social traumas, in addition to a deadly war imposed by the US, finding alternatives to Western development went only so far. When the atrocities and socio-economic difficulties of US war on Nicaragua finally convinced a majority of the voting population in Nicaragua to vote the Sandinista government out of power in 1990, seventeen years of neo-liberal US-backed governments ensued which, through privatizations and austerity policies, rolled back most social advances made in the 1980’s, like free education and health care.

Since returning the presidency in 2007, the Sandinista government has continued to grapple with the contradictions of breaking with the conventional development idea. Recognizing the limits of development - while facing global and internal contradictions, such as a capitalist money system, unequal wealth and land distribution and a globalized monoculture-encouraging world economy – the government has attempted to re-embed the economy in the biosphere as well as within Nicaraguan culture(s). Here are just a few examples:

Government policies that re-embed the economy in the biosphere and in Nicaraguans[5]

- Land redistribution, including property titles for indigenous communities and the poor;
- Autonomy, respect, protection and encouragement of indigenous cultures;
- Progressive tax reform;
- Protection of women’s rights and promotion of gender equity;
- Political inclusion and parity laws;
- Coastal protection laws;
- Free public health care and education;
- A powerful transition to alternative energy (from 25% of the energy mix in 2005 to 62% in 2019 and 80% in 2020),
- As of 2020, 97.4 % of the territory has access to electricity;
- 72 nature reserves, representing around 20 percent of Nicaragua, with community management plans;
- Food sovereignty, and encouragement of small-scale polyculture sustainable family-farming.
- Respect for sovereignty and diversity in culture of other nations (peace diplomacy).
- Hospitals
- Roads

[5] *Live from Nicaragua: Uprising or Coup? A Reader*. Alliance for Global Justice, 2019.

- Recreation in parks and museums, lakes, rivers and oceans

Examples abound, that laid the foundations to talk about “the industry without chimneys”, tourism. The thing is, tourism, as a sector and concept, is intricately intertwined with government policies just mentioned.

Tourism Policy, the Biosphere and Nicaraguan Culture(s)

Nicaraguan government tourism policy[6] has specifically focused on being coherent with orienting resources and plans in order to integrate the concept of equity with the biosphere and Nicaraguan culture(s). The pillars of the strategy are the following:

- Develop tourism activity based on national identity, integrating the very lives of Nicaraguans, (their way of being, idiosyncrasies, culture, traditions, religiosity, gastronomy, history and national heritage) within national and international tourism.
- Integrate productive activities, like agriculture and the *Family and Community Economy,* into tourism networks.
- Link tourism activities and networks with small businesses and productive enterprises.
- Promote and develop National Tourism in order to strengthen Nicaraguan identity and pride by integrating with tourism the knowledge and identification of culture, values, traditions and attractions of the different regions and departments of the country.
- Incorporate tourism in all sectors; public, large, medium, small and micro private enterprises, and family and community economy.
- Encourage shared responsibility in tourism management between the different types of users.
- Promote the protagonism of the people, Nicaraguan families and communities within tourist activity, as part of its attractiveness.
- Promote training for all participants in tourism as a mechanism to improve the quality, care and responsibility with which to provide tourism services and complementary activities.
- Promote the Nicaraguan values that permit the evolution of a responsible tourism that encourages respect and places people, families, women and children and the environment at that center.
- Promote investments that improve conditions and infrastructure not just with tourism in mind but also the rights and desires of Nicaraguan people.

Notwithstanding the contradictions of implementing change in a predominantly capitalist world, Nicaraguan government initiatives have attempted to push back against the governing economic world-view, asserting its sovereign right to act according to values

[6] “Nicaragua, Crezcamos Juntos!: Políticas y Proyectos de Desarrollo Para Potenciar la Inversión 2017-2021.” ProNicaragua, 2016. https://www.el19digital.com/app/webroot/tinymce/source/2016/00-AGOSTO/Politicas_y_Proyectos_Nacionales.pdf.

of culture, democracy and justice as perceived by Nicaraguans and in the Nicaraguan context - not Western-imposed interpretations.

Resistance and the creation of alternatives to colonialism, imperialism or 'development' is nothing new for Nicaragua and Nicaraguans. In '*US Imperialism in Nicaragua'*, Wilson and McCune point out that "Nicaragua is perhaps among the clearest cases of rampant US imperialism producing sustained anti-imperialist movements, in a pattern that has repeated itself since even before the US mercenary William Walker invaded that country to set up a slave state and declare himself president in 1856. The United States' financial and industrial interests, backed by US military forces, have sought to maintain control over key Nicaraguan resources, infrastructure and a potential interoceanic canal route ever since.[7]

The historic Nicaraguan figure, Sandino, is not only known for his anti-imperialist struggles, but also for his involvement in alternative socio-economic forms of living. While General Augusto César Sandino organized and led a military movement, with the active participation of both women and men, to fight US occupation in early-20th century Nicaragua, he was also at the center of a social-economic initiative to develop agricultural community cooperatives in the Nicaraguan mountains.[8]

Overall, these initiatives attempt to breach the labyrinth of Western-style development, capitalism and growth, by drawing on a diversity of human and environmental resources and working towards less material notions of prosperities, promoting resilient, artistic, and spiritual individuals and communities in order to face the inevitable resource crises, economic and political shocks that come with operating in a capitalist-dominated world.

One of the particularities of tourism in Nicaragua is its democratization. Since the Sandinista government won elections in 2006 and came to power in 2007, the promotion and expansion of the tourism sector is increasingly important for Nicaraguans, contributing significantly to a rise in incomes for many lower-income families.[9] Contrary to the focus on tourism (or even 'ecotourism) for export in many countries, Nicaraguan government tourism policies incentivize Nicaraguan working-class family tourism. This has not only been the result of tourism promotion outside of the country, but primarily a consequence of the Nicaraguan government's social, economic and legal policies directed towards re-embedding the economy in the biosphere and in Nicaraguans (See list above).

As Anasha Campbell, Nicaragua's Tourism Minister points out, "*in Nicaragua, tourism is based on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Eighty percent of the tourism industry is based on SMEs and the democratization of government investments means*

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[7] S. Wilson, Brian and Nils McCune. "US Imperialism and Nicaragua: 'They Would Not Let Our Flower Blossom.'" In *Live from Nicaragua: Uprising or Coup? A Reader*. Alliance for Global Justice, 2019.
[8] Costa, Cecilia. "Sandino: Yo Me Inclino Por Un Régimen de Cooperativas." *Barricada*, February 19, 2019. https://barricada.com.ni/sandino-cooperativas-nicaragua/.
[9] Di Fabio, Luca. "Economic Growth in Nicaragua Has Helped Reduce Poverty," April 30, 2018. https://borgenproject.org/economic-growth-in-nicaragua-helped-reduce-poverty/.

that benefits go directly to the Nicaraguan people. They do not go to big capital, which mostly exports the benefits of this sector." While multinational corporations and big business do exist in Nicaragua, they do not dominate the economy. The fact that SMEs are at the heart of the tourism economy means that "*the Nicaraguan people and Nicaraguan families are the ones who offer their services and products in the tourism industry."* [10]

Most goods and services related to tourism, like many other income-generating and life-sustaining activities in Nicaragua, come from what Nicaraguan sociologist Orlando Nuñez Soto calls "the popular economy" (or "the people's economy"). This "economic subject" is formally "composed of the family, community, cooperative and associative sector and is organized into the Council for Social Economy (CES), where low-income farmers, peasants, fishermen, artisans and merchants are grouped together." The popular economy, as Nuñez points out, produces more than fifty percent of the wealth in Nicaragua in terms of income (big business produces around thirty percent while the public sector produces fourteen percent).[11] Considering government policy in general, and tourism policies specifically, one can observe that it is precisely the popular economy that is at the center of the Sandinista government's priorities.

Anasha Campbell, one of a majority of women that head the Nicaraguan government, emphasizes that, "for us, tourism is seen as a strategy for the human development of the Nicaraguan people. From 2015 until now tourism has been the main income generating sector for the Nicaraguan economy in general. That means work for the Nicaraguan people, but it also means that the people of Nicaragua have seen the sector as a means to generate their income; both to develop their families and to develop their own community."[12]

Tourism has also allowed for a renewal in the relationship between the Pacific and the Caribbean (Atlantic) Coasts of Nicaragua. For the majority of Nicaragua's history, the Atlantic Coast was marginalized from the rest of the country. However, the Sandinista government has focused on rehabilitating the relationship between both parts of the country. As a result of improvements in infrastructure, health and education on the Atlantic Coast, tourism policy also promotes the experience of, as Campbell puts it, "a different part of Nicaraguan history; how to interact with the different cultures." Campbell says that she, herself, is part of the policy of diversity and peace:

> **"I am one of those examples. I am from Bluefields (on the Atlantic Coast) and this democratization of tourism brings it together, brings that ease of interaction between Nicaraguans, between the Pacific coast of Nicaragua and the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua...that in itself is how tourism has been providing benefits to all the different**

[10] "Turismo, Democracia y Desarrollo En Nicaragua." *19 Digital*, August 26, 2018. https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:80715-turismo-democracia-y-desarrollo-en-nicaragua.

[11] Nuñez Soto, Orlando, and César Martínez. "Who Produces the Wealth in Nicaragua?" *Tortilla Con Sal*, 2018. http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/7155.

[12] "Turismo, Democracia y Desarrollo En Nicaragua." *19 Digital*, August 26, 2018.

parts of society, helping to bring about understanding among the people, encompassing that multicultural and multiethnic part of the nation in general. Therefore, we believe, not only in terms of employment or income generation, that tourism enhances that understanding between cultures and also contributes to strengthening the culture of peace in all countries. Nicaragua is no exception."

Between 2007 and 2018, tourism policy in Nicaragua served as an example around the world.[13] In addition to being the second fastest growing destination in the entire American continent (eighth in the world), Nicaragua was also classified as one of the safest countries to visit in Central America, second in Latin America. Security and tourism attractiveness, however, should not be looked at in a vacuum. As mentioned before, these are the results of a comprehensive governmental effort to bring a sense of dignity back to the people through free health care and education, access to electricity and water, roads, food-sovereignty and more.

2018 Coup Attempt and Tourism

But the government of Nicaragua was, unfortunately (in the eyes of Western capitalism and "democracy") not going in the right direction with these policies.[14] The Nicaraguan capitalist conservative sectors and the oligarchy, in coordination with the US government, could not stand the continued success of a government that was not directly controlled by their interests. As Kevin Zeese and Nils McCune put it in their article *Correcting the record: What is really happening in Nicaragua,* the problem is "the example Nicaragua has set for a successful social and economic model outside the US sphere of domination."[15]

Nicaraguan tourism policies aren't necessarily a 'problem' for the US government in of themselves, as much as the fact that they successfully attracted foreign (i.e. US) tourists to visit the country. If there is a threat of successful "tourism" in Nicaragua, it is that Nicaragua, a country with little resources compared to wealthy countries like the US, could improve much in terms of general human social, economic and health well-being.[16] However, one could argue that successful tourism in Nicaragua wasn't a

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[13] Sayles, Jill. "Nicaragua Announces Commitment to Sustainability." *Travel Daily Media*, 2017. https://www.traveldailymedia.com/nicaragua-announces-commitment-sustainability/, and also "Tourism Booming in Nicaragua," January 12, 2018. http://www.nicaraguasc.org.uk/news/article/273/Tourism-booming-in-Nicaragua.

[14] S. Wilson, Brian and Nils McCune. "US Imperialism and Nicaragua: 'They Would Not Let Our Flower Blossom.'" In *Live from Nicaragua: Uprising or Coup? A Reader*. Alliance for Global Justice, 2019.

[15] Zeese, Kevin, and Nils McCune. "Correcting the Record: What Is Really Happening in Nicaragua?," July 11, 2018. https://www.globalresearch.ca/correcting-the-record-what-is-really-happening-in-nicaragua/5647092.

[16] McCurdy, Daniel. "Nicaragua: Improvements in Social and Economic Well-Being and the Nov. 6 Elections." *Center for Economic and Policy Research*, November, 2011. https://cepr.net/nicaragua-improvements-in-social-and-economic-well-being-and-the-nov-6-elections/.

principal threat to the US given that its media system does such a great job at keeping people ignorant from successful alternative political systems.

The United States' long-term regime change efforts in Nicaragua culminated in an attempted coup that saw the tourism sector come to nearly a full stop in mid 2018.[17] The main initial objectives of the "soft" coup-attempt were to discredit Nicaraguan government policies and delegitimize the president, Daniel Ortega, in the hopes of imposing a new government more favorable to US and oligarchical interests. [18]

However, in the months after the 2018 coup-attempt failed, and despite a relentless and continued barrage of fake news - not only in Nicaraguan-opposition and international media outlets but also on official US and European foreign ministry websites - regarding the situation, tourism slowly started returning to Nicaragua.[19]

Challenges to a Different Future in Tourism: Development, Capitalism and Path-Dependency

Since its formative years as a state, Nicaragua has played a small but revelatory role in the global economy of resource extraction and capital circulation. The European discovery of 'America' and the industrial revolution made Nicaragua's geographical location and landscape greatly susceptible to the demands of international commerce and, as a result, US hemispheric commercial interest.

From coffee, cattle and cotton to mining and cheap labor, the demands of the global trade in goods (and labor) have shaped Nicaragua's landscape. Successive US-imposed Nicaraguan governments deepened the entrenchment of Nicaragua's economy, culture, and politics into the global order of capital circulation. In 1979, however, the Sandinista Revolution put this trajectory of traditional development and growth into question.

To break from this trajectory is extremely difficult and complicated. From Sandinista government policies in the 1980's to its policies during the last fourteen years, the most

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[17] *Live from Nicaragua: Uprising or Coup? A Reader*. Alliance for Global Justice, 2019.

[18] In general, these kinds of regime-change efforts can be understood in the context of "full spectrum dominance". Full-spectrum dominance consists of unipolar military and political hegemony, permanent warfare, unilateral declarations of regime illegitimacy, covert or overt actions to destabilize regimes the hegemon doesn't control; regime change wars, negation of international law but extraterritoriality of hegemonic law; unilateral, coercive measures that are mostly illegal (the only legal sanctions are approved by the United Nations Security Council); administrative freezing of assets without judicial recourse; control of financial transfers, negation of banking services; extra-territorial criminalization of third parties that don't comply with the illegal measures; capacity to intercept all communications everywhere, cyberattacks, cyberwarfare, fake news, social media manipulation, media and cultural hegemony, offshore prisons to obviate rights, indefinite detention without trial for foreigners, drone killings by administrative edict, objective of Damocles Sword capable of killing anyone on the planet, anywhere, within an hour, as a totalitarian agenda; all for military, political and economic hegemony.

[19] To read about how tourism was recovering despite the coup-attempt and the international fake-news campaign, see news headlines at head of the article.

significant challenge to creating an alternative to ‘development’ has been to overcome the combination of long-term US government intervention and the chains of ‘path dependency’, imposed by political, legal, socio-economic and psychological local and international structures. For Nicaragua to break away from the path chartered by global capitalism means confronting the traditional paradigms of development and growth, a transformation that is not that easy as ‘dandole vuelta a una tortilla’ (Nicaraguan metaphor/slang, literally meaning ‘flipping over a tortilla’, metaphorically meaning changing a situation quickly).

Presently, tourism is vital for Nicaragua, as are other export goods, since it not only allows people from around the world to discover ‘the land of lakes and volcanoes’, but, thanks to government policy, it provides Nicaraguans with the possibility of a dignified means of income that does not directly over-exploit humans and the environment. However, given that tourism, as all other export-revenue (dollar) generating activities, is inevitably part of the global metabolism of capitalism, the challenge for Nicaragua in the future will be to decrease its dependency on the double-sided coin of foreign exchange and export activities.

This is not an easy task because it means transforming how and what people consume. It means transforming not only what Nicaraguans consume - most Nicaraguans already consume very locally, except for the middle and upper classes - but also what tourists consume. This doesn’t mean cutting Nicaragua off from the world, but finding a balance that is favorable to Nicaraguans in times of instability. It means creating a new tourism that is low-carbon, circular, complimentary, respectful of people and the environment.

In his latest book, Paul Oquist, Minister and Private Secretary for National Policies for the Presidency of Nicaragua remarks that “the hegemonic economic, social, and political structures, as well as mechanization, automation and artificial intelligence have concentrated wealth to the point where one percent of the world’s population controls over fifty percent of the world’s wealth. At the same time wealth redistribution mechanisms have been weakened. If this continues with the imminent rapid expansion of artificial intelligence, nearly worldwide economic, social, labor, and political instability and crises are completely predictable.”[20]

Oquist and the Nicaraguan government are very conscious of the situation Nicaragua faces in light of global challenges. In writing about the dominant forms of development, Oquist says “we have lost touch with our place in the evolution of the universe and Mother Earth. Our most common answers to the big questions have worn thin and lack the spiritual urgency that can be the basis for a Survival Movement. For this we need to have an understanding of the Universe and Mother Earth and how we are an integral part of evolution, collectively and individually, that renews our identity and values, and

[20] Oquist, Paul. *Equilibra: The Philosophy and Political Economy of Existence and Extinction*, 2020. https://read.amazon.com/kp/kshare?asin=B087DYQCX9&id=iII_FBbCSDyIMC28j6vCnw&reshareId=BAF3C493KZYQZTJ2QHNY&reshareChannel=system.

elevates our level of consciousness of our current situation and the vulnerabilities and risks that threaten our existence. What is required is a transformation through a Survival Social Movement that constructs a low-carbon, climate-resistant and resilient, circular, sustainable society with far greater equality."

In effect, Nicaraguan government (tourism) policies are rooted in the spirit of a "Survival Social Movement" seeking to discover, through real world practice, other ways of living fulfilling lives as individuals, families and communities, all this while facing enormous internal and external contradictions and pressures to succumb to the imperial God of development.

Here are a few 2019 news excerpts about tourism that illustrate how it recovered despite the coup-attempt and the international fake-news campaign

Attractive Tourism Destination
A report published last Sunday in American Airlines magazine *Celebrated Living*, states that Nicaragua is one of the best tourism destinations for those seeking to escape the cold winter this time of year. The article states, "Music, tradition, culture, volcanoes, lakes and much more awaits you in Nicaragua. As beautiful as ever!" (Nicaragua News, 2/18/19)

British Magazine Recommends Tourism in Nicaragua
A report published last Saturday in British magazine The Leader, states 5 reasons to visit the beautiful land of lakes and volcanoes. "The safety and normalcy have returned to Nicaragua and its doors are open to tourists from all over the world. Amazing beaches, active volcanoes, colonial cities, culture, tradition and much more awaits you in Nicaragua". (Nicaragua News, 3/7/19)

Attractive Surfing Destination
A report published last week in Canadian magazine TravelWeek, states that Nicaragua beaches in the Rivas Department are "the perfect destination for eco-travelers and surf enthusiasts." One of the most impressive sites is Costa Esmeralda, a dream paradise for relaxation and unconventional tourism, the perfect place away from the madding crowd of the city," the TravelWeek report states. (Nicaragua News, 3/15/19)

Attractive tourism destination
A report published in British newspaper *The Telegraph*, states that Nicaragua is one of the best tourism destinations to spend an unforgettable spring break vacation. "Safety and normalcy have returned to the land of lakes and volcanoes. Nicaragua has stunning colonial cities rich in culture and tradition, amazing beaches for surfing and the best volcanoes to practice sand boarding," The article states. (Nicaragua News, 3/21/19)

Thousands Find Recreation at Salvador Allende Port
During Holy Week more than 8,000 people visited this recreation port center on Lake Managua every day. (Radio La Primerisima, 4/22/19)

International Surf Tournament
A report published by SURFERS Magazine states that Nicaragua was selected as the venue for this year's International Oakley Surf Shop Challenge. "The tournament that attracts world class surfers, will be held at Playa Colorado in Rivas Department next September," SURFERS Magazine report states. (Nicaragua News, 4/30/19)

Attractive tourism destination
An article published last week in National Geographic's Traveler Magazine states that Nicaragua, with 19 amazing volcanoes, has the best tourism packages for nature explorers and extreme sports enthusiasts. "The Mombacho Volcano has a wide variety of trees and wildlife; Concepción Volcano on Ometepe Island offers water adventure; the boiling lava lake of Masaya Volcano is just stunning, and Cerro Negro Volcano is a favorite destination for extreme sports and volcano-boarding enthusiasts," the Traveler article states. (Nicaragua News, 5/2/19)

Nicaragua: second best surfing destination
Playa Maderas in Nicaragua is the Second best destination for surfing in the world according to Conde Nast Traveler, after Keralan, India, and before Hawaii, Portugal, Morocco, Australia, and Bali. It has off- shore winds more than 300 days a year, and offers a boutique hotel with an excellent restaurant, yoga lessons, etc. (Informe Pastran, 5/17/19)

June Edition of National Geographic Covers Nicaragua's Volcanoes
Exploring the Volcanos of Nicaragua by Jaime Lafferty describes his experiences at Nicaragua's volcanos: https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel/2019/05/exploring-volcanoes-nicaragua (Nueva Radio Ya, 5/24/19)

Nicaragua Among the 10 Best Eco-friendly Destinations in the World
A report published in USA Today last Wednesday, ranks Nicaragua among the 10 best eco-friendly destinations in the world. Visitors learn to respect nature by helping to protect the lives of hundreds of green sea turtles and other endangered species that nest on this beautiful beach," the USA Today article states. (Nicaragua News, 5/25/19)

Travel Website Says Nicaragua Great for Adventure Tourism
The "Fearless Female Travels" website last Monday carried an article stating that Nicaragua is one of the best places in the world for adventure tourism. "In seven spectacular days we visited traditional colonial cities, beautiful coffee farms and 100% organic chocolate factories. During the day we enjoyed the best beaches for surfing and at night we observed an amazing volcanic lava crater," the Fearless Female Travels article states. (Nicaragua News, 5/31/19) https://fearlessfemaletravels.com/nicaragua-travel-itinerary/#more-4446)

British Magazine Promotes Tourist Destinations on Ometepe
The June 5 edition of International Magazine Kreol included an article entitled "Find all of the Charms of Nicaragua on Ometepe Island." About the island the article says: "It is the biggest island in Lake Nicaragua and is made up of two volcanoes—one active and one extinct—joined by a narrow strip of land. This is a truly remarkable and intriguing place…. Volcán Concepción is active, while its southerly neighbor, Volcán Maderas, is extinct. Both are a majestic sight." See article here: https://kreolmagazine.com/travel-2/find-all-the-charms-of-nicaragua-on-ometepe-island/#.XQA_T1xKiUk (La Voz del Sandinismo, 6/7/19)

Canadian Magazine Highlights Nicaragua for Tourism
The Canadian magazine, Travel Week, in its June edition called "Luxury Spring," dedicated two pages to the best places in Nicaragua to "recharge, rejuvenate and recalibrate." This includes destinations for adventure lovers and for travelers who prefer relaxation and rest, with cozy landscapes, "unspoiled natural beauty, crystal clear beaches and an exceptionally welcoming culture." (Informe Pastran, 6/17/19) http://www.travelweek.ca/news/here-are-the-best-places-to-enjoy-some-rr-in-nicaragua/

23% Increase in Tourism
The first 5 months of 2019 shows a 23% increase in the arrival of international tourists compared to the similar period in 2018, according to the organization of Tour Operators — Nicatrama. "In these last two months tourism has taken off," said Channel 8 journalist Oscar Morales. Antonio Armas, president of this organization, said most tourists arrive on their own and are not brought by tour operators. "This encourages us because behind these tourists come those who seek packages with tour operators and a more organized tourism." He also noted that national tourists have increased their frequency level in restaurants, bars, discotheques and other entertainment centers due to promotions and discounts. Armas said they have optimistic projections for 2019 because travel alerts for Nicaragua as a result of 2018 violence have been cancelled in several countries. In 2017, Nicaragua received 1.7 million tourists from the US, Canada, Costa Rica, Europe and others which provided more than US$800 million. (Informe Pastran, 6/26/19)

United Nations Recognizes Nicaragua as Safest Country in the Region
Nicaragua, with 8.3 homicides per 100,000 people is the safest country in the region according to the UN's 2019 World Homicide Survey published July 7. El Salvador has the highest per capita homicide rate at 62.1 per 100,000. Central America, with an average homicide rate of 25.9 per 100,000 inhabitants is the area with the highest level of violent deaths in the world, due to the murders caused by drug trafficking. About Central America, the report notes "The highest national homicide rate is more than seven times higher than the lowest." Honduras and Guatemala follow El Salvador, in violent deaths. Homicides of young men are eight to 11 times higher than killings of women. (Radio la Primerisima, Informe Pastran 7/8/19)

San Juan del Sur Ranked as Top Cruise Ship Destination
In the fourth edition of the Cruise Critic Cruisers' Choice Awards for 2019, San Juan del Sur was recognized as one of the best ports among five destinations in Central America. San Juan del Sur was also highlighted in the category of "Top ranked destinations of the Panama Canal and Central America", particularly among surfers and divers. (Nicaragua News, 7/29/19)

Tourist Attractions Highlighted
The British newspaper "The Times" published an article by travel writer Chris Haslam entitled "Nicaragua: The Ultimate Guide to Central America's Comeback Kid." https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/nicaragua-ultimate-guide-central-america-p00pkpkcj
In the article Haslam describes his visits to the ecolodges of the Río San Juan, with its monkeys and pink moon sunsets reflected in the rivers and crystalline waters of the Nicaragua Caribbean Coast. He states that "without a doubt the cultural wealth of Nicaragua, its landscapes and its people make it a destination to visit and enjoy a well-deserved vacation. In Nicaragua I finally found the wildlife and nature I was looking for," the writer said. (Nicaragua News, 8/23/19)

Italian Tourism Website Applauds Nicaragua
The Italian website *Rivista Donna*, specializing in tourist destinations, lifestyles, art and culture describes Nicaragua this way: "Visiting Nicaragua is an experience for the senses, a reconnection with nature and with oneself traveling through an uncontaminated place, full of

places to discover. If you have chosen this magnificent country for a vacation, you have made the perfect choice." "Nicaragua is the cheapest country for tourism in Central America. Nicaragua is a small eco-sustainable state full of islands surrounded by the ocean, full of colors that can do nothing but take your breath away. An example is volcano boarding near Leon or the freshwater lake, where some sharks have adapted to live. Not to mention the spectacle offered by dolphins and sea turtles swimming in the Pacific Ocean, perfect for surfing." Donna magazine chose 5 reasons to visit Nicaragua: 1. Uncontaminated Beaches. 2. Great places for surfing and snorkeling. 3. Numerous volcanoes 4. Beautiful hotels and villas. 5. Security and low cost. (19Digital, 9/9/19) https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:93941-por-que-visitar-el-paraiso-terrenal-llamado-nicaragua

British Magazine highlights Nicaragua's Magical Tourism
The renowned British magazine Wanderlust published an extensive report on Nicaragua authored by travel writer Sarah Gilbert, highlighting it as one of the 200 secret destinations most recommended by travel experts. "A land of contrasts, the unhurried island life of Nicaragua is a world away from its fiery volcanoes and the history of rebel pirates and mysterious legends," Gilbert writes. The author describes her adventures at the most emblematic Nicaraguan volcanoes, walks through the colonial city of Granada, the lush nature of Solentiname Archipelago and the Indio Maíz Nature Reserve, the magic of the mythical Ometepe Island, the seductive beauty of the Caribbean on Corn Island, Little Corn Island and the Pearl Cays, as well as the surfing paradise of the Pacific beaches. (Nicaragua News, 9/18/19)

Ometepe Island Celebrates Nine Years of Being Named a Biosphere Reserve
September 28 and 29 Ometepe Island celebrated Expo Ometepe 2019 promoted by the Nicaraguan Institute of Tourism (INTUR) and the Ometepe Municipalities. Expo Ometepe commemorates the ninth anniversary of Ometepe Island being named a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. Carnivals toured the main streets of Moyogalpa and Altagracia promoting recycling and care for the environment with school groups and bands. There was a food and handicraft fair where the Ometepeño family, national and foreign tourists could enjoy the variety offered by more than 95 exhibits as well as cultural presentations, musical groups, dance competitions. The youth of the Environmental Movement Guardabarranco participated with the campaign "I adopt a tree, in love with Ometepe." The co-director of INTUR, Anasha Campbell, said that this event is very important as "we restore the right to healthy recreation, enjoyment of art and culture related to our identity and the pride of being Nicaraguan." (El19Digital, 9/30/19)

New Tourism Campaign Launched in the United Kingdom
On September 25 the National Tourism Board (INTUR) launched the Campaign "Nicaragua, with open arms," which invites tourists from the United Kingdom to discover Nicaragua. INTUR Director Anasha Campbell, explained that the Campaign is being carried out in coordination with the Latin American Tourism Association of the United Kingdom (LATA) and seeks to promote "the great hospitality and affection that distinguishes Nicaraguans." She also noted that the campaign is one of the results of the Business Roundtable held in Managua last June with 9 of the most important tour operators in the United Kingdom. (Nicaragua News, 9/25/19)

Nicaragua Present at Paris Tourism Fair
The Nicaraguan Institute of Tourism represented by Co-Minister Anasha Campbell was present the first week of October in Paris at the 41st IFTM Top Resa 2019 Tourism Fair. From Nicaragua, DeTour, Oro Travel, Nicaragua Descanso and Holiday Inn, and colleagues from the Nicaraguan Embassy in France also participated. (El19Digital, 10/2/19)
https://www.el19digital.com/articulos/ver/titulo:94804-promueven-a-nicaragua-como-destino-en-la-feria-internacional-de-turismo-top-resa

Spain's "Independent" Published "The Charms of Nicaragua"
Spain's digital newspaper "The Independent" published in its weekend edition a comprehensive report on Nicaragua by tourism expert, Enrique Redondo, entitled "The Charms of the Nicaraguans." Redondo describes the natural attractions, the safety and the welcoming nature of Nicaraguans. The famous writer points out that Nicaragua is a refined and unique destination because it offers the unexpected with flavor and personality. "This small Central American country is not the Burger King of tourism, it is a special and unique meal that amazes and enriches the palate." (Nicaragua News, 10/21/19)

Nicaragua Tourism Awarded
The Nicaragua Tourism Board (INTUR) reported that "Agent Choice" honored Nicaragua with the "Environmentally Friendly Destination Award." Organized by the British tourism publication "Selling Travel Magazine," the winning destination is selected by travel agencies and tour operators in the United Kingdom. The award will be presented to INTUR Director Anasha Campbell during the World Travel Tourism Fair that will take place on November 5 and 6 in London. (Nicaragua News, 11/4/19)

Hilton Opening Second Hotel in Managua
The Hilton Worldwide hotel chain will be opening a second hotel in Managua under the DoubleTree brand in early November. The new hotel will be powered by solar energy and will have two restaurants, Kyoto and Las Isletas, conference rooms, outdoor pool and 140 rooms with capacity to accommodate 400 guests. (Nicaraguan News, 10/30/19)

Nicaraguan Army Protects Sea Turtles
During October, 2019, in compliance with the Plan for the Protection of Natural Resources and Protected Areas, 160 military personnel from the 4th Regional Military Command located at the La Flor Military Post, provided protection and security for the arrival of 61,751 sea turtles to lay their eggs and the release of 77, 688 baby turtles into the sea at the La Flor Wildlife Refuge, located 20 kilometers south of San Juan del Sur, department of Rivas. (El19Digital, 11/6/19)

Tourism Improving In Nicaragua
Nicaraguan tourism figures are positive, said INTUR Co-Director Anasha Campbell during a meeting November 18. In statements to TV Noticias of Channel 2, she explained, "The failed coup d'état significantly affected tourism, however, as of May of this year, the numbers have been positive: in June 2018 there were only 49,000 tourists and in the same period of 2019 there were more than 100,000 visitors. These figures are due to a promotional campaign, Nicaragua Siempre Linda, which aims to restore tourism," said Campbell. Nicaragua also participated in 25 international fairs. Nicatur 2019 was promoted with the participation of 63 wholesale travel agencies and 32 international media. Public-private missions were carried out in the United States, Canada, Mexico, France and Central America. Tourism in Nicaragua is generating 48,687 direct jobs, 51% of which are occupied by women. In the case of indirect jobs, this figure triples. (Informe Pastran, 11/19/19)

Among the Most Important Destinations to Visit in 2020
The End of Year edition of the British magazine "Wanderlust," highlighted Nicaragua in its "Hot List 2020" as one of the most important destinations to visit in 2020. The magazine states that Nicaragua is a nature lover's paradise with its "Smoky volcanoes, pristine beaches, lakes, lagoons and jungles full of exotic animals." The article emphasizes destinations such as Granada, León, Ometepe, Little Corn Island and Río San Juan, which according to the magazine encapsulates the touristic and natural variety that Nicaragua offers to the world. (Nicaragua News, 11/22/19)

Other Resources Related to Development and Tourism in Nicaragua

Nicaraguan economic growth before the coup
https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/43965/130/EEI2018_Nicaragua_en.pdf

The Troika of Tyranny: The Imperialist Project in Latin America and Epigones, Roger Harris, 11/7/18 https://www.counterpunch.org/2018/11/07/the-troika-of-tyranny-the-imperialist-project-in-latin-america-and-its-epigones/

No to Trump's Sanctions on Nicaragua, Ken Livingstone, 3/25/19
https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/no-trumps-sanctions-nicaragua

Wales Nicaragua CYMRU, An Unusual and Extraordinary Threat, 12/2/18
https://walesnicaragua.wordpress.com/2018/12/02/an-unusual-and-extraordinary-threat/

Nicaragua, Venezuela and the Right to Development 30 years on, 11/18/18
http://www.tortillaconsal.com/tortilla/node/4868

NicaNotes: The Sun Doesn't Go Down 'Even a Little Bit,' Jorge Capelan, 9/4/19
https://afgj.org/nicanotes-the-sun-doesnt-go-down-even-a-little-bit

https://www.rd.com/advice/best-travel-destinations-2020/

https://www.travelpulse.com/destinations/central-america/nicaragua.html

https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandratalty/2020/12/31/the-four-biggest-travel-trends-for-2020/#750a20431ced

https://www.thebrokebackpacker.com/backpacking-nicaragua/

Polls Show Sandinista Popularity Undiminished

By Chuck Kaufman

Introduction

This chapter, which tracks the political popularity of the Sandinista government of President Daniel Ortega and the opposition, cites polls from three nonpartisan polling companies, M&R Consultores, Consulta Mitofsky, a Mexican firm, and Borge y Asociados. M&R Consultores was formed in 1990 and polls for business intelligence and public opinion. Its clients are private businesses, public institutions, and civil and political organizations. Consulta Mitofsky is a private Mexican firm, and Borge y Asociados (no relation to FSLN founder Tomas Borge) was the only polling firm to correctly predict the Sandinista electoral defeat of 1990. They have offices throughout Central America and their clients include USAID and the Violeta B. de Chamorro Foundation.

None of the three polling firms cited could remotely be called pro-Sandinista and yet all consistently report strong numbers in favor of the Sandinista political party and show Daniel Ortega as the most popular politician in the country with favorability ratings of several multiples the rating of any opposition figure.

The Ortega government's popularity dropped significantly during the violent opposition uprising in April 2018, but has steadily rebounded since the opposition roadblocks were removed and business and peace have returned to the cities and countryside.

The other thing I would note as a result of my more than 30 years as an observer of Nicaraguan politics and a solidarity organizer, is that in all those decades three institutions have consistently ranked the highest in the public's esteem in the polls. Those are: the Army, the National Police, and the Catholic Church.

The fake news perpetuated by the opposition, international media, and even formerly respected human rights groups, blaming the 2018 violence on the National Police, temporarily dropped the favorability of the National Police, but as the lies were exposed and the people recalled the 40-year history of the police, which was born out of the Revolution, walking with the people, the poll numbers quickly returned to their historically high level.

NicaNotes: Poll Shows Nicaraguans Have Consigned the Coup to the Dustbin of History

By Chuck Kaufman, January 15, 2020

https://afgj.org/nicanotes-poll-shows-nicaraguans-have-consigned-the-coup-to-the-dustbin-of-history

The latest poll by independent M&R Consultores covering the last quarter of 2019, shows that less than two years after the failed coup attempt of April-July, 2018, the Sandinista government, led by President Daniel Ortega is more popular than ever and all but a tiny minority of Nicaraguans reject the violent tactics and street blockades used by the US-supported opposition.

In the face of these poll numbers it is hard to maintain any credibility for the opposition and corporate media narrative that says Ortega is a dictator, the police are repressing the people, and that Nicaragua is collapsing into a failed state. The Empire's solution is to ignore the numbers and continue to press the discredited narrative as if it were true.

The poll found that 52% say they strongly support the Sandinista Front (FSLN) and 60% say they are likely to vote for the party in the 2021 national election. Sixty-five percent of those polled support the current government. Fifty-five percent think that President Ortega is leading the country in the right direction and 59.7% hold a favorable opinion of his administration. Likewise, 59% think that the Sandinista government is a factor of unity for Nicaraguans and 58.3% say that it is a government that generates hope. A strong majority believe that the country has made progress compared to six years ago. 61.1% think that the current government is the best the country has ever had, while 69.3% responded that the Ortega government works for the general population. To each question roughly one-third of respondents disagreed.

Perhaps even more significant is that 53.8% of respondents say there is more security at present and 77.8% see the National Police as a very professional institution. One of the clearest signs that the coup attempt in 2018 was based on lies was its demonization of the police and attempt to portray them as if they were the same corrupt and violent institution as exists in neighboring Honduras. Those who have followed Nicaragua for decades know that, even during the neoliberal years of 1990-2006, every poll showed the police and the army as being the two institutions most respected by the population. That is simply not true in countries where the coercive powers of the state are venal and repressive.

I remember five or six years ago a naturalized Nicaraguan, former gringa, went with me to Honduras and she wrote to me after the delegation that she was so frustrated because her neighbors would simply not believe that in Honduras people feared the police. In Nicaragua, the National Police was born out of the Revolution to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship. The police have always walked with the people. Police departments from around the globe travel to Nicaragua to study its system of community policing, its job training programs for at-risk youth, its sports programs for the same, and its women's police stations where abused women can find a safe space to seek protection and justice.

The third significant finding of the M&R poll was the nearly universal rejection of the violent tactics of the US-funded opposition. 92.2% of respondents said they disagreed with the statement: "It doesn't matter that the roadblocks prevent people from going to work, it doesn't matter that the roadblocks prevent the movement of merchandise, it doesn't matter that the economy is damaged because that is the price the population must pay to overthrow the Sandinista government."

An even higher 93.6% rejected the statement, "We must return to the streets, it does not matter that people are unemployed, what is important is to overthrow the government." 87.4% also disagreed with the statement, "The roadblocks are an extraordinary idea." Finally, 82.5% of

those polled agreed that “it is the people through their vote who should decide who should govern and when.” Only 16.5% is in favor of the government being replaced, while over two-thirds (68.5%) reject pressure on the country by the international community to have early elections. 69.6% rejects attempts to remove the president of the Republic, 21.6% approve, and 8.8% are uncertain or did not respond…

If I were an opposition leader, I would be pretty damned depressed by the M&R poll and if I were one of their handlers in the US State Department or National Endowment for Democracy, I would be wondering if my democracy manipulation budget wouldn’t better be spent in some other country.

The Sandinista Front continues to be the biggest political party in the country, with 52% support, the opposition in this survey polled only 23.9%, with 3.5% of that hard vote and 20.4% of soft vote. The remainder declared themselves independent. Of these independents, 28.4% tend to identify themselves with the FSLN and 24.1% with the opposition. 93.6% of those surveyed, who were all of voting age 16 and above, said they had a voter identification card.

Of the poll respondents, 55.8% believe that Nicaragua’s problems are economic and 29.4% believe they are political. A bit over one-third (36.2%) think about emigrating, which is high, but lower than historical levels and far below those of their neighbors in the Northern Triangle countries. Although only 17.5% stated that their family economic situation improved since last year, 27.1% said it remained the same, and 55.4% said it deteriorated, this was a 5-6% improvement over the previous quarter. 70.1% of those consulted were optimistic that in the next 12 months their family income will be better with greater purchasing power and employment.

These are not the conditions that create fertile ground for insurrection. Most people are poor, but remain optimistic about the future. They feel physically secure and opposed to violence. And they are relatively satisfied with their government and distrustful of outside intervention. This is the difference that a revolution makes. Nicaraguans shed much blood and endured much hardship to achieve their current state of peace, security, and hope for the future. The generations of revolutionary struggle have done a good job of passing their experience and the stories of their martyrs on to the generations that have grown up in the last 40 years. And the attempted coup built a bond between the historic combatants and the young Sandinistas who worked together to overcome the violence. Nicaragua is a small and impoverished country, but it is a country filled with the wisdom gained by blood and sweat and it is not a soft target for the bourgeois elites and the US hegemons. Nicaragua remains the “threat of a good example.”

Related Articles

Nicaraguans and their perspectives on their international environment

M&R Consultores, February 24, 2020
https://www.el19digital.com/app/webroot/tinymce/source/2020%20(2)/24feb/2Presentacion_Nicaraguenses%20y%20sus%20Perspectivas%20Acerca%20del%20Entorno%20Internacional_Febrero%202020.pdf

Related NicaNotes Briefs 2019

New M&R Poll Released
M&R General Manager Raúl Obregón released the results of his firm’s latest poll at a press

conference on Feb. 26, 2019, in which he highlighted that almost 80% of those polled said they were willing to tolerate and accept those who have political ideas different from their own and 90.2% said they believed that dialogue was the best mechanism for resolving conflicts. When asked how they evaluated President Daniel Ortega, 54.6% said they approved of his performance as President while 32.3% disapproved.

Over 69% want the country to retake the route that it was on before last year's disturbances that began on April 18th. Sixty percent agreed that the period between 2007 and 2018 has been the best period for Nicaragua in terms of its economic situation and social policies. When asked, 54.9% said that the country had progressed in the last six years while 7.5% said it was the same and 37.1% said it had gone backwards. But 41% said that their family's economic situation at the moment was worse than one year ago while 34.4% said it was the same and on 21.5% said it was better. However, 83.2% expected their situation to improve over the next year. When given a choice between the two, only 9.6% of those polled said that good relations with the United States were necessary for the country to move forward while 87.8% felt that Nicaragua should have good relations with as many countries in the world as possible.

The poll was carried out by in person interviews countrywide in urban and rural areas between Jan. 25 and Feb. 11, 2019 with 1,600 people over 16 polled and a margin of error of 2.5% and a level of confidence of 95%. (Informe Pastran, 1/26/19; https://www.el19digital.com/app/webroot/tinymce/source/2019/FEBRERO/26FEB/SISMO%2058%20-%20Presentacion%20Resultados%20(1).pdf)

President Daniel Ortega One of the Best Rated in the Americas
According to the latest ranking of popularity of Latin American presidents conducted by the Mexican firm Consulta Mitofsky, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega rates higher than the rest of Central American presidents and even most South American presidents. Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador is the best ranked by his citizens, with an approval of 67%. He is followed by Peru's president, Martín Vizcarra, with 63%; Danilo Medina, from the Dominican Republic, with 58% and Daniel Ortega, from Nicaragua, with 55%. (Informe Pastran, 3/11/19)

Nicaraguan Government Receives High Approval in Poll
The last survey by the polling firm Borge & Asociados carried out from July 17 to 28, indicates that President Daniel Ortega has a 51.4% approval rating and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) continues to be the party that enjoys the greatest level of support, with more than 44% approval, 2.6% higher than in March 2019. Likewise, 52.1% of respondents stated that the electoral period established in the National Constitution must be respected and that presidential elections should be held in 2021 as established by the electoral calendar. The survey demonstrates the clear rejection of the population to the imposition of foreign sanctions (55.8%) and 65% of respondents say the most important thing is economic prosperity and employment. (Nicaragua News, 8/23/19)

Pre-election Poll Reveals Sympathy with the Sandinista Party
The first pre-election poll by the firm M&R Consultores released September 2 reveals that in the 2021 elections, 52.6% of the Nicaraguan people sympathize with the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) and that if the elections were held today the FSLN would win by 27% over the opposition. 52.9% of Nicaraguans believe the country will do better with an FSLN government, and only 13.3% believe it will be better with the opposition, while 11% say it will not improve. According to the poll, if the elections were held today, 36.9% would absolutely vote for

the FSLN, another 16.5% are leaning that way. 3.8% say they would vote for the opposition and 9.1% are leaning that way. The likely turnout in the next election is 70.8%.

51.4% of the population believe that their lives will be better with a Sandinista-led government, and 52.3% believe their children will have better opportunities with the FSLN. 52.2% estimate that with the FSLN they would have more opportunities than their parents did. 53.9% believe that with an FSLN government they would have more access to housing, and 56 % say they would have more access to free health care, and 56.3% to free education. The survey also reveals that economic problems are the biggest concern, (71%), whether employment or cost of living. Twenty percent of Nicaraguans say their main problem is political, 3.5% say security and 2.4% social conflicts.

49.4% of the population estimates that their economic situation in relation to last year is worse, 32% say the same and 18.1% say it is much better compared to 2018. 57.6% say the country has progressed compared to six years ago and only 8% say it is the same. Forty-four percent of Nicaraguans say that in this same period their best economic situation was in 2017. Seventy-four percent of the population expect their economic situation to improve in the coming months. Another fact revealed by the survey is that 89.6% of the population has not been the victim of aggression or theft, and 55 % believe that the work of the National Police is very good. Sixty-six percent also consider the National Police to be professional. Ninety percent of citizens believe that false news is becoming a problem for the country since 44% do not know how to identify it. The survey was conducted from Aug. 3 to15, 2019. (Radiolaprimerisima, 9/2/19)

New Survey Shows Great support for Current Administration

The most recent opinion poll by M&R Consultores shows that 59% of the people approve of President Ortega's management. This survey was conducted with 1,622 samples between August 24 and September 4. Although 29.6% say the country is going the wrong way, that is a drop of 7.9% from the last poll in April. 68.6% of those polled consider that the Sandinista government works for the benefit of the country's poor; 26.8% said for the benefit of the rich. In relation to the situation in Nicaragua six years ago, 54.1% think it has progressed; 39.7% think it has regressed and 4.8% think it has remained the same. 81.6% estimate that economic growth will return to what is was before April 2018.

The Sandinista Front continues to be the political party with the highest number of supporters in Nicaragua, with 53%, distributed between 38.9% hard vote and 14.1% soft vote. Meanwhile, the opposition reaches 13.5% between 5.9% hard vote and 7.6% soft vote. The opposition still has no leader, because 74.3% say they do not know who the leader is. 85.3% believe that it is the people through their vote who should decide who should govern the country; 12.6% believe that the government should leave power. 61.3% oppose pressures from the international community towards Nicaragua; 29.5% support them; 9.1% do not know. 66.6% disagree with forcibly overthrowing the government of President Daniel Ortega; 23.1% agree; 10.2% do not respond. (Informe Pastran, 9/23/19)

New Poll finds High Approval for Ortega and FSLN

Despite the intense national and international media campaign against Nicaragua, in a new survey of Borge & Asociados, President Daniel Ortega receives 57% approval and Vice President Rosario Murillo a 47.6% approval rating, surpassing the opposition by a longshot. If the elections were held today, President Daniel Ortega would overtake the opposition by up to 25 points. As for political sympathies, 60% would not vote for either the Civic Alliance or Blue and White National Unity (UNAB), and if these two groups joined Citizens for Liberty (CXL),

68% would not vote for them. All three are opposition groups. Meanwhile, the FSLN as a party has a sympathy level of 40.6%; the PLC 4.3%; the other parties 2.8% and no party preference, 48.3%. Electoral experts from different countries believe that when a presidential candidate, two years before the elections, has not even obtained a third of the voters, he/she will not achieve it in the following 24 months and consequently another candidate must be sought. Historically, in Nicaragua, the FSLN usually gets at least 14% of the votes of those without a party. (Radiolaprimerisima, 10/2/19)

New Opinion Poll

The latest survey by M&R Consultores revealed that 73.6% of the population believe that the conflict the country has experienced since April 2018 should be resolved by Nicaraguans, while 62.2% disapprove of the interference of other countries in Nicaragua's internal affairs. Further, 90.3% believe that in order for the country to be well, Nicaragua must be free to decide what it wants as a country without external interference. 66.5% of Nicaraguans say the conflict has been externally supported to in order to destabilize the country and prevent peace. 83% say that under no circumstances should they allow the country's sovereignty to be placed under the tutelage of other international organizations or agencies. Sixty-four percent condemn the fact that a group of countries headed by the United States formed a commission without Nicaragua requesting it to address the country's political problems. Seventy-one percent of the population disagree with the U.S. government's Nica Act sanctions that prevent multilateral banks and organizations from granting loans to Nicaragua to finance development. More than 72% also disapprove of Nicaraguans who promote this type of international sanctions and 82.3% believe it affects democracy. 92.4% of Nicaraguans claim that international sanctions affect the entire population, and 71% say they know that this is interventionist behavior. (Radiolaprimerisima, 11/4/19)

Nicaragua Persists Despite Continued US Efforts to Destroy It

S. Brian Willson

Introduction

It is critical to keep in mind the depth of the historical roots and imperial patterns of US interventionism, not just in Nicaragua, but in all of Latin America, indeed, in much of the world. Understanding these patterns reveals an ugly historic truth concealed by official, noble sounding rhetoric (US American exceptionalism). Also important to note, is that these patterns are created by real human beings who possess, or are possessed by, a particular mind-set common to Eurocentrics and oligarchs – racist superiority and special entitlement, addicted to greed. The consequences of their policies are brutal, and most US-Americans do not want to know about, or think about them, including many "liberals."

The US cultural origins are founded on gruesome genocide, driven by an incredible arrogance, and ignorance about life outside the Eurocentric world. The cultural characteristics, the "DNA", include grotesque White male racist, sexist and classist violence; unspeakable cruelties and vindictiveness inflicted on concocted "enemies;" vicious retribution; plutocracy/oligarchy; and expansion for the benefit of a few at the expense of the many by *any* means. And so far, nothing has been able to substantially, and permanently, reverse this diabolical behavior. Nicaragua, because it genuinely seeks autonomy from this monster from the north, continues to be a targeted victim of its destructive intentions.

When the Spanish conquistadors conquered Latin American lands almost 500 years ago, they forcefully introduced a new concept – ownership of property (fiction of "title"). Land with access to water is the most sacred and indispensable resource enabling sustainable human culture. The historic Indigenous occupants of the land lived and farmed communally. Ownership was a foreign, alienating value. Thus, was introduced the idea of protected (with military dictatorships and oligarchic-created Constitutions) private, versus communal land. The consequential tensions have been played out ever since: private profit/individualism versus public/social/community; planter (oligarch) versus peasant/Indigenous (serf); competition/greed versus cooperation/sharing. If this structural "sin" of private versus social good is not addressed, the modern version being state protected "capitalism", nothing of substance really changes.

By 1500, the six primary European White imperialist powers (France, Spain, Italy, British Isles, Portugal, and Netherlands), comprised less than 8 percent (about 40 million people) of the estimated world population. They, in effect, launched a global terror campaign through forceful colonization, racism and brutal slavery, stealing Indigenous lands and labor, nearly destroying the ancient "Red" Indigenous cultures in

the Western Hemisphere, and the Black Indigenous cultures of Africa, possessing a combined 25-40 percent (175-200 million) of the world's population.[21]

Puritan John Winthrop's 1630 sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity", has become an axiom for US "American Exceptionalism": "*We shall find that the God of Israel is among us… For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us".*[22] He deeply believed the Puritans were God's chosen people. The "exceptionalism" cast was set.

Nicaragua - a case study - historic US obsession with domination

1850s

One week after Pro-slavery Franklin Pierce had been inaugurated as US President on March 4, 1853, he ordered US Marines from the USS *Cyane* warship commanded by Captain George Hollins to go ashore on March 11 in Greytown (San Juan del Norte) to protect Cornelius Vanderbilt's US Accessory Transit Company's (ATC) railroad and other property. Vanderbilt's rail lines crossed from east to west, from Caribbean to the Pacific Ocean. The democratically elected government of San Juan del Norte had requested ATC to move its dock to a more accommodating location. ATC rejected the request and refused to honor the authority of the local government. In retaliation, local militias burned down ATC's storehouse and hotel. Many of the local inhabitants were semi-slave British-Jamaicans working with consent of the local government.[23]

More than a year later, in retaliation, Captain Hollins was ordered to return to San Juan to further protect ATC's property, while also preserving the safety of Solon Borland, the US Minister to Nicaragua, who had been threatened by locals. On July 13, 1854, Hollins ordered the townspeople to compensate ATC for damages, and issue a formal apology to the US for assaulting its minister. They refused. The Marines from the USS *Cyane* then bombarded Greytown from 9 am to 1:30 pm, expending all the ship's ammunition. Not succeeding in destroying all the city's buildings, Hollins ordered his men to enter the city and burn the remaining buildings to the ground. Greytown was totally destroyed.[24]

Thus, was established the character of US American foreign policy in Central America, including Nicaragua, to the present – contempt for local autonomy, and wanton destruction and murder when locals dare resist.

Less than a year later, in June 1855, William Walker, a Calvinist White racist from Tennessee, arrived in Nicaragua with intentions to expand slave territory. After a 4-month campaign attacking Rivas, he then conquered the Conservative capital of Granada, taking effective control

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[21] [D.E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 11; John D. Durland, "Historical Estimates of World Population: An Evaluation", *Population and Development Review*, 3:253-296, 259, 1977; C. Clark, *Population Growth and Land Use*, 2nd Ed (New York: MacMillan Press, 1977), 82-89; Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones, *Atlas of World Population History* (New York: Facts on File, 1978), 49, 57, 101, and 103.]

[22] Page Smith, *A New Age Now Begins*, Vol. I (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1976), 19-20.].

[23] George B. Clark, *Battle History of the United States Marine Corps, 1775-1945* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2010, Chapter 17 "Nicaragua", pp. 141-..

[24] Ibid.

of the country, immediately reinstating slavery. On May 20, 1856, less than a year after Walker's arrival, President Pearce recognized him as the legitimate president at age 32. Outraged, Nicaraguans took up arms against foreigner Walker with help from compatriots in Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Walker was later killed in Honduras in 1860.

There have been at least ten subsequent US military interventions in Nicaragua, including the savage 1980s Reagan Contra terrorist war.

1920s

Wall Street Bankers Guaranty Trust and Brown Brothers were investing in Nicaraguan mahogany and other timber.[25] A 1926 *New York Times* article reported that "extensive mahogany growths [were] owned by Americans on the east coast of Nicaragua" and the "payment of duties [export taxes] by American exporters of lumber" were in dispute. Export duties legally due to the Nicaraguan government were being confiscated to pay off loans owed to U.S. investors.[26] These and other economic factors helped cause a virtual civil war in Nicaragua, beginning in 1927, between the Conservatives, representing the minority elite, and the Liberals, representing the majority poor, whose small armed element of Augusto Sandino's forces were referred to by the U.S. as "bandits". Of course, the United States could not sit idly by while this "instability" threatened a significant source of prosperity for its elite class investors.

In January 1927, U.S. President Calvin Coolidge delivered a special address to Congress raising alarm about loss of US property in Nicaragua. Large US American investments in lumbering, mining, coffee growing, banana culture, shipping, and also mercantile and other collateral business were in jeopardy of being destroyed.[27] He suggested that arms and munitions had been sent to the revolutionists in Nicaragua from foreign powers, threatening its constitutional government.

Coolidge's Secretary of State, Frank B. Kellogg, repeated U.S. fears that Nicaragua was becoming a hostile Bolshevist regime in cahoots with revolutionary Mexico, describing *"formation of the All-American Anti-Imperialist League, under instructions from Moscow…to actively support Latin-American strikes against American concerns*."[28]

Coolidge's Assistant Secretary of State, Robert E. Olds, repeated that Mexico sought "to establish a Bolshevik authority in Nicaragua to drive a 'hostile wedge' between the U.S. and the Panama Canal…and we must …insist on our dominant position."[29] *Until now Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power, while those which we do not recognize and support fail. Nicaragua has become a test case. It is difficult to see how we can afford to be defeated.*[30] Thus, Moscow was used as early as the

[25] Harold Denny, "Wall Street Role Large in Nicaragua", *New York Times*, July 29, 1928, repr. in *Central America and the Caribbean: The New York Times*, eds. Graham Hovey and Genee Brown, 114–15 (New York: Arno Press, 1980).
[26] "American Marines Land at Capital of Nicaragua Rebels", *New York Times*, December 25, 1926, repr. in Hovey and Brown, eds., *Central America and the Caribbean*, 108–9.
[27] Calvin Coolidge Special Message to Congress, "American Intervention in Nicaragua" (extracts), 69th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record* 1324–26 (January 10, 1927): H 633; Vincent Ferraro, "Calvin Coolidge, 'Intervention in Nicaragua', 1927", http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/cc101.htm; "Coolidge Openly Accuses Mexico in Unexpected Message to Congress, Defending His Policy Nicaragua; Warns Against Meddling", *New York Times,* January 11, 1927.
[28] Richard V. Oulahan, "Kellogg Offers Evidence of Red Plots in Nicaragua and Aid from Calles," *New York Times*, January 13, 1927, repr. in Hovey and Brown, eds*. Central America and the Caribbean*, 110–11.
[29] Godfrey Hodgson, *The Colonel: The Life and Wars of Henry Stimson, 1867–1950* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 108.
[30] Ibid., 108–9.

1920s to justify U.S. intervention in the Western Hemisphere.

Coolidge sent more than five thousand Marines to Nicaragua who conducted an early version of large-scale counterinsurgency operations, popularly called “Mr. Coolidge’s Jungle War” seeking to defeat August Sandino’s revolutionary army.[31] From 1927-1933, the Marines used tactics similar to those used earlier against the various Indigenous nations resisting White European settlements—burning crops and killing horses and cattle, destroying food supplies, burning homes, and murdering large numbers of civilians. Bombing first in Chinandega, then in Ocotal, they dive bombed, using fragmentation antipersonnel and incendiary bombs, scattering shrapnel over wide areas, machine-gun strafing of civilians, while supporting Marine ground operations. After massacring thousands, the Marines bragged that “scores of men fell from the bombing and strafing" as the "miracle of Marine air" produced "streets...strewn with the dead and dying."[32]

Subduing Sandino’s ragtag army proved to be elusive. The US State Department contemptuously hypocritically accused the Sandino forces of adopting “the stealthy and ruthless tactics which characterized the savages who fell upon American settlers in our country 150 years ago”.[33] Though the Marines left in 1933 in a stalemate, the United States had manipulated elections to guarantee its continued control of Nicaragua’s political process.

Seventy-seven-year-old Bill Gandall who had been a young U.S. Marine fighting against Sandino’s forces in the late 1920s, described the brutality that he and other Marines inflicted on the Nicaraguans. Speaking of Sandino, “We never caught him because no matter how we tortured, we could never get people to inform.”[34] He described the 1928 Nicaragua elections “fraudulent,” while describing the Marine’s brutality: “I shot a guy at the polls . . . [and] after that, it was taking part in rapes, burning huts, cutting off genitals.[35]

Soon after the frustrated U.S. forces departed in 1933, the United States installed Anastasio Somoza García, son of a wealthy coffee planter who was educated in the United States, as head of the National Guard. In 1934 Somoza lured Sandino from the mountains of Nueva Segovia to Managua to the presidential palace for dinner, but had him assassinated. Sandino and his popular, now disarmed, movement were perceived as a political threat, even though they were seeking to create peaceful communities and cooperatives in Northern Nicaragua. By 1936 Somoza was the president and his family held the reins until overthrown by the FSLN on July 19, 1979, who ruled until 1990.

The Revolution Continues Despite Continual US Efforts to Thwart It

In 1990, the US essentially funded a new Nicaraguan party – UNO (United Nicaragua Opposition) – to run Violeta Chamorro as (their US) presidential candidate for the Nicaragua

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[31] Richard O’Connor, “Mr. Coolidge’s Jungle War”, *American Heritage* 19, no. 1 (December 1967): 36–39, 89–93; “1,000 Additional Marines Are Ordered to Nicaragua to Quell Sandino Revolt”, *New York Times,* January 4, 1928, repr. in Hovey and Brown, eds., *Central America and the Caribbean*, 112–13.

[32] Joseph H. Alexander, *The Battle History of the U.S. Marines* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1997), 56–58; Conrad, *Sandino, The Testimony of A Nicaraguan Patriot*, 88-90. Sandino kept journals of his six-year effort to rid Nicaragua of the Yankee troops and documented the practices and policies of the U.S. Marines. In the example here, Sandino describes the battles of Ocotal, San Fernando, Los Calpules, July 1927.

[33] Hodgson, 119.

[34] Colman McCarthy, “In Nicaragua, An Ex-Marine’s Campaign of Conscience,” *Washington Post*, Sunday, March 2, 1986.

[35] Ibid.; See also: Michael Parenti, *The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution, and the Arms Race* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1989), 41.

people. US spent nearly $50 million to assure defeat of FSLN and victory of Chamorro.[36] President G.H.W. Bush had told the Nicaraguan people if the FSLN won the elections, there would be more Contra war and sanctions. The Nicaraguans literally voted with a gun to their heads. UNO won.

The oligarchic Nicaragua "Liberals" remained in power until after the 2006 elections. Most of the gains of the revolution in education and health care, among others, had been reversed during their 16 years of repressive, neoliberal privatizing and austerity policies. Much to the chagrin of the US, and the oligarchy of Nicaragua, the Sandinista government returned to power in 2007. The US was stunned to have lost their puppet government, and remain unforgiving to this day for having lost their "colony."

The 2018 US Coup Attempt – in the works since 2007

Examining US State Department, NDI (National Democratic Institute) and USAID (US Agency for International Development) communications from 2010 to 2018, the US has been preparing for an illegal change of government before, but no later than, the 2021 elections. Their extensive and continuous communications reveal:

* "final goals" of "regime change" to a government "akin to the interest of the US government";

* "promote mobilizations against the Government of Daniel Ortega";

* "the US government, through its Embassy and the USAID have been preparing the conditions to carry out a non-violent coup d'etat against the Nicaraguan government";

* "create a mass of young people critics of the government";

* "create a negative opinion about Daniel Ortega";

* "discredit the electoral process";

* "promote antigovernment awareness in vulnerable sectors of the society";

* "training young leadership and exerting control over the 'independent' means of communication…. looking out on the 2021 elections";

* "undermining the image of the Nicaraguan government";

* "strengthening the civil society organizations, the media war and the creation of a platform for young leaders, and, at the same time, guaranteeing an international following"; and

* "training in data journalism and data visualization…to influence on the Nicaraguan public opinion and to create a negative opinion about the Daniel Ortega's government", using funds from George Soros' Open Society Foundations.

On May 1, 2018, Benjamin Waddell authored, "Laying the groundwork for insurrection: A closer look at the U.S. role in Nicaragua's social unrest," published by *Global Americans* (a Latin American news agency whose editor and executive director has deep connections with both

[36] http://www.brianwillson.com/how-the-u-s-purchased-the-1990-nicaragua-elections/

AID and National Endowment for Democracy (NED). https://theglobalamericans.org/2018/05/laying-groundwork-insurrection-closer-look-u-s-role-nicaraguas-social-unrest/.

Adding known monies from AID, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and the CIA, several *hundred million* dollars have been devoted specifically to regime change since 2010. As an aside, from 1990-2006, during the three Liberal governments, USAID alone allocated $1.7 *billion* to Nicaragua, averaging more than $106 million per year, to prop up its puppet government preserving privatization of the economy, including banks and social services. This figure includes $175 million in the US Millennium Challenge Account, a separate fund for designated "poor" countries.

Since the Sandinista government returned to power, the NED has continued to *annually* fund dozens of programs in Nicaragua educating especially young people on "democracy" and how to best replace the existing authoritarian government. AID has also committed millions of dollars every year for regime change.

Finally, on April 18, 2018, the US orchestrated its violent coup with millions of dollars for payoffs/bribes to complicit collaborators and criminals, scripted media campaigns of fake news, and provided sanctuary to opposition leaders involved in violent criminal activities. The coup was defeated by late July, but not without many casualties, opposition destruction of government buildings and houses, murder and torture, arsons, etc. The US has never forgiven the Sandinistas for overthrowing in 1979 their all-time favorite dictator, Somoza.

Post-Coup

In July and December 2018, respectively, in public statements, Human Rights Watch (HRW) supported the successful application of the Global Magnitsky Act (authorizes the US government to sanction those who it sees as human rights offenders, freeze their assets, and bans them from entering the US), when US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on five Nicaraguans implicated in human rights abuses and corruption", while also urging Congress members to meet with US-backed Nicaraguan opposition "leaders".[37]

November 27, 2018, as Nicaragua was making multiple efforts to recover from the psychological, infrastructure, financial, and human destruction of the US-orchestrated coup (the banal, deranged *intention* of US policy), in association with their Nicaraguan collaborators, President Donald Trump issued Executive Order 13851, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, in response to "***the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States constituted by the situation in Nicaragua.*** This emergency continued in effect until November 27, 2019 (which was renewed). This is essentially the same emergency President Reagan announced against Nicaragua on May 1, 1985 during the murderous US Contra War of the 1980s. Of course, this is just one more insidious effort to continue the "evil" Sandinista narrative for the benefit of the US and European audience.

December 11, 2018, Nicaraguan Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (NICA Act) ACT passed Congress (H.R. 1918) with not a single vote against, revealing the lack of a solidarity movement in the US. The Act allows the US Treasury Department to sanction any non-US person implicated in egregious human rights abuses and corruption in Nicaragua, and would

[37] Ben Norton, Billionaire-Backed Human Rights Watch Lobbies for Lethal US Sanctions on Leftist Governments as Covid Rages", *Grayzone*, April 17, 2020, republished in *Consortium News.*

allow freezing of assets held in the US, forbidding entry to the US, and revoking US visas. The bill originally was to punish President Ortega for alleged unfair elections in 2016.

December 20, 2018, Trump signed H.R. 1918, the Nicaraguan Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (NICA Act).

March 13, 2019, Jose Miguel Vivanco, director of HRW Americas Division tweeted about the Nicaragua "regime" and "dictatorship": "You can't negotiate with the blood-soaked dictatorship of Ortega and Murillo…On the contrary, you have to double down on the sanctions."[38]

Mar 17, 2019, Vivanco in an interview with Univision: "The only language that Daniel Ortega understands is sanctions and international pressure."[39]

June 11, 2019, Vivanco actively lobbied (testified) for Nicaragua's right-wing opposition before Congress "to impose targeted sanctions–including asset freezes– against senior Nicaragua officials."[40]

June 19, 20, 2019 Vivanco in a tweet, "accuses Nicaragua of torture against protesters, urges sanctions."[41]

Sept 18 and Sept 19, 2019, two similar articles are published highlighting and lauding Nicaragua opposition leader Medardo Mairena, in Miami, *Newsweek* (Scott McDonald, September 19, 2019*)*, and *Miami Herald* (Jimena Tavel and Sarah Moreno, September 18 2019). Mairena is a convicted murderer of 5 people in the town of Morrito, July 12, 2018, during US-planned coup activities. Mairena was one of hundreds of unappreciative prisoners granted amnesty in June 2019, a genuine peace gesture from the Nicaragua government.

Nov 27, 2019, President Trump renewed Executive Order 13851, pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, in response to "***the unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States constituted by the situation in Nicaragua.*** This further bolsters the Nicaraguan opposition to continue their various tactics and media campaign of lies geared toward regime change. Again, this is imperial theater to perpetuate the "evil" Nicaragua narrative for the benefit of foreign audiences.

USAID 2018 Obligations Nicaragua - $24,547,645; USAID 2019 "Obligations Nicaragua - $34, 205,234 (40% increase over 2018), for "training young, emerging democratic leaders" to better "engage in democratic governance" with the goal to "increase citizen support for the right to freedom of expression and access to public information". Recipients included Violeta Barrios Foundation, political competition, the IRI (International Republican Institute, part of NED), and a number of NGOs.[42]

National Endowment for Democracy, Nicaragua 2018 - $1.3 m funding for 17 projects, continues trainings of youth; NED Nicaragua 2019 - $987,000 funding 16 projects, many for training youth in "democracy."[43]

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] http://www.usaid.gov/.
[43] https//www.ned.org.

Note: I am reminded that Indian writer Arundati Roy has identified “democracy” as the Free World’s whore. "Democracy, the modern world's holy cow, is in crisis ... every kind of outrage is being committed in the name of democracy. It has become little more than a hollow word, a pretty shell, emptied of all content or meaning…willing to dress up, dress down, willing to satisfy a whole range of tastes, available to be used and abused at will…Free elections, a free press and an independent judiciary mean little when the free market means they are on sale to the highest bidder.”[44]

January 14-15, 2020 there was a meeting in El Salvador of the two leading Nicaragua opposition groups, Alianza Civica and UNAB-MRS, to create a new unified *National Opposition Coalition of Nicaragua* (CNON) in order for them to continue receiving US funding.[45]

January 21, 2020, US Secretary of State and ex-Sunday School teacher, Mike Pompeo (“never ending struggle…until the rapture”[46]) met with Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado, assuring him that the US will continue to apply pressure on Nicaragua to end the repression and human rights violations, declaring that “very few authoritarian regimes remain in the region, and Nicaragua is one of them.” Pompeo reminded Alvarado that the US had given Costa Rica $13 million since 2018 “to assist vulnerable populations.”[47] The UN High Commission for Refugees had awarded Costa Rica $650 million to meet the challenge posed by the “crisis” in Nicaragua.[48]

January 23, 2020, US Secretary of State and ex-CIA chief Mike Pompeo (“We lied, we cheated, we stole“[49]),met with Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, the day after the Florida State Senate voted unanimously to condemn President Daniel Ortega. Pompeo reported that he had spoken with Nicaraguan opposition leaders, pledging more US support, with a goal of free elections which he believes would remove Ortega. Pompeo reiterated financial support for opposition leaders who have had to flee Nicaragua, and that the US is working closely with the Catholic church to press for fair elections.[50] The reader is reminded that the US habitually interferes in other country’s elections to assure a US-sympathetic “democracy”,[51] as it successfully did in the 1990 Nicaragua elections, but unsuccessfully in the 2006 elections which the FSLN won.

January 30, 2020, right-wing leaders from Alianza Civica (Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy), a coalition of opposition groups formed in 2018, called a press conference to announce their expanding effort in conjunction with Washington to oust the Sandinistas. Also present were members of the group Blue and White National Unity (UNAB). Both groups were instrumental in fomenting the US-orchestrated coup with US funds. One of the opposition leaders present was Saturnino Cerrato, representing the rabidly fundamentalist evangelical

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[44] “Democracy is the Free World's Whore, says Arundhati Roy”, Sunday, May 18, 2003 by *Agence France Presse*; republished in Common Dreams; https://archive.commondreams.org/scriptfiles/headlines03/0518-03.htm.
[45] *Informe Pastran* January 15, 2020; Ramon Pedregal Casanova, “It is Not Just Venezuela. Nicaragua Is Also An Objective of Imperialism”, *Pacol.org*, February 17, 2020, transl by Jill Clark-Gollub.
[46] Edward Wong, “The Rapture and the Real World: Mike Pompeo Blends Belief and Policy”, *The New York Times*, March 30, 2019.
[47] *Confidencial*, January 23, 2020.
[48] John Perry, “Nicaraguans in Costa Rica: A Manufactured “Refugee” Crisis”, *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, Mar 23, 2020.
[49] See “’We Lied, Cheated and Stole’: Pompeo Comes Clean About CIA”, *Telesur*, April 15, 2020.
[50] *TV 6, South Florida*, Jan 23, 2020, copyright AP.

[51] Shane Dixon Kavanaugh, “US Interfered in Elections of at Least 85 Countries Worldwide Since 1945”, *Global Research*, December 31, 2019, https://www.globalresearch.ca/us-interfered-in-elections-of-at-least-85-countries-worldwide-since-1945/5601481.

right-wing Party for Democratic Restoration (PRD), who reiterated that the national demand for unity was coming from inside the country, but also from "powerful foreign actors." Presumably he was referring to the US. Another US-supported opposition spokesperson was Juan Sebastion Chamorro representing his neoliberal think-tank, the Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUNIDES), loaded with USAID dollars.[52]

January 31, 2020, acting assistant Secretary for the US State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Michael G. Kozak, publicly condemned the democratically elected Ortega government, while supporting the major right-wing opposition newspaper, *La Prensa.* The latter has been funded primarily by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) since 1980s, and is owned by the economically powerful Chamorro family that fiercely opposes the Sandinistas.[53] Members of this oligarchic dynasty also own *Confidencial, another rabid anti-government media* mouthpiece and directs the nongovernmental organizations *CINCO, Invermedia* and *La Fundacion Violeta Barrios,* which channels USAID and NED monies to other organizations and other media supporting regime change. Current *La Prensa* director Jaime Chamorro proudly wears a "President TRUMP 2020" T-shirt,[54] revealing *La Prensa's* close identification with the Trump's plans to oust the democratically elected government of Nicaragua.

March 5, 2020, US Embassy increased pressure on Nicaragua issuing a security alert, imposing travel restrictions on Embassy personnel.[55]

March 5, 2020, "US Sanctions Nicaraguan Police Force Over 'Violent Repression'".[56]
March 9, 2020, US House of Representatives passed a bipartisan resolution without any opposition whatsoever, "to send a strong message" demanding more sanctions and aggressive actions against the Nicaragua government.[57]

March 17, 2020, HRW Australian staff described as great news the new round of US sanctions on Nicaragua, providing great hope for Nicaragua victims, published as an op-ed in US funded opposition *Confidencial.*[58]

March 19, 2020, Kenneth Roth, long time director of HRW, praised Trump for "imposing" the new sanctions on Nicaragua.[59]

March 23, 2020, Nicaragua National Coalition (opposition) sent a letter to Ana Emilia Solis, the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) representative in Nicaragua, condemning her organization's praise of the Nicaragua government's policies of identification and prevention of COVID-19.[60]

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[52] Ben Norton, "US/EU Coup Attempt in Nicaragua Continues", *The Grayzone*, February 8, 2020.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Nan McCurdy and Nora Mitchell, "With help from US media allies, Nicaragua's coup-mongers are aiming for Western hearts and minds", *The Grayzone*, February 26, 2020.
[55] Ben Norton, "US House Rams Through Nicaragua Regime-Change Bill With Zero Opposition", *The Grayzone*, March 12, 2020.
[56] Oswaldo Rivas, *Reuters*, March 5, 2020.
[57] Ben Norton, "US House Rams Through Nicaragua Regime-Change Bill With Zero Opposition", *The Grayzone*, March 12, 2020.
[58] Ben Norton, Billionaire-Backed Human Rights Watch Lobbies for Lethal US Sanctions on Leftist Governments as Covid Rages", *Grayzone*, April 17, 2020, republished in *Consortium News.*
[59] Ibid.
[60] *Radiolaprimerisima*, March 24, 2020; "Nicaragua Opposition Makes Wild Accusations Abut Covid-19 Plans", Nica Notes, April 1, 2020.

March-April, 2020, Continued Fake News with US monies – *La Prensa*, *Confidencial*, *Radio Corporacio*, *Onda Local*, *Canal 10*, *100% News* – enjoy incredible press freedom, even creating fake accts about COVID-19, to instill fear in the Nicaragua people, serving as obedient stenographers for the US criminal and obsessive intent to oust the democratically elected Nicaraguan government.[61]

April 2020, Apparent coordination of International media attacking Nicaragua for its alleged inaction against the Corona virus: April 4, *BBC World;* April 6, *The Lancet*, and *The NYT;* April 8 and 12, *The Guardian;* Apr 13, *The Washington Post*.[62] On April 18, the second anniversary of the US regime change attempt in Nicaragua, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo Called for "immediately a democratic transition – including the restoration of human rights guarantees and free and fair elections – to provide for a healthy, prosperous, and free Nicaragua." His statement simply gave another boost for a flurry of regime change articles in the right-wing press.[63]

Sanctions

An article by Ken Livingstone in the Monday, March 25, 2020 issue of *Morning Star* *https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/no-trumps-sanctions-nicaragua:* "**No to Trump's sanctions on Nicaragua: The Trump administration is spreading its intervention and aggression across Central and Latin America**"

PRESIDENT Donald Trump signed into law the "Nica Act" (Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act) on December 20 2018, over two years after the draft legislation was first approved by the US House of Representatives in September 2016. The Act seeks to use the US's "voice, vote and influence" within international financial institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank, to stop them providing "any loan or financial or technical assistance" to Nicaragua's government.

This is of course extremely significant as the US is a strong and, at times, dominant voice in these institutions, and a voice that many international actors do not want to be at odds with. The Act also gives the US president the authority to impose targeted sanctions on Nicaraguan government officials, former officials, or people purportedly "acting on behalf of" the government in Managua.

The secretary of state is instructed by the Act to submit a report to congressional committees within six months as to whether the Nicaraguan government is complying with a range of US demands, including a demand for early elections. The US demand for early elections is significant as Nicaragua's elected president is less than half way through his constitutional term

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[61] Ben Norton As Nicaragua Confronts Covid, Its US-Backed Opposition Exploits the Pandemic to Create Chaos, *The Grayzone*, April 13, 2020; Nora Mitchell and Nan McCurdy, "International Media Uses Fake Journalist to Spread Disinformation About Nicaragua", *Alliance for Global Justice, Nica Notes*, March 11, 2020.

[62] John Perry, "Nicaragua Opposition Misrepresents Government Response to COVID-19", *Council on Hemispheric Affairs* (COHA), April 17, 2020.

[63] Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary of State, Press Statement, "Two-Year Anniversary of the Crisis in Nicaragua", April 18, 2020, *Global Public Affairs, U.S. Department of State*, https://translations.state.gov/2020/04/18/two-year-anniversary-of-the-crisis-in-nicaragua/

of office, having won the last presidential election in 2016 with 72 per cent of the vote on a turnout of around 65 per cent.

By incorporating the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, the act also paves the way for the president to go even further in infringing Nicaragua's sovereignty. Powers granted to the president under this Act enable Trump to block and prohibit financial and other asset transactions and deny or revoke visas, and such measures have been the precursor for further interventions in other countries. The legislation is a clear violation of international law and Article 1 of the charters of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, both of which condemn such actions.

The campaign behind the Nica Act within the US was largely led by recently retired neoconservative Florida Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, with help from Florida Representative Mario Diaz Balart and Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, all Republicans. Their political history includes aggressive support for the blockade of Cuba and sanctions against Venezuela, where they also called for a coup. The Nica Act's supporters hope it will cut off future financial loans to Nicaragua through the World Bank, and other lenders.

Loans to Nicaragua are running at $250 million annually and are being invested in education, social programs, electrification, roads and other infrastructure initiatives. One such project is a $60m World Bank-funded project to strengthen the public health care system in Nicaragua. Additionally, there is a danger that donor nations may use negative loan decisions to guide their own bilateral aid and loans, creating a multiplier effect and cutting some European aid as well.

The Nica Act may well be a heavy additional blow to the achievements under the FSLN (Sandinista) government's poverty reduction program, under which the poverty rate was nearly halved, from 45.8 per cent of the population in 2005 to 24.9 per cent in 2016. These sanctions will hit ordinary people hard, whether or not they support Nicaragua's government, and it is the poor and most vulnerable in society who will suffer serious consequences as a result. Additionally, history in the region and elsewhere, suggests such US sanctions are likely to further exacerbate the country's divisions and difficulties rather than help the country move forward.

These factors also explain why within Nicaragua, the Nica Act has been opposed by a wide-range of voices, including both some business organizations (including CONAMIPYME, the organization of small and medium businesses) and trade unions. The reality is that the Nica Act has little to do with US concern for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Act is instead a tool to help effect the Trump administration's "regime change" agenda, which is not confined to Nicaragua but includes Cuba and Venezuela, with Brazil having been successfully delivered back into pro-US, extreme right-wing hands following the 2016 coup and jailing of Lula, the frontrunner in the presidential elections before that grave injustice.

Statements made by former White House national security adviser John Bolton, and recently by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, make intentions for Nicaragua regime change abundantly clear. On November 1, 2018, Bolton denounced Nicaragua, along with Cuba and Venezuela, as a "troika of tyranny" stating that he "looks forward to watching their governments fall." It is against international law for the Trump administration to decide who should be the government of any country, and experience in Central and Southern America shows that social progress and people's rights are not things that come near the top of US-installed regimes' priorities.

You can follow Ken Livingstone at www.twitter.com/Ken4London and www.facebook.com/KenLivingstoneOfficial. For more information on campaigning against the sanctions visit the NSCAG website at http://www.nscag.org/.

What do Nicaraguans think about US imposed sanctions[64]

According to M&R Consultants in a poll of 1600 Nicaraguans, 16 yrs and older from rural and urban areas, released February 24, 2020:

* Almost 85% of Nicaraguans are very aware that they, and the remainder of Latin America have historically have been considered in the backyard of the United States and do not agree that this is how it should be;

* Over 76% of Nicaraguans are opposed to the NICA Act that enables the U.S. to prevent organizations such as the WORLD BANK and the International Development Bank from granting loans to Nicaragua to finance projects in the country;

* Nearly 81% of Nicaraguans understand that US-imposed sanctions hurts Nicaraguan democracy;

* Nearly 92% of Nicaraguans said that US-imposed sanctions hurt *all* Nicaraguans, while only 6.5% said the sanctions only hurt the government;

* Nearly 79% understand that US-imposed sanctions are a manifestation of the interventionist conduct of the United States in the internal affairs of Nicaragua;

* Almost 75% of Nicaraguans disapprove of the use of US-imposed sanctions on any country.

Conclusions

Earlier in this chapter, the reported 1927 comments of Coolidge's Assistant Secretary of State Robert E. Olds remain relevant today: *Until now Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power, while those which we do not recognize and support fail. Nicaragua has become a test case. It is difficult to see how we can afford to be defeated.*

Nothing has changed in the US political-economic mind. It remains a dangerous, cruel, and selfish monster. It has militarily invaded dozens of countries nearly 600 times since 1798, almost 400 just since World War II. The US murdered over 200,000 in the 1980s alone in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala – all to save private, selfish enterprise at the expense of local populations. It adheres to no international laws, or even its own Constitution which

[64] Nicaraguans and their perspectives on their international environment
M&R Consultores, February 24, 2020;
https://www.el19digital.com/app/webroot/tinymce/source/2020%20(2)/24feb/2Presentacion_Nicaraguenses%20y%20sus%20Perspectivas%20Acerca%20del%20Entorno%20Internacional_Febrero%202020.pdf

incorporates all international laws and treaties as part of the Supreme Law of the US. Currently there are no domestic or international mechanisms able to effectively restrain its lawlessness.

Historically, the 1979 people-powered Nicaragua revolution broke the long chain of US-supported oligarchic control over the nation. After the FSLN defeat in 1990, the "Liberal" oligarchs quickly dismantled the revolutionary gains. But in 2006, after 16 years they were voted out of power. The revolutionary goals of the Sandinista Government once again have made incredible gains in health care, education, roads, bridges, granting land titles, housing, electricity distribution, renewable energy, and reduction of poverty. It is imperative that the Nicaragua people remain vigilant and courageously resistant to preserve their peace.

Most of the world, and most Nicaraguans, know the ugly nature of US policy. The Nicaragua social democracy is an example for others to emulate, which is why it poses such a threat to the US. Only Nicaraguans can preserve their sacred autonomy. It is a shame that the US solidarity movement is so weak that there was not one vote in Congress to oppose the damaging, unilateral US sanctions imposed on the country, a real shame. But, let's hope that radically changes soon.

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Related NicaNotes Briefs

US Does Not Rule Out Military Option in Nicaragua
Although "focused on resolving Nicaragua's crisis through political, economic and diplomatic action," Washington "does not rule out any other option, including the military option," Ambassador Todd Robinson, the U.S. special envoy for Central America, said Monday in Madrid. Robinson met this Monday with representatives of the Spanish government, as part of his contacts with European allies to analyze the internal conflict in Nicaragua. As he did last week in Brussels, the State Department representative insisted that the United States supports dialogue in Nicaragua; that sanctions against the government will continue; and that Washington calls for "prompt, free and fair elections." The US continues to apply a policy of sanctions and restrictions on investments in the country by international financial institutions, according to Robinson.

The US demands "the release of all political prisoners," which Robinson put at between 800 and 1,000, while at the same time minimizing the recent release of a hundred prisoners as "the vast majority remain under house arrest." Ambassador Robinson said he was convinced that the dialogue process, which has the support of the opposition, the Holy See and some U.S. allies, "is going to work." (La Prensa, 3/17/19)

Nicaragua Refuses OAS "Peace Mission"
On Aug. 30 the Organization of American States with barely a plurality approved a "peace commission" to report back in 75 days on Nicaragua. Nicaragua rejected the commission as an illegitimate interference in its internal affairs in violation of the OAS Charter. The commission, made up of the United States, Canada, Argentina, Paraguay, and Jamaica announced it would travel to Nicaragua Sept. 16-17. Reuters reported that the Nicaragua government informed all airlines that the delegation would not be allowed to enter the country. The so-called crisis in Nicaragua ended over a year ago. Nicaragua has been calm and the economy, including tourism, has been recovering rapidly. The only place the crisis still exists is in the minds of the corporate media and institutions controlled by the US government which funded the failed coup. (Reuters, Sept. 15)

Opposition Electoral News and History Repeating Itself
The public announcement that the UNAB-MRS (Sandinista Renovation Movement) and the Alianza Civica were separating fell like a bucket of cold water among their US sponsors, so they were called to meet in El Salvador Jan. 14 and 15 to convince them to go together in the 2021 elections. If not, there will be no more financing from the US and Europe. This is the same US strategy as in the lead up to the 1984 elections with the Nicaraguan opponents at the time, and the Contras and the same escalation: before it was war, now it is sanctions.

The then Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinator accepted, conditionally, to go to the 1984 elections, protected by US direct interference through war and total economic blockade. Just like now, the State Department alleged doubts about the electoral process and demanded that the armed Contras participate in a dialogue and be recognized and that the elections be supervised. The US appointed

Richard Stone as an itinerant ambassador to pressure the region, the US dynamited the Nicaraguan ports. In 1984 The US demanded the Nicaragua government dialogue with the Contras, today they demand Nicaragua dialogue with the opposition Civic Alliance.

In 1984 the US named Arturo Cruz Porras and Adam Fletes Valle as the presidential formula, but knowing that they would lose they increased demands on the government which, if not met they would not participate in the elections. Years later they accepted they had done this on order of Washington and that was a political miscalculation (7 parties participated in the 1984 elections which the Sandinistas won). Will they do the same in 2021? (Informe Pastran, 1/15/20)

US Pressure Unified Opposition, For Now
US pressure in a meeting in El Salvador on Jan. 14 and 15 seems to have worked: On Jan.17 a sector of the opposition, divided into several groups, announced that the UNAB-MRS and the Civic Alliance will join under a new political umbrella to participate in the 2021 elections, but without specifying how (with which organizations and in which political party's box). They have changed their colors from Blue and White, the national colors which no party is allowed to use as their party colors, to light blue and white. (Informe Pastran, 1/17/20)

Nicaragua Most Secure Country in Central America
A recent study published by the InSight Crime research center finds Nicaragua has one of the lowest homicide rates in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to this research Nicaragua ranks fourth in Latin America with 7.5 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, a rate only surpassed by Ecuador, Argentina and Chile. In Central America, Honduras is the nation with the highest homicide rate with 41.2, followed by El Salvador with 36 homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants, Guatemala has 21.5 and Costa Rica 11 homicides, respectively. Nicaragua surpasses countries in safety like Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Panama, Brazil, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Colombia and Jamaica, among others. In the case of Nicaragua, after an increase in violence in 2018 due to the attempted coup, the levels recorded in 2019 fell to the levels of 2017 and 2016. (Informe Pastran, 2/5/20)

Nicaragua Denounces US aggression at the UN
On Feb. 27 at the United Nations Human Rights Council, Nicaragua denounced that the US Government continues to apply sanctions with impunity, violating the basic principles for respectful coexistence among nations. The Nicaraguan representative, Valdrack Jaentschke, said that the aggressions violate the human rights of the peoples. He called on the international community to demand the US government suspend sanctions and aggressions, which would contribute to respect for the human rights of the peoples and to peace. Jaentschke said that the Sandinista government continues to work for the restitution of political, social, economic, cultural and environmental rights of Nicaraguans, which is recognized by the international community. (Radiolaprimerisima, 2/27/20)

No Votes Against Nicaragua in the Organization of American States
The Nicaraguan opposition has suffered another defeat with the declarations of the Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro to Andrés Oppenheimer in CNN, assuring that there is no statement from the OAS saying that the government of Nicaragua is not legitimate. In November 2019, in declarations to CNN, Almagro had said that the objective of the OAS was not to expel, nor suspend Nicaragua from the inter-American organization, and that the US could never get the votes to invoke the Democratic Charter. Almagro said the objective should be the elections for 2021, "… it is not the fundamental objective (to get Nicaragua out of the OAS)." This totally contradicts the discourse of the Nicaraguan opposition. (Informe Pastran, 3/3/20)

The Complicit Role of Human Rights Organizations In The 2018 Attempted Coup In Nicaragua

Camilo Mejía

There is an old adage in the Spanish-speaking world that is quite pertinent to the complicity of human rights organizations in Western imperialism: *las mentiras tienen patas cortas*, or "lies have short legs." One would think once a lie has been widely uncovered amends would be made; one would be wrong about most leading international human rights organizations, among them the Organization of American State's Interamerican Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International (AI), to name some of the main ones.

These leading human rights organizations are largely funded by citizens of Western powers, especially the United States and Great Britain. They lend, or rather sell, their prestige to legitimize biased reports, which are then cited by the US and UK governments, in order to build consensus around interventionist policies all over the world, including economic sanctions, regime change, and military invasions and occupations. The countries targeted by these *premier* human rights agencies, are oftentimes led by democratically elected, progressive governments, whose people-centered policies stand as a direct challenge to the neoliberal economic world order, as is the case of Nicaragua, Cuba, and Venezuela, among others.

Amnesty International is a prime example; after leaving the organization's Board of Directors, world renown human rights activist and international law professor, Francis Boyle, wrote the following:

> Based upon my over sixteen years of experience having dealt with Amnesty International London and Amnesty International USA at the highest levels, it is clear to me that both organizations (…) function as tools for the imperialist, colonial and genocidal policies of the United States, Britain, and Israel.[65]

Professor Boyle's full statement lays bare not only that the protection of human rights is not a top priority for Amnesty International, but also that the organization often paves the way to, or completely ignores human rights violations, depending on what best suits the organization's principal donors. He writes from his personal experience as an insider when he denounces AI's complicity with Israel's human rights violations in Palestine, South African apartheid, the US/UK invasions of Iraq, the silencing of indigenous voices in Canada and the violation of human rights in Puerto Rico, to name a few.

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[65] Boyle, Francis, Amnesty International: Imperialist Tool (October 23, 2012). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2324944 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2324944

Just as Amnesty's complicity with genocidal policies all over the world has been publicly exposed, the present chapter will expose the complicity of AI and other leading human rights agencies with US regime change in Nicaragua. The article selection will help readers understand how leading international human rights organizations, working in coordination with their equally corrupt local counterparts, have worked on behalf of their funder, the United States government, to destabilize the country and ultimately overthrow its president, Comandante Daniel Ortega Saavedra.

The following pieces have all been written by independent writers, mostly from Nicaragua, the US and the UK, on a volunteer basis and for the sole purpose of providing readers with an honest account of how human rights organizations, national and international, have been instrumentalized to facilitate US regime change in Nicaragua. Starting with the first article, readers gain a comprehensive review of *Dismissing the Truth*, an in-depth analysis of Amnesty International's two highly biased, uncorroborated reports, showing with numerous documented examples how Amnesty has intentionally painted a *false picture of the human rights situation in Nicaragua*, something, the author reminds us, the organization has done in the past. Moving through the chapter, readers will then be able to navigate through "… the practical bad faith, theoretical dishonesty, corporate co-optation and outright political bias of human rights institutions and organizations," taking a close look at the corruption of the various US- and EU-funded Nicaraguan human rights organizations, some which go back to the 1980s, when they were created and financed by the US to whitewash Contra atrocities.

Honoring the wisdom of the old adage, *las mentiras tienen patas cortas*, the chapter will begin with a detailed account of the loss of legitimacy of "…the 'human rights' bodies whose reports gave the [death] figures credibility." Readers will learn that it was directors within the 'human rights' groups themselves who, merely a year after the violence ended, pointed their fingers at one another while their organizations fell apart.

The chapter ends with a selection of Briefs that shed light on the many lies maliciously concocted by Nicaraguan human rights organizations and adopted by their international homologues, all in the service of US regime change. Starting with a detailed analysis of the reasons Amnesty International refuses to listen to criticism about its work in Nicaragua, the briefs then get into the Sandinista government's efforts to protect the rights of the very prisoners who attempted to overthrow it, the massacres committed by the opposition - all omitted by international human rights agencies - and the fallacy of "political asylees" fleeing their crimes under the guise of political persecution. The Briefs are a great complement to the Chapter, as they provide even more comprehensive evidence of the human rights industry's complicity in US regime change in Nicaragua, showing that regardless of all the money and power in the world, their lies can only get so far before they are widely exposed.

NicaNotes: Dismissing the Truth Debunks Amnesty International's Misleading Reports

By Chuck Kaufman, February 27, 2019
https://afgj.org/nicanotes-dismissing-the-truth-debunks-amnesty-internationals-misleading-reports?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=270c12cc-75d6-432c-a3eb-ecc66f4096a6

On February 26, the Alliance for Global Justice and the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group (UK) released a report, *Dismissing the Truth*, that exhaustively rebuts two reports on human rights in Nicaragua in 2018 by Amnesty International. The Amnesty International reports accuse the democratically-elected government of Nicaragua of "a strategy of indiscriminate repression." *Dismissing the Truth* is a 55-page report researched and written for the US and UK historic Nicaragua solidarity groups by an independent group of people based both in Nicaragua and in the US/UK. It uses eye-witness accounts, reports from government and human rights bodies, media analysis and knowledge of the places where events highlighted by AI took place, to examine AI's analysis and claims.

Our new report, *Dismissing the Truth,* not only refutes the claims made by Amnesty International about the period of mid-April to mid-July of 2018, but shows that the evidence they produce is biased, incomplete and in several cases simply wrong. The Nicaraguan government was accused by AI of using 'arbitrary detention' and 'excessive, disproportionate and unnecessary force' against a basically unarmed, peaceful opposition.

Dismissing the Truth shows that:

- The city of Masaya was the subject of armed siege by opposition forces for several weeks. AI claims that the government, in ending this siege, used indiscriminate and lethal force and also pro-government armed forces. We explain how, given the failure of peace negotiations, the police were obliged to use armed force to free Masaya from heavily armed actors who had declared their 'independence' from the national government.
- Serious events in the town of Morrito on July 12 are omitted from Amnesty International's timeline and unmentioned in the report. The opposition made an unprovoked attack on the police station and town hall, killing four policemen and a teacher and kidnapping and torturing nine others.
- Amnesty International reports that use of heavy weapons was 'limited' when they were actually widespread, as is obvious from the fact that 22 police officers were killed and 401 injured by bullets, quite apart from deaths and injuries to civilians.
- Amnesty International wrongly asserts that a police officer killed during the violence was the subject of a possible 'extrajudicial execution' by the government for deserting his post. In fact, he was killed by opposition sniper fire, along with a colleague, while carrying out his duties. We explain the details of events surrounding his death.
- Other cases of alleged 'extrajudicial execution' or 'arbitrary detention' cited by AI can be shown either to be false or to present conflicting evidence. In each case, AI virtually ignores any evidence that contradicts their pre-existing beliefs about the situation.

Dismissing the Truth includes a case study of one region of Nicaragua showing how AI might have carried out a balanced appraisal of the violence and who caused it. It shows that, over a similar period to that covered by AI reports, half the deaths reported as linked to the protests in

this region had other causes, and of the protest-linked deaths, all but one resulted from opposition violence.

Dismissing the Truth concludes that AI completely fails to establish its case that there is "a strategy of indiscriminate repression" on the part of the Nicaraguan government. As an independent human rights body, Amnesty International (AI) should have taken a different approach, making a balanced assessment of the scale and nature of human rights abuses, ascribing responsibility correctly between the opposition and the government.

Based on the evidence in *Dismissing the Truth,* Alliance for Global Justice and the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group both urge Amnesty International either to make a radical change in its approach to judging human rights issues in Nicaragua, or to desist from publishing further reports.

Amnesty International's protocol fails to incorporate the violence and human rights violations of non-State actors resulting in deeply flawed reports that lack real-world context. I remember when I started at Nicaragua Network in 1987 how angry we would get when Amnesty would publish a new report about alleged Nicaraguan government human rights violations that virtually ignored the fact that the country was at war with a terrorist force that was funded by the United States to commit acts of terror, including assassination, arson, kidnapping, etc.; many of the same tactics employed by the opposition in 2018. Knowingly or unknowingly, Amnesty International's outmoded protocols, in the era of "low intensity warfare," not only paint a false picture of the human rights situation in Nicaragua, Venezuela, and other countries targeted by the US for regime change, they actually act to support the Empire's goals for global dominance.

Human Rights have been co-opted to serve regime change in Nicaragua and other countries

By Stephen Sefton, January 5, 2019
https://popularresistance.org/human-rights-has-been-co-opted-to-serve-regime-change-in-nicaragua-and-other-countries/

Since the demise of the Soviet Union, almost 30 years ago, abuse and debasement of human rights concerns have served increasingly to create pretexts promoting Western dominance around the world. From former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, to Iraq and Sudan, to Ivory Coast, Libya and Syria, to Myanmar and Ukraine, Western governments have used nongovernmental human rights organizations and abuse of the United Nations system to attack countries resisting the demands of US and allied elites and the governments they control. In Latin America, that dynamic has long targeted Cuba, more recently Venezuela, now Nicaragua and will soon attack Mexico too, if the new progressive government there shows too much independence. The US and European elites have stepped up their efforts at regime change in Latin America and the Caribbean so as to guarantee access to and control of the region's abundant natural resources, because Chinese and Russian influence is blocking their accustomed control of the majority world in Eurasia and Africa.

Like Venezuela previously, Nicaragua has been targeted by the US dominated Organization of American States using local US and European funded non-profit proxies inside Nicaragua and Western corporate dominated non-governmental organizations. They have manipulated international and regional human rights institutions so as to violate fundamental precepts of international law like self-determination and non-intervention. Just as in the 1980s in Nicaragua,

Angola, Mozambique and elsewhere, and now both Venezuela and Nicaragua again, violent armed non-governmental actors have been used to destabilize the country and create a context allowing false reporting of human rights concerns so as to discredit revolutionary governments.

As independent US writer Max Blumenthal pointed out in an interview in July last year, "…how I know that there was a regime change operation afoot – and when I say "regime change operation," I mean an attack not just on a government but on the nation-state, a plan to reduce a country to a failed state like Libya – is that Ken Roth surfaced after the Nicaraguan government had essentially won and removed the roadblocks, allowing the economy which had bled $500 million to start functioning again, allowing citizens to start moving around. Ken Roth, the dictator of Human Rights Watch, who has been in the same position for 25 years, catering to a small cadre of billionaires and elite foundations with almost no constituency base, blamed the government for every single death. Meaning that zero Sandinistas died according to Ken Roth."

Blumenthal's insight into the inextricable relationship between human rights NGOs and Western corporate elites suggests a series of points which categorically undermine glib acceptance of false human rights accusations against Nicaragua. The Inter-American Commission for Human Rights, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are all guilty of extreme bad faith, non-compliance with basic norms and adherence to long discredited theoretical nostrums. In effect, they are themselves all accomplices to very serious human rights violations by Nicaragua's US-directed armed opposition. Four main considerations apply.

Firstly, on technical grounds none of these organizations have adhered even to the Huridocs guidelines, a tool created by and for Western government and corporate funded human rights organizations. The guidelines propose concepts and good practice in relation to fact-finding, documentation and monitoring of human rights violations. The IACHR, the UNOHCHR. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have categorically failed to comply with the HURIDOCS guidelines. In terms of fact finding, they systematically omit sources and facts that contradict or exclude their preferred finding. In terms of documentation, they systematically exclude abundant documentation from Nicaraguan government ministries, from the public prosecutor's office, from the legislature's Truth and Justice Commission, from the Institute of Legal Medicine and from the Office of the Procurator for Human Rights.

All that information to a greater or lesser extent contradicts the bogus fact finding of the OAS, the UN and foreign NGOs. In terms of monitoring the situation in Nicaragua, those institutions and organizations depend exclusively on virulently politically biased local media, NGOs and opposition activists. So even on their own terms, their methodology does not comply with basic concepts and standards and, thus, the kinds of cases they have built to justify their findings would never stand up to impartial legal scrutiny. One farcical aspect of their approach has been to accuse the Nicaraguan government of repressing local media when their main sources by far are abundant citations of false reports from those same local media, relayed via dishonest local human rights NGOs.

Secondly, in theoretical terms, the approach of the IACHR, the UNOHCHR and foreign NGOs like Amnesty International has been to exclude violations by non-State actors, exactly the same faithless alibi they all used during the Cold War. But that theoretical framework has been outdated since 1993 when the UN Human Rights Convention in Vienna explicitly recognized the role of non-State actors in human rights abuses (thus recognizing how the US government and its allies used irregular forces, like the Contra in Nicaragua, RENAMO in Mozambique and

UNITA in Angola, to apply systematic terrorism against civilian populations). As Carlos Emilio Lopez a leading Nicaraguan human rights activist and legislator has pointed out:

"In 1993, with the approval of the Vienna Declaration of Human Rights, the subject of respect for human rights was re-conceptualized. For many years it was considered that only States should respect human rights, but that understanding is already out of date. The reconceptualization of human rights is that States must respect human rights but companies, churches, organizations must also do so, social organizations, oligopolies, the media, people as individuals. In other words, we are all obliged to respect human rights, not only State institutions." Thus, every time Amnesty International or the IACHR claim their remit excludes non-State actors, they are appealing to a theoretical framework 30 years out of date deliberately so as to wash their hands of abuses by political actors with whom they sympathize.

Thirdly, specifically with regard to Amnesty International, their organization has been corrupted and co-opted over many years now by corporate influence via links through their senior personnel with corporate globalization advocates whose explicit aim is to undermine and diminish the role of sovereign nation states. Amnesty International's Secretary General and senior directors, their International Board and its Secretary General's Global Council freely advertise their background working either directly with multinational corporations, or with corporate funders or with other heavily corporate funded non-profits. In this, Amnesty International, like Human Rights Watch, is very similar to the Purpose/AVAAZ corporate human rights conglomerate. Their human rights activities are guided by emphatic neoliberal hostility to nation-State governments, such that their reporting deliberately sets out to exclude or discredit information from government or other official sources. More broadly in Latin American and the Caribbean, accompanying the encroaching cooptation of NGOs by corporate predators like Purpose, the overtly political Atlas network supports NGOs promoting extreme right wing policies across the region, thus facilitating the ascent to power of fascists like Jair Bolsonaro.

Fourthly, that corporate corruption and cooptation of Sean MacBride's original vision of the role and work of Amnesty International and similar organizations, is clearly manifest in their demonstrable bias in favor of US and allied countries' foreign policy priorities. In that regard, Professor Francis Boyle, among many others, has been an authoritative and trenchant critic of Amnesty International's role in Palestine and elsewhere, whereby it downplays or minimizes violations by States allied to NATO countries. On the other hand, institutions like the IACHR and the UNOHCHR and organizations like Amnesty International, systematically exaggerate and even invent violations in countries targeted by NATO member country governments. Thus in Latin America, the current horrific record of human rights violations in Colombia and, until AMLO, in Mexico, has been played down and minimized, while events in Cuba, Venezuela and now Nicaragua have been systematically misrepresented.

All these concerns about the practical bad faith, theoretical dishonesty, corporate cooptation and outright political bias of human rights institutions and organizations should give any intellectually honest person of progressive views pause. People genuinely concerned about human rights should reassess what they think they know about Nicaragua and about Venezuela too. The US and allied country corporate elites are determined to use the governments, institutions and NGOs they have bought, to destroy resistance to their domination in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the 60th anniversary this year of Cuba's revolution, together with the 40th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua and the 20th anniversary of Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution suggest they will not have things all their own way.

NicaNotes: Nicaraguan 'Human Rights' Director Accused by Staff of Massive Theft of US Taxpayer Money, Death Toll Inflation

By Nan McCurdy, August 7,2019
Reprinted from *The Grayzone*
https://afgj.org/nicanotes-nicaraguan-human-rights-director-accused-by-staff-of-massive-theft-of-us-taxpayer-money-death-toll-inflation, https://thegrayzone.com/author/nan-mccurdy/

ANPDH's board members are accusing their director of inflating death tolls and stealing huge sums from US soft power organizations during last year's coup attempt in Nicaragua. The OAS, which relied heavily on ANPDH's flawed data, has kept silent so far.

A year after a US-backed coup attempt rocked Nicaragua, a major scandal is unfolding over the alleged theft of half a million dollars in US taxpayer money by an organization at the center of the destabilization effort.

Three board members of the Nicaraguan Association for Human Rights (ANPDH) have denounced their former director Álvaro Leiva, accusing him of stealing almost half a million dollars in funding provided by the US government's National Endowment for Democracy and other US soft power outfits.

The board members have also accused Leiva of "altering the number of deaths and injuries in the ANPDH reports in order to ask for more money from North American donors, which totally invalidates the credibility of those reports," according to Nicaraguan journalist Adolfo Pastran.

During the regime-change attempt, which lasted from April 18 through July of 2018, ANPDH claims there were more than 400 dead, inflating the death toll by at least 150 and falsely blaming the government for each death. ANPDH also exaggerated the numbers of detained, wounded, and disappeared – of which there was only one – Bismarck Martinez, a Sandinista who was kidnapped on June 29, 2018, and found murdered in May of this year. Videos of the horrendous torture of Martinez were found on the cell phones of his torturers following their arrest.

As *The Grayzone* reported, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS) relied heavily on the flawed data of ANPDH in its own lopsided report on the 2018 crisis in Nicaragua.

The ANPDH was founded in Miami in 1986 under President Ronald Reagan to clean up the dirty war his CIA was waging against Nicaragua. Awarded an initial US$3 million from Congress in 1987, the group was charged with improving the human rights image of the US-backed Contras while zeroing in on alleged abuses by the Sandinista Front government. The ANPDH has received US funding ever since with a strong upswing in 2018, when the operation to topple President Daniel Ortega kicked into gear.

This July 23, ANPDH's board of directors placed a complaint against Leiva for stealing nearly a half million US dollars, falsifying signatures and altering financial reports.

Gustavo Bermúdez, a member of ANPDH's board said that included in the US$443,876 received by Leiva was US$45,000 in 2017 and US$60,000 in April 2018 from the US government's National Endowment for Democracy. He reaped an additional $28,876 received in

2017 from the US National Democratic Institute and $310,000 from the Open Society Foundations of anti-communist billionaire George Soros between 2017 and 2019.

Bermúdez is a journalist and widely recognized opponent of Ortega and the Sandinista Front, making the accusations more difficult to dismiss.

Leiva, for his part, says he is the "victim of a conspiracy" overseen by the "dictatorship" of Ortega that aims to punish him for his human rights work. He has attacked his former colleague, Bermúdez, as part of a "fifth column of sophisticated people who dress in sheep's clothes and are wolves in practice."

President of the Criminal bench of the Supreme Court Francisco Rosales said, in an interview with Nicaraguan journalist Adolfo Pastran, that Leiva's alleged actions violate the Criminal Code, the Constitution, and the law against terrorism and money laundering and are crimes prosecutable ex officio. "What has been said is very serious; they themselves have discredited their reports and confirmed that they put live people on their lists of dead," Rosales said.

Pastran said that Leiva could be accused of laundering money through two bank accounts in two Nicaraguan banks. He also noted, "Given the seriousness of the complaints against Leiva, none of the national newspapers, radio and TV stations that lauded the ANPDH reports on numbers of dead and shared them internationally, have said or printed a word".

"The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the Organization of American States (OAS) has not commented despite the fact that their reports were fed with information, now proven fraudulent, from the ANPDH, as well as the reports of Americas Watch, Amnesty International and the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, which would indicate that all those reports are flawed. Even some Catholic bishops who gave statements using ANPDH data are profoundly silent," Pastran noted.

"Leiva left Nicaragua in 2018 along with treasurers José Luis Rodríguez Reyes and Zaira Gabriela Hernández Espinoza with whom he formed a new non-governmental organization (NGO) in Costa Rica and with whom he intends to continue raising resources," Gustavo Bermúdez said.

NicaNotes: The rise and fall of Nicaragua's 'human rights' organizations

By John Perry, August 21, 2019
https://afgj.org/nicanotes-the-rise-and-fall-of-nicaraguas-human-rights-organizations

When political conflict results in people being killed – especially at the hands of a government – the deaths are not just personal tragedies, they are propaganda material. This happened during last year's attempted coup in Nicaragua: the alleged death toll was repeated in practically every international media report and invariably blamed on the Ortega government, its police or supporters. A year after the violence ended, not only have the 'human rights' bodies whose reports gave the figures credibility begun to tell the truth about what they did, they've also started to fall apart as the supply of dollars dries up.

The Grayzone reported last month on the most dramatic break-up, that of the Nicaragua Association for Human Rights (ANPDH). But it is just a part of a veritable human rights industry in Nicaragua, a country of only six million people. Until recently three local bodies claimed to

monitor human rights, all three doing so using foreign funding. The oldest, the Permanent Commission on Human Rights (CPDH for its initials in Spanish) dates from before Nicaragua's 1979 revolution, and receives funding from the US National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The ANPDH was set up in Miami with $3 million from the Reagan administration in the 1980s, with the aim of whitewashing the violence of the US-backed 'Contra' forces that were attempting to overthrow the Sandinista government. And the third, CENIDH (Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights), was set up with European funding in 1990, headed by an ex-FSLN member, Vilma Nuñez de Escorcia.

None of the three bodies have attempted to be politically neutral and all were opposed to the Sandinista government well before last year's coup attempt. But when it began last April, they were a key part of the opposition's propaganda machine. CENIDH and ANPDH, in particular, published regular reports whose bias is made obvious by the language: CENIDH, for example, regularly refers to the Nicaraguan government, elected in 2016, as the 'dictatorial regime' of Daniel Ortega and (vice-president) Rosario Murillo. Its initial report, issued on May 4, already exaggerated the numbers of deaths by recording six fatalities on the first day of the violence (April 19), all but one attributed to the government, when in fact there were only three: a police officer, a Sandinista defending a town hall from attack, and an uninvolved bystander. By late July CENIDH's fifth report logged 302 deaths, all attributed to 'state terrorism'.

By the same date, its rival ANPDH was reporting no less than 448 deaths in 'civic protests', a figure repeated by many international news sources and by the UNHCR. By early September, ANPDH's death count had reached 481. Álvaro Leiva, ANPDH director categorized the deaths with remarkable confidence and specificity: 152 died in 'random executions', 116 in 'planned executions', 86 in 'disproportionate' clashes between government forces and civilians, 57 in 'selective executions', 36 deaths 'appear to be planned and executed by hooded and armed paramilitaries', and only eight were unexplained. By the end of the same month in which there was very little violence, ANPDH's death toll – all blamed on the government – had reached 512.

By early July last year, the accounts published by the 'human rights' bodies had already started to unravel. Enrique Hendrix, a resident of Managua, went systematically through the lists to produce a report he called Monopolizing death: Or how to frame a government by inflating a list of the dead. He found, for example, that CENIDH's list included a suicide, traffic accidents and various duplications or unexplained deaths. In total, of the 167 deaths included in their early reports, just 31% (51 people) were actually protesters who had died in the conflict. In the case of ANPDH, who by that stage had logged 285 deaths, only 20% (58) were confirmed as being protesters.

The report Dismissing the Truth – which responded to Amnesty International's totally unbalanced and poorly researched investigations of last year's violence – examined in detail the casualty lists produced by the 'human rights' bodies relating to the central regions of Nicaragua. It found that more than half the deaths recorded by ANPDH were wrongly attributed to the conflict.

By September, Amnesty International was referring to 322 deaths, 'most at the hands of state agents', based on the counts by IACHR and the local bodies. Its second report on the conflict perversely accused the government of 'challenging the information put forward by human rights organizations' as if their casualty lists should simply have been uncritically accepted. Of course, the whole point of examining and challenging the lists was precisely because they were part of

the propaganda drive against the Ortega government, referred to in practically every international media report on the crisis and cited as authoritative by international bodies, including detailed references to ANPDH by the UN Commission for Human Rights in its 2018 report on Nicaragua.

In February 2019, the National Assembly's Truth Commission was able to issue a final report on the death toll from the attempted coup which, after exhaustive analysis of the different sources, confirmed the total number of conflict-related deaths as 253, less than half that claimed by ANPDH six months before. These consisted of 31 known supporters of the opposition, 48 probable or actual Sandinista supporters, 22 police and the remainder (152) of unknown affiliation.

But 2019 has turned out to be a bad year for the three 'human rights' bodies. Two, ANPDH and CENIDH, were found by the government to have violated their own statutes and their registration as NGOs was terminated. Some of their functionaries fled to Costa Rica. CPDH continues, but its lawyer María Oviedo was arrested recently when, in a visit to a police station in support of a leading opposition member who had been found to have an unregistered firearm, she slapped a police officer. The officials of the other two bodies are fighting among themselves. A director of CENIDH, Gonzalo Carrión, having tried to open a new NGO in Costa Rica, was denied support by his ex-colleagues who feared he would receive the outside donations that used to go to CENIDH.

The plight of the former staff members of ANPDH is even worse. The former general secretary, Álvaro Leiva, was given asylum in Costa Rica last October, a move welcomed by the IAHCR's Paulo Abrão who had in June awarded him "protective measures". However, as The Grayzone reported, Leiva has also attempted to open a new NGO in Costa Rica, to which his ex-colleagues have also responded by accusing him of appropriating funds supplied by US bodies such as the NED. More importantly, they have accused Leiva of requiring them to inflate ANPDH's casualty counts last year, because he believed this would help to secure extra funding from the US. ANPDH director Gustavo Bermúdez, in a press conference ignored by the right-wing media, acknowledged that ANPDH had inflated the death toll relating to last year's violence, including in its list even elderly people who had died of natural causes.

In recent years, ANPDH received over $88,000 from the NED (and at least $348,000 from other US sources). CPDH received $180,000 from the NED in 2018 alone (out of NED spending of $1.8 million that year, to promote Nicaragua's opposition bodies). Of course, far from being genuinely committed to promoting human rights, the NED sees these local bodies as one element of a regime-change strategy. They are propaganda weapons, but with a useful image as respected human rights champions standing up to 'dictatorial' regimes.

Such bodies used to be subject to much closer scrutiny and called out for their role in opposing revolutionary change. Human Rights Watch, at the time called Americas Watch, gave ANPDH very little credibility in 1989 not long after it first opened. Americas Watch said it was "for all intents and purposes a US State Department funded arm of the Nicaraguan Resistance" (the latter was the formal name of the US-backed Contra forces fighting the Sandinista government). The left-leaning political magazine Envío was highly critical of both CPDH and ANPDH in the 1980s. It described Lino Hernández, then director of the CPDH, as coming from the 'far right'. Commenting on the $3 million ANPDH received from the US government, it asked 'What kind of human rights watchdogging has the ANPDH done with all this money? Hardly a whimper, much less a bark.'

Thirty years later, much has changed. When ANPDH and CENIDH lost their registration last year, HRW said that "Public officials repeatedly made stigmatizing statements to undermine the credibility of [human rights] defenders." As noted earlier, AI does not even accept the Nicaraguan government's right to analyze the death counts produced by human rights bodies. Envío magazine has become an unflinching critic of the Ortega government and supporter of CENIDH.

Nicaragua's local 'human rights' bodies have provided HRW and AI with evidence that fits their own prejudices about the Ortega government. While these local bodies need publicity from HRW and AI to maintain their profile, for their funding they need to show organizations like the NED that they are useful agents of regime change. With the failure of last year's coup attempt, it's said that NED is already diverting funds away from Nicaragua and towards Venezuela. CDPH, ANPDH and CENIDH are in disarray now that the coup attempt they supported has collapsed. Are we seeing the death-throws of the three organizations, with their very biased views of what constitutes human rights in Nicaragua?

Related NicaNotes News Briefs

Amnesty International and Nicaragua: Why does AI refuse to listen to criticism about its work?
Amnesty International has repeatedly criticized Daniel Ortega's government, disregarding its massive achievements in tackling real human rights issues in Nicaragua such as significantly reducing levels of severe poverty, massively improving health services and addressing gender inequality. Why is Amnesty International doing this? And why does it reject any criticism and fail to respond when it gets things wrong? In this briefing written for Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group (NSCAG) by John Perry, an NSC member living in Nicaragua, we look at AI's blinkered campaign over the past three years and its refusal to abide by its own rules. (http://www.nscag.org/resources/Amnesty%20International%20briefing.pdf)

Human rights of prisoners respected
Nicaragua Truth Commission Coordinator Dr. Cairo Amador announced that visits to the National Penitentiary System are being organized to ensure respect for human rights of the individuals charged with crimes during the failed coup attempt of last April. "The Commission has verified that the Nicaragua government is guaranteeing full respect for the human rights of prisoners, ensuring they receive medical attention as well as visits of relatives, spouses and friends," Amador said. (Nicaragua News, 1/10/19)

Prisoner Human Rights Respected
Nicaraguan Human Rights Ombudsman and member of the Truth Commission, Dr. Adolfo Jarquín, said the National Penitentiary System is guaranteeing full respect for human rights of those involved in the failed coup attempt. "The Commission has verified that the Nicaraguan government is guaranteeing respect for the human rights of prisoners, ensuring they receive medical attention as well as visits of relatives, spouses and friends," Jarquín said. (Nicaragua News 1/23/19)

Nicaragua Sent Costa Rica a Note Related to Police Massacre
The Nicaragua Foreign Affairs Ministry sent a Diplomatic Note to the Costa Rican government demanding greater protection along the shared border. "The Nicaragua Government demands from the Government of Costa Rica the fulfillment of its international commitments to provide guarantees in the protection of the border from the Costa Rican side, in order to avoid criminal activities by groups operating from Costa Rica in Nicaragua territory," the Diplomatic Note states. This was in

response to the massacre of four police by a gang that operates from Costa Rica. They also kidnapped a policeman. (Nicaragua News 1/23/19)

Prisoner Human Rights Respected
The Nicaragua Ministry of Governance and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), signed a cooperation agreement to strengthen protection for the human rights of all prisoners in the National Penitentiary System. Minister of Governance Maria Coronel said the agreement is part of the efforts undertaken by the government to ensure full respect for the human rights of all prisoners. (Nicaragua News, 3/8/19)

Human rights of prisoners respected
The Ministry of Governance reported that the Nicaragua government is guaranteeing full respect for the human rights of all prisoners in the National Penitentiary System. “Between March 9 and 15, the National Penitentiary System authorized 7,500 visits, 538 judicial diligences, 133 medical appointments and 10 medical emergencies. Likewise, 39 religious services were held during this period,” the official report states. (Nicaragua News, Mar. 19)

Truth, Justice and Peace Commission Clarify Numbers of Detained
On March 26, the Truth, Justice and Peace Commission (CVJP) challenged the data on detainees issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and a committee of people involved in the 2018 coup attempt. During a press conference, Jaime López Lowery stated that the commission verified that 261 people are currently being detained, contrary to the IACHR’s list of 647 inmates handed over to the Nicaraguan government. Lowery explained that of the 386 prisoners remaining from IACHR data, CVJP members stated that 152 have been released, 61 are not linked to the conflict, 54 do not have complete personal information, “which makes it impossible to verify their real state”; 112 are not in any penitentiary or police establishment and seven names are duplicated. (Radio La Primerisima, 3/27/19)

The Castle of Opposition Lies Tumbles Down
The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has released the reconciled list of persons imprisoned in the context of the socio-political crisis that originated in Nicaragua in April last year. The number verified by the Red Cross is 290 “political prisoners” of which 200 have already been released to house arrest. The Red Cross’s authoritative count reveals the crude lies of sectors of the opposition united in the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy (ACJD) and the Blue and White National Unity (UNAB). According to their reports, communiqués and a media campaign unleashed in social networks and other media, the number of “political prisoners” ranged between 600 and 900 people. Using this false data, including the claim that more than 1,000 people have been disappeared, the opposition has launched international campaigns calling for new and more forceful sanctions against Nicaragua. Unfortunately, the most radical sectors of the opposition again suspended dialogue with the government on April 3 and called for demonstrations. (Giorgio Truccio, ALAI, 4/5/19)

Human rights of prisoners protected
The Ministry of Governance reported that the Nicaragua government is guaranteeing full respect for the human rights of all prisoners in the National Penitentiary System. “Between April 22-26, the National Penitentiary System authorized 7,521 visits, 366 judicial proceedings, 3,776 telephone calls and 4,200 medical attentions,” the official report states. (Nicaragua News, May 1)

New Documentary about the Massacre in Morrito
In the town of Morrito, Department of Rio San Juan, the opposition massacred four police and a school teacher on June 12, 2018. A new documentary about this was released June 4. This is the seventh documentary in the series Keys of the Truth. The title of this chapter is “*Matar y Mentir, el Plan en Morrito*” (“Kill and Lie, The Morrito Plan”). NicaNotes covered this extensively at the time as

did journalist John Perry. To see the videos, go to Youtube, put in “Juventud Presidente, 180 degrees of the Truth” and scroll down. The documentaries are under 30 minutes and are excellent. Four are now available in English. I am listing below some of those in English:
Searching Through the Ashes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myr9yYMpsbM ,
Fire at Carlos Marx: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cz6kJ-tRNJI ,
Murder of the Journalist Angel Gahona: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfBiqo0oCxU,
Mafias Exposed: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONw1Y4UZ6Ek (Canal 6, Youtube, Juventud Presidente, 6/3/19)

Nicaraguan Human Rights Association Inflated Numbers of Dead to get Funding
Three members of the board of directors of the Nicaraguan Pro-Human Rights Association (ANPDH) placed a complaint against the former executive director Alvaro Leiva for inflating the deaths, the number of detained and the wounded during the 2018 coup attempt in order to raise more money from US donors. They also denounced him for stealing nearly a half million dollars, falsifying signatures and records.

The Directors of the ANPDH are planning an internal audit to clarify the use and destination of the almost $500,000 dollars. Former director Alvaro Leiva did not account for the money and he remains in Costa Rica denying his guilt. In addition, the group’s board decided to replace Leiva and other directors based on absence. They will notify the Ministry of Interior to rescind the positions of Roberto Solorzano, President and Leiva, Executive Director. (Informe Pastran, 7/29/19, 7/25/19)

Nicaragua And The Media In 2019: A Polarised Picture

John Perry

Look at the media in 2019 and the first part of 2020 and – depending where you look – Nicaragua seems to have become two completely different countries. In one, the economy is slowly recovering from the events of 2018, peace has returned, people are relieved that the violence and roadblocks are behind them, and support for the government has steadily grown since its 2018 low point. In the other, a country with a devastated economy suffers from a repressive and unpopular dictatorship: people either knuckle under or flee to Costa Rica. I hasten to add that I live in the first of these versions of Nicaragua, but I'm constantly astonished at the picture painted by those – often outside the country – who think that the real Nicaragua is the second one.

In 2018, while the battle on the ground was conducted at the roadblocks, an even more important battle took place in the media. As we recorded in Live from Nicaragua, the essence of the media campaign was to portray the opponents of the Sandinista government as 'peaceful protesters', mainly students, who had suffered hundreds of deaths which were all, or almost all, the responsibility of the government. Anyone who wanted to present a more objective picture, let alone those who were government officials or supporters, struggled to get heard. Yet the reality was in fact much more complicated: many protesters were lethally armed, much of the violence was their fault and many more of the victims were Sandinista supporters, innocent bystanders or police than were 'students' or other protestors. Live from Nicaragua presented the evidence for this in detail.

As this chapter will show, in 2019 and 2020 the media battle shifted its focus somewhat, even though there is still a desire to gloss over the opposition's violence. Now that the violent coup attempt is in the past and peace has returned, the media focus is on claiming that appearances are deceptive, dissent has been squashed, the government's political opponents are in exile or in prison, opposition media are repressed and the few people who support the government only do so out of fear. Evidence to the contrary – for example, opinion poll findings that show the government's support is growing and high levels of rejection of the tactics used by the opposition in 2018 – are simply discounted or ignored.

Tackling this false image of present-day Nicaragua has been a big part of the media battle. Another has been to ascertain the truth of what happened in 2018 and present the evidence, especially to the Nicaraguan people but also abroad. In this, official bodies, government supporters and some independent investigators have been very active, uncovering the real stories behind some of the worst violence. The opposition-supporting media – and the mainstream international press – have ignored such investigations, sticking to the versions of events that were concocted immediately after they took place in 2018. Well-known examples of opposition violence, ones whose responsibility cannot be disputed, are still treated as if they didn't happen.

Elsewhere I have written about the disappearance from the mainstream media of journalists of the calibre of Seymour Hersh who revealed the My Lai massacre. While regions of the world on which political attention is now focussed, such as the Middle East, still have local correspondents with specialist knowledge, the days when a NYT journalist such as Raymond Bonner could spend months in El Salvador have long gone (Bonner was taken off El Salvador by the NYT for uncovering the El Mozote massacre; Gary Webb and others uncovered the truth about how the US funded the Contra war against Nicaragua in the 1980s, and Webb was marginalised and met an early death.) In their place we have the deplorable situation where journalists who should know better make short visits to the country, appear to accept without question the stories presented to them by Nicaragua's opposition, and feel little need to look below the surface. This created what quickly became the consensus narrative about Nicaragua in 2018 and which persists into 2020.

One example of this is Jon Lee Anderson, writing in the New Yorker, where Seymour Hersh was once its most distinguished reporter. He appears to have made two quick visits to Nicaragua in 2018. The title of Anderson's second story refers sardonically to the 'fake news' he was warned against by one Sandinista supporter, but which he dismisses. As a consequence, instead of checking whether what he was told about events in Masaya (the city where I live) was accurate, he falls for the opposition's fake news that the protestors there were armed only with 'homemade mortars and slingshots'. He either fails to discover or ignores crucial events in the city from May to July 2018 and doesn't ask basic questions. For example, if the opposition was unarmed, how did its forces hold the police station under siege for several weeks, making nightly attacks that killed three policemen and injured many others?

Another example comes from the *Irish Times*, which sent a journalist, Michael McCaughan, to Nicaragua in July 2019. His report, A revolution gone wrong, also from Masaya, paints a glowing picture of the work of a catholic priest, Edwin Roman, a 'slim, soft-spoken man,' during the opposition's violent occupation of the city. Yet his church, described as 'a meeting place and health post,' was actually a local headquarters for the armed groups. During the protests he was seen participating in the capture and blindfolding of government supporters. He was filmed in mid-July 2018 trying to cover up the murder of police officer, Gabriel Vado Ruíz, by eliminating the remains of the burned body at the scene of the crime. Vado Ruíz had been kidnapped and tortured for two days before he was killed; his body was burnt at one of the Masaya roadblocks.

The *Irish Times,* unlike most international media, could at least be forced to reassess the two reports written by McCaughan, because activists complained to the Irish press ombudsman who launched a formal investigation. The ombudsman reached what might be called an 'open verdict', saying he was unable to establish who had the correct facts about the situation in Nicaragua. But the process at least brought a halt to the *Irish Times'* most egregious reports. Other international media, such as the *New York Times, The Guardian* and the BBC, have largely ignored letters or complaints, as indeed have international NGOs like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. *The Guardian,* with no apparent irony, often repeats the maxim of its founding editor, CP Scott, that

‘facts are sacred’. In the case of Nicaragua, it appears that the maxim (and the facts) can be casually ignored.

A final curiosity about the media and the 2018 violence is how those Nicaraguan ‘journalists’ who either promoted the violence or attempted to disguise it are the ones who are now lauded internationally. *Live from Nicaragua* noted how Carlos Fernando Chamorro, the head of *Confidencial,* is heralded as an ‘independent’ journalist who is the only Nicaraguan member of the worldwide International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. Miguel Mora, head of *100% Noticias*, blamed for hundreds of deaths during the crisis, was one of the ‘journalists’ picked out on World Press Freedom Day in 2019 by the English branch of PEN International. His colleague Lucía Pineda was received by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in January, when she pleaded with him for tougher sanctions on Nicaragua, and he was ‘deeply moved’ by her ‘struggle to reclaim democracy’ in Nicaragua. Among other calumnies, Pineda deliberately promoted the lie that the town hall in Granada was burnt down on June 5 2018 by Sandinistas, rather than telling the truth, that the arsonists had travelled to Granada from the Masaya road blocks.

Sadly, so many of the bodies that promote the ‘freedom of the press’, such as PEN International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Index on Censorship, Article 19 and others, have themselves shown bias in who and what they support. As Steve Sweeney of the UK’s *Morning Star* has pointed out, in several cases this is because they are funded by bodies such as the National Endowment for Democracy and US Aid whose aims in promoting ‘democracy’ are to help fulfil the US’s regime-change agenda in countries with left-wing governments. In Nicaragua, this means praising the bravery and ‘independence’ of journalists who are little more than propagandists for regime change and are openly embraced by right wingers like Mike Pompeo.

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The remainder of this chapter looks in more detail at some aspects of media coverage over the last year and adds detail to the points I have just made.

As is shown in the first piece reprinted below, by Nora Mitchell and Nan McCurdy, those who portray themselves as ‘investigative journalists’ in the Nicaraguan context often have false credentials. For example, the Nicaraguan Carlos Fernando Chamorro (from a well-known and wealthy family in the media business), or the North American Carl David Goette Luciak (who wrote for *The Guardian* and the *Washington Post*) adopt little more than a veneer of investigation and objectivity beneath which they peddle the opposition’s lies.

Where investigative journalism still takes place is in left-wing media such as *Counterpunch, The Grayzone, Popular Resistance, Mintpress News* and (for Latin America) COHA (the Council on Hemispheric Affairs). Excellent investigations have been carried out in Nicaragua by Dick and Miriam Emanuelsson and, locally, by the government-supporting *Juventud Presidente*. Such investigations have been important in uncovering the truth about the most serious incidents in 2018, such as the house fire

in Managua on June 16 which killed several members of the same family, or the attack on the police station in Morrito on July 12 which left four police officers and a teacher dead. The contrast between the explanation for the house fire given by the local and international media (and human rights bodies), and what really happened, is examined in the second piece, *A year after Nicaragua's coup, the media's regime change deceptions are still unravelling*.

The urge to portray Nicaragua as living under a repressive regime became almost farcical when a British TV series, *Unreported world*, turned its attention to Nicaragua. Its reporter, clearly unfamiliar with Nicaragua, was filmed hiding in fear from police in Managua, a city where everyone moves freely, including leaders of the groups who opposed the government in 2018. The third piece, *'Unreported World' and the misreporting of Nicaragua*, shows just how unquestioning journalists can be.

Biased reporting, accompanied by lazy acceptance of what the opposition says, is not confined to events in 2018 but even extends to recent incidents that have nothing to do with the attempted coup, if they can be used to denigrate the Sandinista government. This happened in February and March 2020 in the coverage of land disputes in the Bosawás region. The fourth piece, *While Nicaragua returns to peace, media and international NGOs conjure epidemic of violence with dubious reporting,* shows how an incident involving four fatalities became (in the words of one commentator) 'a tragic epidemic of violence' affecting the whole country.

Finally, the fact that the world is suffering from a real epidemic – resulting from the coronavirus – has provided the latest material for concocting false news stories and attacking the Sandinista government. The fifth piece looks at the concerted effort to portray Nicaragua as ignoring the crisis in March/April 2020, despite the huge efforts being taken by the government to combat the virus at the time.

NicaNotes: International Media uses Fake Journalist to Spread Disinformation About Nicaragua

By Nora Mitchell and Nan McCurdy, *March 11, 2020*

On Feb. 20, 2020, Vox.com published a piece entitled "Burnt radio stations and 18-month newsprint blockades: Inside the slow culling of Nicaragua's free press" that has multiple problems. The first of the many problems with this propaganda piece is that one of its authors – Carl David Goette Luciak – who initially came to Nicaragua to support anti-canal activists, was a close friend of the leaders of the violent opposition who were funded and directed by the US to attempt regime change. Goette Luciak can be seen in multiple photos with the opposition and with their armed lackeys; one of the photos was used for the cover of the book about the attempted coup, Nicaragua 2018: Uprising or Coup? He is also captured on video taking photos of an old man being tortured by the opposition in the documentary March of the Flowers. He appears at second 13 in the video from the Flowers March which took place in Managua on June 30, 2018.

Carl David Goette Luciak with armed opposition

We had seen the photos of Goette Luciak with the armed opposition, but became very concerned and began to write about him when he did nothing after witnessing the torture of the man during the Flowers March. When he began his journalist career, without credentials, writing for the Washington Post and the Guardian in 2018, he never mentioned that the opposition was armed and violent. And after he witnessed the *Flowers March* he still did not report on the opposition brutality and their campaign of terror against Sandinistas and government workers. More than a year has passed and he still has not reported on it.

The authors began the VOX article by hinting at government limits on the internet, ridiculous given healthy commercial internet enterprises as well as the government audacity at providing free internet in parks for the population, even in the most isolated parts of the nation.

In the second and twenty-second paragraphs, the authors claim that government supporters burned down radio stations, for which there is not a shred of evidence. The Nicaraguan opposition burned down the most popular radio station, the private pro-Sandinista *Tu Nueva Radio Ya*, located in front of the Central American University, one of the seats, then and now, of the opposition. They actually attempted to burn it down twice, succeeding the third time with twenty employees who barely made it out alive. They also burned down Radio Nicaragua and the National Autonomous University Student Center and Radio Station in Leon killing Sandinista student, Christian Cardenas.

Then the authors claim that the government restricted free press by blocking newsprint and ink to the newspaper, *La Prensa*. Few people read newspapers in Nicaragua and slowly print versions have gone by the wayside. *La Prensa* fired two hundred employees in mid-2018. More than one in five US papers has closed but nobody blames the US government. It's a tough market for print newspapers all over the world!

La Prensa is owned by the Chamorro family, members of which own *La Prensa, Confidencial* and direct the nongovernmental organizations *CINCO, Invermedia* and *La Fundación Violeta Barrios* which channel USAID and NED money to other organizations and media. They create constant fake news that helped launch and support the attempted coup and they promote US sanctions and intervention. The Chamorro family are known historically for having a monopoly on the US-financed media.

La Prensa *owner Jaime Chamorro with his Trump Shirt*

La Prensa had long overdue debts with the customs office (Dirección General de Aduana, DGA) which the newspaper refused to pay and instead accused the government of blocking their paper and ink supply and requested help from the US press.
La Prensa also has a long record of abusing the tax exemptions for newspaper printing materials by using the supplies for other print businesses and also importing luxury cars and even yachts. The exemption was only for legitimate work vehicles.

But the onslaught of international media articles certainly did convince the government to release *La Prensa's* materials even though the paper owes money to the customs office.

The international press over recent years prints and reprints lies that coincide with the opposition narrative. It's like the saying about how a lie that is repeated again and again becomes the truth, at least in the US. The Nicaraguan population is savvy and does not easily buy the story of repression against *La Prensa* because they have seen the US use this paper for over fifty years against the population, most notably during the US-contra war.

Since 2018 Journalists go to Nicaragua only briefly, seem to have their story already written and only interview the opposition. Nicaraguans love to talk about politics and if journalists would really do a bit of investigation and talk to all sides the articles might not be pure propaganda for the US-backed opposition.

It should be noted that La Prensa has received funds from the US government since the 1980s, and most openly through the National Endowment for Democracy.

La Prensa, Confidencial, Radio Corporación, Onda Local, Canal 10, 100% News and all the opposition press live an unimaginable press freedom in Nicaragua constantly lying about the government, and during the attempted coup, calling for regime change and the assassination of the constitutional president and his family. If this happened in the US the media owners would go to prison for suggesting such an atrocious crime.

In Nicaragua only Miguel Mora and Lucia Pineda of *100% Noticias* went to prison. Miguel Mora threatened a young policeman, Gabriel de Jesus Vado Ruiz, who soon after was kidnapped, tortured, killed and burned in Masaya. Mora also threatened a municipal worker, Bismark Martinez who soon after was disappeared and found dead a year later. Bismark's torturers uploaded videos of his torture to Facebook. Pineda is on video with those who burned down Granada government buildings with the fires raging behind them.

Lucia Pineda and Miguel Mora met with US Vice President Mike Pence where he assured them he "would not leave the Nicaraguan people alone." Photo: The White House.

Thanks to the Sandinista government's desire for peace and reconciliation, Mora and Pineda received amnesty in June 2019.
Knowing what Goette-Luciak did in Nicaragua, for which he was deported on October 1, 2018, and with numerous articles and photos attesting to his behavior, it is more than a little surprising that a media outlet like VOX would print an article by him.

NicaNotes: A year after Nicaragua's coup, the media's regime change deceptions are still unravelling

By John Perry, August 14, 2019

A deadly arson attack during last year's regime change attempt was blamed on Nicaragua's government by everyone from the US State Department to The New York Times. New information has raised serious doubts about the official story, highlighting the wider campaign of misinformation waged by US and UK media. This article was originally published in The Grayzone.

Last year's failed coup in Nicaragua erupted when student protests against social security reforms quickly turned into an armed attempt to bring down the government of Daniel Ortega. The regime change attempt was a battle for people's minds as well as for control of the streets. Violence was used to terrorize government supporters, but it was even more important as a propaganda vehicle. A journalist shot while on camera, demonstrators hit by sniper fire or an arson attack on a family home were all high-profile crimes that were immediately blamed on the government. Key to the anti-Sandinista public relations blitz was an organized barrage of social media postings, indignant statements by local "human rights" bodies condemning the government, right-wing media reaching the same judgment and local people intimidated into "confirming" the story.

During their push for Ortega's ouster last year, opposition groups acted on the largely correct assumption that if they were quick to portray any violence as being the government's fault, a compliant international press would repeat it. Major international human rights NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch could be relied on to take the judgments of their local counterparts at face value. Once a consensus about how to portray the violence had been reached internationally, it would be repeated by regional and global bodies such as the Organization of American States and the UN, and inevitably by the US State Department. After a series of such violent incidents, the reputation of the Ortega government internationally was sealed.

The worst of these attacks occurred on June 16 last year. At 6:00 in the morning, in the Managua *barrio* known as Carlos Marx, masked youths threw Molotov cocktails into an occupied three-story house. Fire spread quickly from the ground floor, used for a family business of making mattresses, to the living rooms upstairs where the family was beginning its day. Neighbours rushed to help but six people were burnt alive, including a baby and a two-year-old girl.

This could easily have been a self-inflicted blow to the "peaceful" image the protesters had created. But instead it became emblematic of the government's supposed violent response to the protests. How was this achieved?

Among those quickly on the scene was a representative of local "human rights" body, CENIDH: Gonzalo Carrion. Student eyewitnesses reported that Carrion had been present when opposition militants took over the campus of the UNAN university earlier in the attempted coup, and had even been a bystander to their violence. Without any obvious prior investigation, he recorded an interview blaming the fire on government supporters, calling it the act of a "terrorist state." This was, of course, consistent with a pattern of misreporting by CENIDH throughout the coup.

Also quick to arrive were reporters from *Canal 10*, the opposition-supporting TV channel: they interviewed one of the survivors, pressuring him to blame the police for the arson attack. Much later he would explain how his vulnerability, in the midst of attempts to find his family and surrounded by opposition supporters, was abused. Nicaragua's main daily right-wing newspaper, *La Prensa,* also had no doubt who the culprits were: "Ortega mobs burn and kill a Managua family" ran its headline the following day.

At that stage, the reality was that no outsiders knew who the masked youths were who had started the fire, nor did the journalists who arrived make much attempt to find out. Hundreds of thousands of social media messages began to appear, blaming the government. The international press, as on so many occasions, took its lead from the local media. Reuters, an agency which has consistently taken an anti-Ortega line, gave prominence to the government's accusers and quoted the secretary of the Organization of American States describing it as "a crime against humanity". A BBC report was more balanced, but still emphasized the accusations against the government. *The New York Times* put the house fire together with other incidents to describe what it called a campaign of terror by forces backing Ortega. The US State Department quickly concurred, saying the attack was "government sponsored". Within a week, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights repeated the accusation, based on "public statements" that it didn't identify.

As it happened, when the fire occurred I was preparing an article about the coup for *The Nation*. Not surprisingly, they asked me to extend the article to include it. Writing only 48 hours afterwards, and influenced by the initial reports, my assessment (published on June 22) was inevitably tentative:

'The government was quickly blamed, because allegedly the fire was in reprisal for the owner's refusal to allow snipers to operate from his roof. Government denials seemed plausible, as the barrio concerned has numerous barricades controlled by the opposition. On the other hand, a surviving family member backs up the opposition version. The truth is difficult to ascertain, and if proof emerges, it is unlikely to dispel the media verdicts about who the real culprits were.'

Of course, as I live in Masaya, a city which at the time was cut off from the rest of Nicaragua by opposition roadblocks, I could not personally visit Managua. Had I done so, I would have quickly seen that the consensus view of who caused the fire was unlikely to be correct, because for weeks the Carlos Marx *barrio* had been sealed off by roadblocks manned by armed protesters. A video posted on Facebook, allegedly showing police trucks in the *barrio*, was later shown to have been made almost two months earlier.

There were other obvious questions about the incident. For example, how was it that the CENIDH representatives (well known to be anti-government) were on the scene so quickly? Why would police or government supporters suddenly start setting houses on fire, when it was the opposition that had recently burned down a local government office in the same *barrio*? Why did no one investigate explicit social media threats which had been made against the family by protesters – including one made only 38 hours before the fire was started? Or the fact that four members of the M-19 (an armed opposition group) were on the scene later the same day, to record a video (now erased) where they accuse the government of "state terrorism" and admit they controlled the roadblocks in the area? Their message says: "We are not going to remove the roadblocks, they are in our hands and those of the people, and we will not take them off. I want you to know: if the people do not unite, it will end up in new massacres like this one."

My assertion that any doubts about who caused the fire would be unlikely to dispel the media verdicts, was proved correct. The simple reason was that neither local nor international media were interested in addressing these questions, as was soon demonstrated by coverage in the UK by *The Guardian*. The newspaper had already published 13 news stories about the violence in Nicaragua by early July, its Latin American correspondent had visited the country in June and I had told him about the opposition's arson attacks. By the time *The Guardian's* freelance reporters Carl David Goette-Luciak and Caroline Houck covered the story on July 5, some of the facts about the fire had begun to emerge. Even so, rather than questioning the consensus narrative, they reinforced it.

By the time *The Guardian* story appeared, police had succeeded in reaching the crime scene. But it was not until December 19 that the police were able to arrest two suspects and identify four others (local media quickly labelled those arrested as "political prisoners"). Why did it take so long to identify the arsonists? Apart from the difficulty the police had in entering the *barrio*, there were other obstacles. The roadblocks made it very easy for the masked attackers to slip away undetected, and local people were frightened to denounce them even if they knew who they were. Soon after escaping the fire, the surviving family members were surrounded by protesters and opposition journalists demanding that they denounce the police, which some of them did. These family members were then quickly taken into hiding by CENIDH, the "human rights" group, in a way which one of the family later described as being kidnapped. They were prevented from making phone calls "for their own safety", and of course were unavailable for police interviews.

In January, independent journalists Dick and Miriam Emanuelsson started to ask the questions that the international media had ignored. They found that, six months after the fire, local people in the Carlos Marx *barrio* were more willing to talk. They also interviewed a police official responsible for the investigation. Their report casts further light on events. First, it is now clear that there were around 30 roadblocks preventing movement into or around the *barrio*. Second, local people confirmed that the armed groups controlling the roadblocks determined who could pass through. Third, in lengthy interviews, the surviving family members (one a 14-year-old girl with horrendous burns) described how they were threatened by the protesters, before and after the fire. They said that they were scared by them into denouncing the police and were whisked away while injured and in severe shock, and later offered visas by CENIDH to leave the country. Fourth, the police explain the evidence they were able to assemble and how they did it, including testimony from protesters who knew who had carried out the attack. Some of the evidence and interviews are now available in English, one year after the fire, in a short documentary that is part of a series produced by local film producers *Juventud Presidente*.

If the treatment by the international media of the Carlos Marx house fire were exceptional, it might not be so important that they overlooked basic facts in this case. But sadly this pattern was repeated in coverage of most of the worst incidents in last year's violence, including the murder of the journalist Ángel Gahona while he was broadcasting live in Bluefields (also covered by Goette-Luciak for *The Guardian*), and the murder of four police officers and a teacher in an armed attack in the small town of Morrito. Hardly an incident occurred in which the main international media, including ones like *The Guardian* who take pride in their independent journalism, based their reports on opposition accusations that crimes were committed by government supporters, when in fact the culprits were armed protesters.

The same freelance reporters, Goette-Luciak and Houck, had earlier reported from Masaya for the *Washington Post,* where they also minimized opposition violence. They went on to produce

a similarly unbalanced story for *The Guardian* on September 7, about an opposition-led strike. It was strongly criticised for its bias by former Amnesty International prisoner of conscience Camilo Mejia. Later, in a surprising twist, Goette-Luciak was exposed by journalist Max Blumenthal as being far from politically neutral: he was actively working with anti-Ortega opposition groups. Blumenthal was in turn denounced by *The Guardian*, but they then failed to respond to a complaint sent to the newspaper by a friend of Goette-Luciak who had been directly involved in his anti-government activities, and who was able to substantiate Blumenthal's arguments.

The terrible incident in the Carlos Marx *barrio* is one example of Nicaragua's treatment by the international media since the protests took place last year. Instead of asking what is really happening in the country, the international press has eagerly promoted Washington's preferred narrative about Nicaragua. As the writer Nick Davies put it in his book Flat Earth News, it's not journalism's job to report that people say it's raining, it's journalism's job to look out of the window. In a country like Nicaragua, if the international media send reporters who simply repeat what they're told by one side, then they're serving that side's interests. When their reports bolster the arguments of a Trump administration looking to impose its neoliberal model on the whole of Latin America, they become far more than an attack on Daniel Ortega's government: they are an attack on the majority of Nicaraguans who now want a return to peace and economic stability.

NicaNotes: 'Unreported World' and the misreporting of Nicaragua

By John Perry, June 5, 2019

This piece was first published in the Two Worlds blog responding to a "news" show in the UK. Unfortunately it applies equally to the disinformation propagated by the corporate and progressive media in the US.

Despite the violent protests of a year ago, Managua has largely returned to normal. While never the most attractive capital city in Latin America, it remains one of the safest. There are more police on the streets than there were before last year's violence, but most people find that reassuring. A recent opinion poll shows that the government maintains close to 60% support and that 85% of Nicaraguans would oppose any return to last year's protests. Nevertheless, if you buy a newspaper, you'll find it full of anti-government rhetoric. If you watch TV news, there's a good chance you'll find the same. According to the world-wide Committee to Protect Journalists, opposition media are in a stronger position than they were before the crisis.

But this is far from the picture painted in the UK by the Channel 4 series 'Unreported World'. In a programme from Nicaragua called *Censored,* its presenter Sahar Zand skulks around Managua by taxi, hiding from mysterious pursuers and from the police. She claims it's unsafe for her to travel in the same car as local reporters, and she keeps telling her photographer to hide their cameras. Journalists in Nicaragua, she says, risk being deported or killed. She finds police at the roadside 'unsettling'. Avoiding walking in the streets, she says at one point that 'Nicaragua may be a nation at war'.

There is a reason for this odd behaviour. Zand seems not to have come to Nicaragua to listen to different political opinions, she's evidently here to endorse the image of the country presented by the anti-government media. Of the half dozen major opposition newspapers and TV

channels, Zand picks three: *La Prensa* (a right-wing newspaper) and *Canal 10* and *100%Noticias*, TV news channels. The whole programme is devoted to and steered by these opposition sources; no one speaks up for the government or challenges the picture that *Censored* presents.

The team from *La Prensa* take her to the Divine Mercy church, scene of a siege during last year's violence. They show her bullet holes, evidence that the 'students' who had sheltered there had come under fire from government forces. What they don't explain is that the adjoining university, the UNAN, was at that time completely controlled by armed protesters. They had burned down parts of it and a child development centre was completely destroyed. The day before the armed gangs retreated to the church, they had launched a fusillade against a passing group of government supporters, injuring and hospitalising ten of them. It was hardly surprising that they were being sought by the police, given the weapons they were using (and the violence to which some of them confessed afterwards). Hundreds of weapons were recovered by police when the university was retaken.

Unreported World uses a video clip of a student at the UNAN, supposedly sheltering from gunfire last year, appealing to her mother to forgive her for getting involved in the protests. This clip was shared worldwide, but it was quickly shown to be play-acting, as any examination of media stories about it would have revealed. Another video, made during the same incident, shows a student 'saying goodbye' to his mother while 'under fire', yet others stand around casually, apparently indifferent to the bullets.

Sahar Zand moves on, to talk about *100%Noticias*, whose director Miguel Mora is in prison on charges of inciting violence. The charges are treated as ridiculous, yet stem from real events. On May 29 last year, Mora made the false claim on air that his TV studio was under attack by government sympathisers. He appealed for opposition activists to respond by attacking the Sandinista station, *Nuevo Radio Ya*. They did, setting it on fire, holding over 20 radio staff under siege and then shooting at firefighters and police attempting to control the fire and rescue those inside. Only the bravery of the rescue services prevented severe loss of life. The building was destroyed. Not long afterwards, on June 9, it was the turn of the independent *Radio Nicaragua* to be set on fire: such is the opposition's respect for the diversity of Nicaragua's media. These incidents and other attacks on government-supporting media and journalists go unmentioned by Unreported World.

Zand's final port of call is *Canal 10* (Channel 10), and its reporter Valeska Rivera. She says she is in constant fear of being killed, and is seen assuring her daughter that she will come home every night. In fact just two reporters have been killed as a result of the protests, both by opposition forces: one was Angel Gahona, shot by protesters in Bluefields; the other was Eduardo Spiegler, killed in Managua when he was filming youths demolishing one of the brightly lit 'trees of life' that were attacked as government symbols.

Canal 10 is also well-known for its false news stories. In March, Valeska Rivera was reporting from an opposition demonstration when she suddenly threw herself to the ground, taking shelter from a police 'attack'. The incident was filmed by a bystander, and the clip shows that while Rivera and her colleague are lying prone, others stand nearby or sit on steps in the background, unaware of the 'gunfire'. She went on to report that she had faced not only bullets but contact bombs. Despite this repression, as Zand points out, *Canal 10* still 'manages' to broadcast three news bulletins per day, every day.

There is an irony in *Censored* being part of a series called 'Unreported World'. Rather than tell a story that is genuinely unreported, Sahar Zand repeats the messages already purveyed by the BBC, the *Guardian*, *New York Times*, and the rest. She could have challenged the distorted coverage of Nicaragua found in most of the international media. As the results of recent polls have shown, she would have been reflecting the opinions most Nicaraguans. It's a pity that when Sahar Zand was in Managua she didn't get out more.

NicaNotes: While Nicaragua returns to peace, media and international NGOs conjure epidemic of violence with dubious reporting

***By John Perry**, March 4, 2020*

Media bias against Nicaragua's Sandinista government is unremitting, and international NGOs are feeding it by misreporting a violent land dispute in the Bosawás nature reserve. This article was originally published by The Grayzone, Feb. 19, 2020.

Here's a headline you won't see in the corporate media: **Nicaragua is at peace.**

After the violent attempt to overthrow the government in 2018, which cost at least 200 lives, the country has largely returned to the tranquillity it enjoyed before. This is not only the impression that any visitor to Nicaragua will receive; it is confirmed by statistics: Insight Crime analysed homicide levels across Latin America in 2019 and showed that only three countries were safer than Nicaragua in the whole continent.

What's more, three of Nicaragua's neighbors, in the 'northern triangle' of Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, are all among the most violent countries. They are specifically plagued with high levels of fatal violence against women. In the first 24 days of 2020, for example, 27 Honduran women met violent deaths, while next-door, Nicaragua continues to have one of the lowest levels of femicide in Latin America.

But wait. A headline in January denounces the "Tragic Epidemic of Violence in Nicaragua." This month the UN slates the Nicaraguan government for supposedly allowing "repeated attacks against indigenous peoples." A UN situation report talks about a "general environment of threat and insecurity." Toward the end of 2019 the purported "systematic, selective and lethal repression of peasant farmers" was reported.

Where do these allegations come from, and what do they mean?

Media and NGOs distort local land dispute

The latest smears are based on an incident at the end of January. Landless farmers attacked a Nicaraguan community in the large forest of Bosawás. It was reported by Reuters to have led to six deaths, with 10 more people kidnapped and houses destroyed. The Guardian, New York Times, and Washington Post all repeated the story.

Nicaragua's right-wing newspaper La Prensa quoted the NGO Fundación del Rio, which called it a "massacre." US-backed opposition group the Civic Alliance joined in by branding it "ethnocide." Amnesty International condemned what it called the "state's indifference" to the

suffering of indigenous people. And the Interamerican Commission for Human Rights said the government was failing its international obligations.

Bosawás is the largest area of tropical rainforest north of the Amazon. It has few roads and mainly tiny communities, many relying on rivers for transport. Many local people belong to indigenous groups which have been granted land titles by the government and this land cannot be sold, only leased. Others are settlers (called ”colonos”) some of whom have leased land but others who occupy it illegally.

Disputes between established farmers and landless peasants are common, and for many years have sometimes resulted in violence. The problems of policing such places, with their history of conflict and corruption, are not confined to their remoteness.

What really happened in the recent case only became clear after the police arrived to investigate, having been called to the scene of two deaths, not six, late on the afternoon of January 29.

In the community of Alal where the attack occurred, the police found 12 houses had been burned down and two people had been injured. No one had disappeared. By January 31, local authorities had checked three more nearby communities and found no evidence of murder or kidnapping. Community leaders condemned the false news reports.

Then, at a completely different location 12 kilometers east of Alal, along the River Kahaska Kukun, near the community of Wakuruskasna, police found and identified four bodies; two in one part of the river and two in another part, apparently dead from gunshot wounds. Local people said they knew of no one who had disappeared or was missing.

Investigations continued and two days later senior police and government officials met with the community in the local school to explain the investigations and the enforcement work they were doing, as well as the help that people would get to rebuild their destroyed houses.

On February 5, the families of the victims met with Nicaragua’s Procurator of Human Rights, Darling Ríos, to denounce the crimes committed. The police are pursuing the criminal gang involved and, at the time of writing, have captured one culprit who was carrying a sub-machine gun.

The background to this story is important and is ignored by the international media and human rights groups. A significant proportion of Nicaraguan territory is legally held by indigenous groups and has been duly titled by the Nicaraguan government in each community’s ownership. The authorities that administer them are designated by the communities themselves.

In the indigenous territory of Mayangna Sauni, made up of 75 communities, there is an internal dispute over control of these communal lands. Some of the leaders have sold land to groups of outside settlers, which is possibly at the root of January’s conflict.

Sadly, despite a massive and ongoing process of land reform in Nicaragua, there are still cases of displaced peasant farmers who cannot buy expensive land in populated areas and seek to buy it cheaply, and perhaps illegally, elsewhere, or simply to occupy it. Sparsely populated areas like Bosawás are especially vulnerable.

The ensuing conflicts are portrayed by international NGOs as struggles between environmentally conscious indigenous people and destructive outsiders, abetted by the government. The reality is that poor people are in competition for land, sometimes violently. And the violence is spasmodic: there were few reported deaths in land disputes for the last two years, although there were several in 2015 and 2016, mainly affecting a different indigenous community, the Miskitu.It is hardly surprising that the corporate media sides with indigenous groups. Inevitably, as in the Alal case, whoever can get a story out via a phone call will receive attention, and even an agency like Reuters is likely to accept such a report before the facts can be checked.

'Human rights' NGOs spread debunked fake news

To those unfamiliar with Nicaragua, any news item about indigenous groups conjures images of un-contacted tribes in the Amazon, which is far from the real situation. Corporate media sets the scene with romantic images of rainforests. Only rarely do they send reporters to investigate in depth.

If this is to be expected of today's media, it shouldn't be the case with human rights NGOs. Yet Nicaraguan-based "human rights" bodies are notoriously biased politically, and have long passed the point where they can be considered objective.

Their recent allegations of a government campaign of rural assassinations, for example, were shown to be completely false. All the local NGOs compete for donations from foreign governments, and as one admitted, exaggerate their death counts in order to get it.

Regrettably, the international NGOs are little better. Amnesty International's reporting on Nicaragua has been shown as full of errors and misrepresentations. Global Witness was called out for biased reporting of the land disputes in the Bosawás area, in which it absurdly labeled Nicaragua the "world's most dangerous country to be an environmental defender."

Despite many efforts to get Global Witness to listen to the complexities of the real story, it refused to withdraw its allegations even when some were found to be completely untrue.

This is why headlines like "A Tragic Epidemic of Violence" should not be taken at face value. Even the BBC, which said "six indigenous people reportedly killed in attack" was wrong.

Media bias against Nicaragua's Sandinista government is unremitting, and international NGOs are feeding it along with the US government.

Meanwhile, behind the headlines, the Nicaraguan people are successfully recovering the precious peace and safety they enjoyed before the violent events of 2018. Most are relieved that the real "epidemic of violence" ended just a few months after it began.

"Never Let a Good Crisis Go to Waste"

By John Perry, April 21, 2020
From Counterpunch and Council on Hemispheric Affairs

Paul Baker in Managua, with one of the leaflets delivered by health officials during a visit.

The right-wing opposition in Nicaragua, having failed in their attempted coup in 2018, still looks at any crisis as a new opportunity to attack the Sandinista government. Their latest chance, of course, arrived with the coronavirus pandemic. Even though the virus has barely hit the country yet, the government is under attack. The international media are lapping up opposition propaganda and ignoring or disparaging the government's efforts to deal with the coming crisis, even though preparations began before those in many other countries.

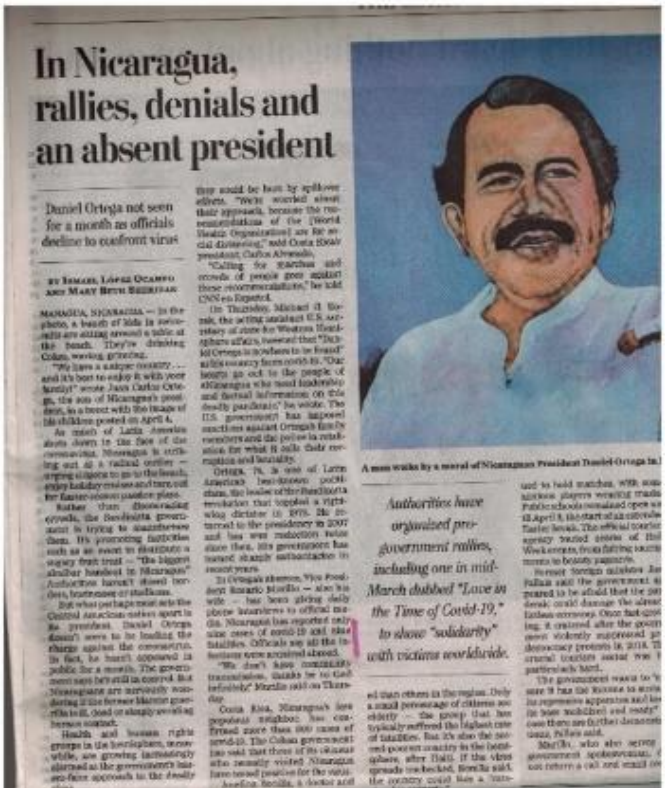
Since early April, Nicaragua's well-connected opposition leaders have used their contacts in the international press to push a series of stories relating to the pandemic. These stories – detailed below – variously claim that President Daniel Ortega is in quarantine or has died, that his government is in denial about the coronavirus or that it is ill-prepared and inactive in the face of the threat. None of this is true. What is worse, it seems based on the tone of news coverage, that reporters who are unable to visit the country nevertheless make little attempt to find out what action the government is actually taking and whether opposition criticisms have any substance.

At the time of writing (April 16, 2020) Nicaragua has only nine confirmed virus cases, all of them people who have come from abroad or their immediate contacts. The opposition and the media pour scorn on the official figures and (without evidence) claim that infection levels are far higher. Ignoring the daily press briefings by Dr. Carlos Sáenz, Secretary General at the health ministry, the opposition claims that Nicaraguans are being kept in the dark. Despite health officials having visited 2.7 million households, sometimes on several occasions, to dispense advice (see photo), the opposition complains that there is little or no guidance on combating the virus.

How the international media attacks developed

The attacks began on April 4 with BBC World, which in addition to criticising President Daniel Ortega for not making public appearances asserted that his government had taken "no measures at all" in the face of the virus threat. Then *The New York Times* (April 6), asking

Where is Daniel Ortega?, said Nicaragua had been "widely criticized for its cavalier approach" to the pandemic. It quoted opposition supporters who say the public "is deeply dubious about government claims." On April 8, The Guardian said that Ortega was "nowhere to be seen." By April 13, The Washington Post said Ortega had "vanished" and castigated his government's "laissez-faire approach" (the *Post's* print edition even managed to report that nine virus victims had died, when there has been only one death so far). According to The Guardian, on April 12, the "authoritarian" Daniel Ortega is one of only four world leaders who are in denial about the coronavirus (among the others is, of course, the right-wing Bolsonaro in Brazil). The attacks have even been reproduced by the international medical journal, *The Lancet.* On April 6, an article entitled Love in the time of COVID-19 labelled the government's approach as "erratic" and "violating the human rights of its citizens."



In Nicaragua, rallies, denials and an absent president

Daniel Ortega not seen for a month as officials decline to confront virus

Authorities have organized pro-government rallies, including one in mid-March dubbed "Love in the Time of Covid-19," to show "solidarity" with victims worldwide.

The Washington Post claims 9 deaths from COVID-19 in Nicaragua; at the time there was 1.

The real situation in Nicaragua

What is the real situation in Nicaragua? The country has had health checks at its borders for months, far sooner than in the US. Travellers entering Nicaragua are managed tightly, and officials follow up with new arrivals by phone and by house visits, as I know from my own and friends' direct experiences after arriving in the country. Two lengthy and porous land frontiers make it preferable to keep borders open so as to minimise informal crossings which make health checks impossible. When people do cross illegally, neighbours often report them using a free, dedicated phone number set up a few weeks ago. This number is also used to obtain more general advice on the virus. Nineteen hospitals have been identified to receive virus cases and 37,000 health workers and 250,000 volunteers have been trained accordingly. The result is that – so far at least – Nicaragua's nine virus cases represent the lowest infection rate in Latin America.

Nearly 4 million household visits by health workers have taken place (at the time of writing).

Social distancing and its costs

In the international press, opposition spokespeople call for more drastic measures such as social distancing and school closures. Reporters ignore the obvious dilemma that faces poor countries in deciding when to take such steps. Importantly, even though the World Health Organisation has emphasised the importance of social distancing, it also recognises this dilemma. Its Director General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said this on April 16:

“Governments must consider that for some countries and communities, stay-at-home orders may not be practical, and may even cause unintended harm. Millions of people around the world must work every day to put food on the table. They cannot stay at home for long periods of time without assistance.”

In Nicaragua, because all confirmed COVID-19 cases so far have come from abroad, the government assessment is that no or very limited local, community transmission has taken place. This is why there continues to be vigilance while wider measures have not yet been imposed. If self-isolation becomes necessary it will carry a massive cost as seen for example in the US and other countries, as most people need to go to work daily to eat. There is no reliable mechanism to distribute subsidies, nor can small, poor countries like Nicaragua borrow with impunity to pay for them. Many Nicaraguans live in cramped houses in densely populated neighbourhoods, making social distancing extremely difficult. The government is genuinely attempting to balance the fight against the virus with the economic needs of the population. To impose an untimely lockdown, at a time when the spread of the virus appears to be still under control, would not only cause huge resentment and hardship but could be totally counterproductive. Of course, government policy is subject to change as the situation evolves and any objective assessment must be based on the government’s future handling of the crisis, not only on its response to date.

The Lancet article cites approvingly the contrasting policies of El Salvador and Honduras. In the former, President Nayib Bukele forced people to self-isolate, offering a subsidy of $300 per family which caused massive, unregulated queues and then rowdy protests outside government offices. The *Los Angeles Times* reported (April 7) that in some areas the lockdown is enforced by gangs with baseball bats. In Honduras, a "militarized quarantine" has led to police violence, more than 1,000 arrests and almost 900 vehicles being confiscated, according to respected human rights group COFADEH. Despite these actions, both countries have much higher infection levels than Nicaragua. So does Costa Rica. All of these neighbouring countries are quick to criticise the Ortega government and express fears for cross-border contamination, when the reality is that Nicaragua should be the country that fears contamination from its neighbours. This is not to say that mitigation is inherently counterproductive; the point is that if a situation does call for quarantine, state actors ought to inspire a sense of solidarity and understanding rather than impose punitive and coercive measures that divide people rather than unite them.

International media are more sympathetic to other low-income countries

The irony is that international media have carried a number of articles about the dangers of imposing draconian measures in poor countries. In *The Observer*, Kenan Malik pointed out that whether in the UK or the developing world, we're not all in coronavirus together. As he says, in many poor countries "only the privileged can maintain any kind of social isolation." David Pilling in the *Financial Times* points out that in developing countries, the lockdown cure could be worse than the disease. Mari Pangestu, a managing director with the World Bank, says in the *Daily Telegraph* that for the poorest countries, the full danger from coronavirus is only just coming into view, because of its effect on their ability to maintain food and medical supplies.

Astonishingly, the international media treat their sources in the Nicaraguan opposition as *bone fide* when there is a mountain of evidence to the contrary. Even in the current crisis, they have excelled themselves, as Ben Norton has shown in The Grayzone. They created a fake account posing as Nicaragua's TV Channel 4, with invented statements supposedly by Vice-President Rosario Murillo, announcing school closures that were never planned. They purport to give advice on issues such as social distancing, as if this isn't available from the government, when it is (and, as Norton points out, in their daily lives several of them ignore their own recommendations). Within Nicaragua, Facebook is alive with false rumours from opposition sources about deaths allegedly caused by the virus, attempting to undermine people's confidence in official figures.

President Ortega addresses the nation

When he addressed the public on April 15, President Ortega said little about the criticisms being made by his opponents, although he noted one item of fake news. A Nicaraguan woman, returning recently to Costa Rica where she works, via a route with no border controls, had been accused in local media of carrying the coronavirus. However, when tracked down and tested by the Costa Rican authorities, she was shown to be free of the disease. Ortega also pointed out that a hospital, various health centres and multiple supplies of medical equipment had been destroyed in opposition arson attacks in Nicaragua during the attempted coup of April 2018; all of these had now been rebuilt or restored, and are available to deal with the pandemic. Referring indirectly to the clamour for Nicaragua to adopt measures like the lockdowns employed in adjoining countries, he pointed out that without work the country dies. And he was able to quote one new statistic: since the worldwide pandemic was officially declared on March

11, a total of 1,237 people had died in Nicaragua; but only one of these had been killed by the coronavirus. In the days ahead we may see a change in public health policy, but any such change will likely be informed by the situation on the ground, rather than by ill-judged comments in the international media.

Related NicaNotes News Briefs

Carlos Fernando Chamorro Chooses to Go into Exile—A Commentary
On Jan. 20, Carlos Fernando Chamorro, son of former President Violeta Chamorro, and heir apparent of one of Nicaragua's most powerful families, announced his decision to go into self-exile on his evening television show *Esta Semana*. The show will continue and his other show *Esta Noche* will air on Wednesday evenings. He will continue these two programs and his media outlet *Confidencial* from Costa Rica. He says he made the decision to go into exile in Costa Rica because he says he has been subject to threats, although he did not show any evidence.

In December 2018, various opposition-aligned NGO's feared being investigated and perhaps even closed for non-compliance with Nicaragua's law relating to non-profits. They illegally moved computers and other materials to the offices of Chamorro's media outlet *Confidencial* which already held computers and materials from his own NGO, CINCO. The Nicaraguan authorities undercut these maneuvers when they discovered the illicit transfer of equipment and documentation, which were then subpoenaed by the government for their investigation.

Local observers believe Chamorro moved to Costa Rica because he can no longer access US funding through his NGO – CINCO and will more easily be able to receive US funding in Costa Rica. Chamorro has been claiming repression since 2008 when he and his CINCO organization also broke the law relating to non-profit political activity but at the time settled that incident with the Sandinista government.

For years Chamorro has published venomously critical, frequently deceitful coverage of the government while simultaneously falsely claiming repression. For example, when Sandinista interests took over Channel 8 some years ago, Chamorro left that TV channel, mendaciously claiming he'd been forced out, which was not true; rather he chose to leave.

His move to Costa Rica now is part of the same strategy Chamorro has followed for over twenty years aimed at falsely discrediting Daniel Ortega and, since 2007, the Sandinista government. A legitimate question is what would happen to a similar media non-profit figure in the US, say Amy Goodman, if she were found to be receiving funding from a foreign government to attack the US government? (La Prensa, 1/20/19 and notes from Nan)

Papel Nuncio Denounces Media Manipulation
On March 18, Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Stanislaw Waldemar Sommertag condemned the manipulation of his role at the negotiating table by some media outlets and said that those same people do not want a peaceful solution to the country's crisis. The Vatican representative said that some of the media and certain sectors manipulate information and that he has no personal interest other than to help find peace in Nicaragua. "I have no interests. But I think you have an interest here, either you want this country to get out of this situation or you want to spend another 10 months in the same situation. Before, everyone wanted a dialogue and now that there is negotiation they criticize it," he said. Archbishop Sommertag said that unfortunately some media are laying a trap to prevent negotiation and allow acts of violence to continue. He stressed that many lies are told in Nicaragua

and there is a lack of trust among the parties. “If manipulation of the truth continues, it could be too late [to achieve peace].” (Radio la Primerisima, 3/18/19)

La Primerisima Website Is Attacked for the Seventh Time

July 24 was the seventh cyber-terrorist attack against the website of radio station La Primerisima. The director of the private, but Sandinista supporting, radio station, William Grigsby Vado, blamed the attacks on opposition groups responsible for the 2018 attempted coup. “Cyberterrorism has not been able to silence the truth and the information we share with the people”, wrote Grigsby on the station’s web page; which also stated, “The last attack on our web page was on June 12 of this year and that time groups supporting the Supreme Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) were responsible.” (Radiolaprimerisima, 7/25/19)

El Nuevo Diario Discontinues Publication

On Sept. 27, the corporate board of the newspaper El Nuevo Diario announced that it was discontinuing publication “due to economic, technical, and logistical difficulties that make its functioning unsustainable.” END, as it was known, was founded in 1980 by Xavier Chamorro and Danilo Aguirre breaking with the political line of the Chamorro family newspaper, La Prensa. In 2011, the paper was bought by Ramiro Ortiz and the financial group Banpro Promerica. Informe Pastran quotes an informed source as saying, “El Nuevo Diario had an economic deficit ever since the owners bought it (in a bankrupt condition). It did not show a profit in any year; the sale of ads diminished and the owners (Banpro) financed the deficit. They couldn’t achieve profitability and for business reasons they closed.”

Opposition media outlets, including La Prensa and Confidential, quoted PEN International as saying that the paper was ceasing publication due to 15 months of government limitations on its importation of paper, ink and other essential products. However, Informe Pastran stated that the owners closed the paper suddenly to avoid a criminal indictment against ARDISA, the press under the same ownership, for printing materials for the group FUNIDES that called for a campaign of violence against the government, violating articles of the Penal Code. (El Nuevo Diario, 9/27/19; Informe Pastran, 9/27/19; Confidencial, 9/27/19; La Prensa, 9/27/19)

The Nicaraguan Opposition

Barbara Larcom

This chapter describes the activities during 2019 and early 2020 of groups opposed to the current Nicaraguan government. In contrast to the violent coup attempt of 2018, much opposition activity of the past year was focused on propaganda efforts and the creation of false narratives about police violence and government repression.

In the first article below, Chuck Kaufman describes how a minor protest in March 2019 was manipulated to create both a fake Channel 10 report and a subsequent "danger alert" by the US Embassy.

Also, as noted in the *NicaNotes Briefs* toward the end of this chapter, late in 2019 a number of opposition journalists returned to Nicaragua from self-imposed exile in Costa Rica. Almost immediately more fake news stories began to appear on social media. Such messages were then amplified by the US government to portray Nicaragua as a dangerous place and an imminent threat.

While violence was less prevalent in 2019 than in the previous year, there was sporadic unrest throughout the year. As the Briefs note, some of this appeared to be attempts to undermine negotiations with the government from February to May; or to convey an impression to the wider public that the police were repressive or that Nicaragua is not at peace. The March and December protests at Metrocentro mall in Managua provide such examples.

Some of the violence, however, seemed to be prompted by the even more sinister motive of scaring the local population. The November bombings in Masaya, in which thirteen opposition activists were arrested, fall in that category.

In the past, the opposition had consistently maintained that they were peaceful and that protesters were unarmed despite ample evidence to the contrary; they laid all violence at the feet of the police and government supporters. In 2019 this assertion was belied by opposition members themselves. In a leaked video of a July meeting in Costa Rica, various high-level opposition participants laid claim to acts they had committed, including murdering Sandinistas, promoting a coup d'état, and maintaining violent roadblocks. A second revelation was the opposition's November statement that certain armed gang members were their supporters.

The opposition continued its communications and visits with US government officials in 2019, lobbying for even harsher US sanctions against their own government and people. Opposition groups could not unite, however, as they squabbled over US funding from USAID and other sources.

In the meantime, countervailing forces were at work. Big business resisted certain opposition tactics, such as strikes and civil disobedience, because these disrupted their

operations. Some Nicaraguan politicians urged the government to investigate US funding to the opposition, on the premises that (1) it was illegal, as it was intended to destabilize the country and (2) much of the money seemed to be disappearing into private hands.

Following the conflictual events of 2018, most citizens made it clear that they had no interest in experiencing more of them. In 2019, they marched in support of peace, and they also devoted time and energy to ceremonies honoring the memory of those who had lost their lives to opposition violence in the year before.

The electoral situation in Nicaragua began heating up with the advent of 2020. Ben Norton, in the second article below, recounts how the US and the European Union (EU) met with opposition groups early in 2020, trying to persuade them (with ambiguous results) to unite more effectively in order to defeat the Sandinista government in the upcoming elections of 2021.

This chapter also examines the question, how can one tell whether opposition groups truly represent the will of the people? The third article below, by Carlos Fonseca Teran, provides several criteria for assessing movements. One of these is to look at whether they promote specific policies and programs that meet the needs of everyday people, or only the desires of the upper crust. Another is to scrutinize who is financing opposition efforts; are the activities primarily supported by grassroots donations, or by foreign governments and the country's elites? A third is to ask, are civilians the majority of those suffering or dying in a violent conflict, or are casualties a mix of everyday citizens with government officials? The former suggests a people's uprising; the latter, an armed coup attempt. Additional criteria, and greater depth, are found in this excellent piece.

We must also consider the 2019 activities of the Nicaraguan opposition in the context of events during the same period in several other Latin American countries. Both the Fonseca Teran article, which compares Nicaragua and Ecuador, and the *NicaNotes* article by Chuck Kaufman that follows it, which describes Nicaraguan opposition support for the Bolivian coup, discuss ongoing US efforts to replace governments of the "Pink Tide." The 2018 events in Nicaragua were the first US coup attempt in the region during the Trump era, but regrettably not the last.

Even a minor protest can be useful for manipulating information, as this article shows. This event took place on March 16, 2019. On a personal note, I spent the first two weeks of April in Nicaragua, traveling to various cities and rural areas on the Pacific side of the country, often by public transportation. I never encountered even a hint of violence.

Nicaragua: Failed Opposition Rally Still Used for Propaganda

By Chuck Kaufman, March 22, 2019
https://popularresistance.org/nicaragua-failed-opposition-rally-still-used-for-propaganda/

The opposition called for a demonstration on Saturday, Mar. 16 at Metrocentro, a busy shopping area and traffic circle in Managua. Eye witnesses report fewer than 200 people showed up. The poor turnout is an indication that the Nicaraguan people have no interest in a repeat of last year's failed coup attempt which paralyzed the country for weeks and cost about 200 lives.

The demonstration did not have a permit and after sporadic incidents of vandalism, police reportedly detained 107 people and released them a couple hours later without charges.

But, besides the poor turnout, what is interesting is the effort of the US embassy and Channel 10 TV to blow up the minor incident to build fear and anger in hope of creating a pretext like happened on April 18 of last year when social media ran fake stories that the police had killed students demonstrating against changes the government was proposing to make the social security system sustainable. There were no deaths on April 18, 2018. The following day there were three casualties: a policeman, a Sandinista supporter, and an innocent bystander. Those deaths too were used, along with staged video, to give the impression that the police were out of control and slaughtering people.

Those fake videos were very similar to the coverage by opposition TV station Channel 10 on Saturday. Check out this video of Channel 10 reporters pretending to be pinned down by police fire while in the background demonstrators can be seen sitting tranquilly on an outdoor staircase. This is straight out of the US regime change playbook as refined in Syria. Remember the tearful [fake] videos of supposed residents of Aleppo recording messages to loved ones because they were about to be killed any minute by Syrian troops? Nicaraguans, trained in such techniques by US National Endowment for Democracy (NED) workshops, did the same thing using the same scripts almost to the word.

And speaking of the US, below is an email sent by the US embassy to all US citizens on Saturday. Note that the alert was sent out at 6:13pm. The opposition demonstration at Metrocentro was called for 2:00pm and was over by the time the embassy sent out its alert.

De: acs.managua@state.gov [mailto:acs.managua@state.gov]
Enviado el: sábado, 16 de marzo de 2019 06:13 p. m.
Asunto: Demonstration Alert: U. S. Embassy Managua, Nicaragua (March 16, 2019)

Demonstration Alert: U. S. Embassy Managua, Nicaragua (March 16, 2019)

Location: Managua, countrywide

Event: Police responded with force and arrests to disperse a pro-democracy protest in Managua today, which caused the Embassy to temporarily restrict the movement of its personnel. Additional demonstrations may occur in Managua or elsewhere in Nicaragua with little or no notice. Please monitor local media for updates, and remember that violence may break out at any demonstration.

Actions To Take:

· Avoid demonstrations and leave the area immediately if unexpectedly in the vicinity of large gatherings or protests.

· Do not participate in demonstrations. Foreigners, including U.S.-Nicaraguan dual nationals, risk arrest or expulsion if they participate in protests.

· Do not attempt to drive through large groups or barricades encountered on the street.

· Monitor local media for updates. Radio Corporacion and Channel 10 can provide the most updated news. Online media including Confidencial, Articulo 66, and La Mesa Redonda are also useful resources.

· Please note the Department of State has issued a Travel Advisory urging U.S. citizens to reconsider travel to Nicaragua due to civil unrest, an increase in violent crime, and limited healthcare availability.

Assistance:

Please follow the links or call the numbers below for consular assistance.

· Contact the U.S. Embassy in Managua, located at Km 5 ½ C. Sur Managua, Nicaragua, by calling +505-2252-7104, 7:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 7:15 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Fridays. The American Citizen Services unit is also available by email during regular business hours at ACS.Managua@state.gov. For after-hours emergencies, call +505-2252-7100 and ask for the Embassy Duty Officer.

· Nicaragua Country Information

· Enroll in Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security updates

· Follow us via the Embassy Managua website, Facebook, and Twitter.

Why would the US embassy send out such an absurd after-the-fact alert? Because the US government has not given up on its plan for regime change in Nicaragua. Right now its main focus is on Venezuela, but just because its plan failed in Nicaragua last year doesn't mean it has given up on its ultimate goal. It has to keep up the narrative that Nicaragua is a violent country, run by a dictator whose will is enforced by a thuggish police force and where there is no rule of law.

It is bad for the propaganda machine that the cruise ships have returned, the burned markets and schools have been repaired and rebuilt, and according to a recent poll, Daniel Ortega is the fifth most popular president in Latin America and the Caribbean! But the US embassy knows that most Americans have no independent source of information about Nicaragua so the US government can keep a completely out of date Travel Advisory telling people to reconsider travel to Nicaragua because of the violence.

For them, turning a failed, relatively trouble-free opposition rally into another story of violent repression by the dictatorship, is all in a day's work.

The US embassy and European Union are meeting with right-wing Nicaraguan opposition leaders and pressuring them to unite against elected leftist President Daniel Ortega in the lead-up to the 2021 election.

NicaNotes: Right-wing Nicaraguan Opposition Boasts of Support from US and EU in Campaign to Oust Sandinista Gov't

By Ben Norton, February 12, 2020, reprinted from Grayzone Project February 7, 2020
https://afgj.org/nicanotes-right-wing-nicaraguan-opposition-boasts-of-support-from-us-and-eu-in-campaign-to-oust-sandinista-govt

A far-right opposition figure in Nicaragua has boasted that the country's unpopular opposition forces are meeting with representatives from the US embassy and European Union, who have pledged them support in their bid to oust the ruling leftist Sandinista Front government.

According to this rightist Evangelical leader, the US government and EU are pressuring Nicaragua's badly divided opposition to unite in the lead-up to the 2021 election, with the goal of unseating the Sandinistas.

This frank admission of foreign meddling in Nicaragua's democracy comes after a violent coup attempt in 2018, in which right-wing groups funded and supported by the US government failed to overthrow the elected president, Daniel Ortega.

The Donald Trump administration has declared the small nation of Nicaragua to be a supposed "national security threat," and has imposed several rounds of aggressive sanctions on the country, with the aim of destabilizing its economy.

The violence and economic warfare [have] failed to weaken the popularity of the ruling FSLN party, however. A survey released this January by a mainstream polling firm found that 63.5 percent of Nicaraguans plan to vote for the Sandinistas in the upcoming election, while the opposition really only has the dedicated support of around 11.5 percent of the population.

'We met with political advisers from the US embassy and the European Union'

On January 30, right-wing leaders from a group called the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy (ACJD) held a press conference to announce their expansion as part of a process of "fortifying."

The ACJD is a coalition of opposition groups, several of which are funded by the US government and coordinate closely with Washington. It was formed in 2018 during the coup attempt against the Sandinistas. In the press conference and a subsequent printed statement, the ACJD announced that it is in the process of creating "a National Coalition, wide, pluralist, and committed to the change that Nicaragua needs."

Among the opposition figures at the presser was Saturnino Cerrato, the fundamentalist Evangelical leader of the rabidly right-wing Party for Democratic Restoration (PRD). Cerrato, a minor figure in Nicaraguan politics who is barely known outside far-right circles, said his party is eager to become part of the right-wing National Coalition, arguing "there is a total opening" for the opposition.

He revealed that this demand for opposition unity is not only coming from inside the country, but also from powerful foreign actors. "First it is a national demand, from the national community, and next it is also a demand from the international community," Cerrato explained.

“In these days — the day before yesterday and today — we met with political advisers from the US embassy and the European Union,” Cerrato said in the January 30 press conference, which was livestreamed on Facebook.

The US embassy and EU told the opposition leaders, “We are ready to support a large movement that is formed in Nicaragua,” he recalled. “And one of the advisers said, ‘We are surprised that it has taken so much time to form that unity,’” he added. Cerrato said the pressure both from within and outside convinced his party to join the National Coalition efforts.

US and EU backing far-right fringe figures in Latin America

Before the US-backed coup attempt against Nicaragua’s elected Sandinista government in 2018, Saturnino Cerrato was virtually unknown in the country. His PRD party received just over 4 percent in the 2016 general elections.

A 2017 poll by major firm showed that more than 85 percent of Nicaraguans did not even know who Cerrato was or had no opinion of him. Of those who did know the right-wing pastor, they had a mostly negative view of him. (For perspective, this same poll found that 80 percent of Nicaraguans had a positive view of the leftist President Daniel Ortega, and just 11 percent had a negative view.)

A Nicaraguan activist told The Grayzone that figures like Cerrato “don’t have much local influence. But he is an Evangelical pastor who have the ability to influence many Evangelical groups.” “He does not have a lot of people, he has one of the parties with very few votes,” the activist said. “But after the coup attempt they have tried to become more influential.”

The US government has a long history of elevating fringe far-right figures like these in coup efforts targeting independent leftist governments in Latin America.

In the putsch against Bolivia’s democratically elected leftist government in November 2019, for instance, Washington supported the installation of a Christian extremist with a long and documented history of anti-indigenous racism, Jeanine Añez. Her fringe opposition party also reaped just over 4 percent of the vote in the 2019 general elections.

More US-backed opposition groups leading Nicaragua alliance efforts

The opposition is moving towards greater unity while the Trump administration escalates its pressure campaign against Nicaragua’s government.

On January 31, the acting assistant secretary for the US State Department’s Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Michael G. Kozak, tweeted condemnation of the elected Ortega government and expressed support for the major right-wing newspaper, La Prensa.

Owned by the oligarchic Chamorro family, La Prensa is the traditional mouthpiece for the opposition. It has a long history of receiving funding from the US government through the CIA front the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and was indispensable in the US government’s propaganda campaign against Nicaragua during its Contra proxy war in the 1980s.

The January 30 press conference held by Nicaragua’s Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy featured several other prominent right-wing opposition activists who are backed by Washington.

Among the co-sponsors was Juan Sebastián Chamorro of the powerful Chamorro clan, a wealthy family that has controlled Nicaragua for much of its history. His neoliberal think tank, the Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUNIDES), has been bankrolled with millions of dollars by the US government's soft-power arm the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and used as a conduit for funding smaller opposition groups.

Helping to organize the press conference was the group Blue and White National Unity (UNAB). Like the right-wing Civic Alliance, the UNAB was founded in 2018, in the wake of the failed coup attempt. It is an integral part of the US- and EU-backed efforts to form an opposition alliance. UNAB has even changed its photos on social media to call for a "National Coalition."

Carlos Fonseca Teran is the son of Sandinista founder Carlos Fonseca and a leader and thinker in his own right. In this article, he compares and contrasts the attempted 2018 coup with the 2019 popular uprising against IMF structural adjustment policies in Ecuador. Under Ecuador's former President Rafael Correa (2007-2017), it was considered part of the Pink Tide of countries leaning toward socialism in Latin America. Current President Lenin Moreno was Correa's vice-president and was elected to succeed him on a platform of continuing Correa's economic policies. Instead he immediately began privatizing the economy, reinstating neoliberal policies, and criminalizing Correa much like what was done to Lula in Brazil.

Differences between an Attempted Coup D'état and a Popular Civic Insurrection

By Carlos Fonseca Teran, translated to English by Nan McCurdy, October 16, 2019
https://afgj.org/differences-between-an-attempted-coup-detat-and-a-popular-civic-insurrection

1. In Nicaragua, the 2018 crisis was triggered by opposition to social security reforms replacing those the International Monetary Fund (IMF) wanted to impose. The government reforms were opposed to the interests of big business, and favorable to the interests of working people.

In Ecuador, the current crisis was triggered by the obedient application by the government of the policies dictated by the IMF to the detriment of the people and for the benefit of the big businessmen.

2. In the riots in Nicaragua armed groups attacked the police and supporters of the revolutionary process, as a result of which there were deaths on both sides. The number of deaths among the Sandinistas were higher than among the opponents.

In Ecuador the protests are carried out without the use of weapons (through October 11 there was no evidence of any protester being armed) and there are no violent attacks on government supporters. Government supporters have not demonstrated in defense of the policies of a shaky government that responds to the interests of the elites, unlike Nicaragua, where with a popular and revolutionary government, hundreds of thousands of citizens demonstrated in defense of their government and their revolutionary project.

3. In Nicaragua, the government called for dialogue from the very first moment of the crisis and, in order to create an environment conducive to it, provisionally repealed the social security reforms.

In Ecuador, the first thing the government did was to say that the measures applied remained firm.

4. In Nicaragua, as a sign of good will, the government sent the police to their barracks, which were besieged by violent armed groups. And with the police in their barracks, the number of deaths per day increased, demonstrating that the deaths were not the result of any repression.

In Ecuador, police forces have been active in permanently repressing demonstrators.

5. In Nicaragua, the armed and violent groups, taking advantage of the police in their barracks and the willingness of the Sandinista Front to engage in dialogue, and in collusion with organized crime, took possession of entire cities. They kidnapped their inhabitants, capturing Sandinista militants, torturing and murdering them. As a result of this, there were more deaths at the opposition roadblocks than in the street confrontations during the offensive to recover the cities and other strongholds of the armed opposition by dismantling of the roadblocks.

In Ecuador there have been no reprisals by demonstrators against government supporters, nor has there been armed and violent territorial control by government opponents.

6. In Nicaragua, after the repeal of the social security reforms, the opposition did not raise any other social demands because it is Sandinismo that has defended those demands. Social rights which were lost while the current opposition governed were recuperated by the Sandinista government through its policies. Those demands had been ignored by the neo-liberal governments of the time and the rights of the people were trampled underfoot.

In Ecuador the demonstrators made a whole series of social demands provoked by the neoliberal policies applied by the current government. Among those demands are:

-Restore fuel subsidies, recently eliminated by the government, thus provoking a strong rise in the prices of basic necessities;

-The re-application of taxes and tariffs to vehicles and materials that form the fixed capital of the big companies, which had been eliminated, the State ceasing to receive a great amount of resources that could be used in benefit of the most impoverished sectors.

-The maintenance of workers' salaries and of the public employees' thirty days' vacation, which was recently eliminated; and repeal of a 20% reduction in salaries established for contract renewals and of the monthly donation to the State of a day's salary by public employees.

7. In Nicaragua, opposition actions were financed by foreign agencies, among them the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which are used by the United States to destabilize governments not behaving in its interests. Big business, the right-wing media, the traditional politicians of the "sell-out" parties, and the leadership of the Catholic Church participated.

In Ecuador, the protests have been promoted by social organizations, trade unions, indigenous and other organized sectors of society, as well as by revolutionary political militancy, identified with the interests of the people. On the contrary, private enterprise, the right-wing media, right-

wing politicians and their parties, and the Catholic ecclesiastical leadership support the government and repudiate the demonstrators.

8. In Nicaragua, destabilizing actions were possible thanks in large part to the manipulation of the media and social networks with false news and memes.

In Ecuador, the actions of the popular movement in rebellion against neoliberal policies did not arise from virtual reality, but from the true reality faced by the Ecuadorian people, with a brutal rise in the cost of living, among other social calamities against which that brave people rose.

9. In Nicaragua there was no situation that justified early elections; the government was always engaged in dialogue, which was repeatedly suspended by the opposition, and the Nicaraguan Constitution does not contemplate early elections.

In Ecuador, the Constitution provides for the holding of early elections in situations of national upheaval and even establishes the corresponding procedures.

10. In Nicaragua, the imperialist powers headed by the United States, as well as their international instruments such as the Organization of American States (OAS), publicly supported the opposition in its attempt to overthrow the Sandinista government.

In Ecuador it is the opposite: the reactionary forces of the world's powerful support the neoliberal government and reject the actions of the popular sectors that claim their rights against the policies of the current government.

Finally, A brief Reflection

As we have seen, the differences are profound between an attempt to violently overthrow a legitimate government that defends the interests of the people and the nation against the pretensions of imperialism, which tries to impose its will and intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign countries, and that of an unarmed popular rebellion, demanding rights curtailed by a government that defends the interests of the oligarchy and responds to the dictates of imperialism through organizations such as the IMF.

Almost all of the leftist governments that emerged in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1999 after the triumph of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela emerged from popular struggle, rather than from electoral processes. These were rather the culmination of those struggles, the product of which in some countries neoliberal governments had even been overthrown (up to three presidents in a week in the case of Argentina, as well as different governments of that type in Bolivia, Ecuador and Brazil). In the case of Venezuela, there had been a patriotic armed rebellion of military forces committed to the ideals of Simón Bolívar, shortly after the massacre of a popular uprising by the very democratic government of Carlos Andrés Pérez, who in life was a great friend of the opponents described above.

It is impossible for the people to conquer power and start a revolutionary process if not through popular struggle, regardless of whether it later has political expressions of an electoral type, which in the current world political conditions are also necessary.

In the case of Nicaragua, for example, Sandinismo would never have returned to power without the accumulated popular struggles waged against neoliberalism in the seventeen years (1990-2006) in which the right wing governed our country in favor of the rich and the US, despite which Sandinismo never proposed to overthrow any of those puppet governments of imperialism

which were similar to that of Somoza. But in the case of Somoza, conditions did not allow for a peaceful and electoral solution.

When there were popular uprisings in the nineties against the neoliberal policies, a certain correlation of forces was achieved. They negotiated to reach at least partially the popular demands that motivated those protests, and the popular forces demobilized temporarily by their own will and political discipline, contrary to what happened with the coup forces last year, whose only objective was the overthrow of the Sandinista government.

Now a very beautiful slogan has emerged, inspired by that of the time of the guerrilla struggle in El Salvador, which said: “If Nicaragua won, El Salvador will win. This new slogan now is: “If Nicaragua won, Ecuador will win.”

If Nicaragua defeated the forces of greed led by U.S. imperialism and succeeded in preventing them from overthrowing our revolutionary government, Ecuador will defeat those same forces, but in their case they are in government.

…through organized popular struggle, and led by a revolutionary political vanguard upholding a political program oriented to social transformations that guarantee the improvement of the life of the people through a just distribution of wealth and the exercise of political and economic power by the organized popular forces, under the guidance of a political force which lives up to the people to which it belongs and whose struggle it makes its own to conquer popular victory. The godchildren of imperialism and the traitorous rulers of Ecuador could not and will not be able to confront this heroic people mobilized in permanent and victorious popular struggle.

Until victory, always beyond: Homeland, freedom or death.

This article points to the irony of the Nicaraguan opposition, which likes to portray itself as pro-democracy and pro-freedom, speaking in support of the coup in Bolivia which has violently oppressed indigenous citizens and other vulnerable persons. Evidence is provided in the form of the opposition’s tweets.

NicaNotes: Nicaraguan Opposition Praises Bolivian Coup

By Chuck Kaufman, November 20, 2019
https://afgj.org/nicanotes-nicaraguan-opposition-praises-bolivian-coup

Anyone who remains under the illusion that the opposition behind the 2018 failed coup in Nicaragua was rising up from the Left should wake up and smell the coffee as the groups representing the coup mongers fall over themselves to praise the ultra-right, anti-indigenous coup in Bolivia. Have you seen the quote from the self-declared “President” of Bolivia, opposition legislator Jeanine Anez? “I dream of a Bolivia free of satanic indigenous rituals. The city is not for the Indians, they should go to the highlands or to Chaco!” the Evangelical Christian-Fascist said in 2006. This virulent strain of racism against the indigenous peoples of Bolivia is a return to governance by the traditional Bolivian oligarchy which has always had the support of the US government and transnational corporations. These are the kind of friends that even the Sandinista Renovation Movement is consorting with these days and for the last several years.

It is interesting to note that Amnesty International, which has had a lot of anti-government, poorly documented accusations to make against the government of Nicaragua, has said not one word about the violent coup in Bolivia that has left at least 18 supporters of the constitutional

government dead. I have not seen statements by any other corporate-supported international human rights organizations that would indicate any concern about human rights in Bolivia.

It is also worth noting that the Peasant Movement of Nicaragua from Exile, which brought to fame Francisca Ramirez (supposedly a peasant environmentalist being repressed by the Ortega government), has taken the side of the Bolivian oligarchy, calling them “brothers” in their statement below.

The putsch in Nicaragua in April 2018, was the first test of the Trump regime to overthrow the governments of the so-called “Pink Tide” that was fulfilling Bolivar’s dream of a politically and economically integrated Latin America independent of the “Colossus of the North.” The coup effort failed there and multiple attempts failed in Venezuela as the most recent effort by US anointed fake president Juan Guido fell flat this past Saturday.

The jury is still out on whether it will succeed in Bolivia as the unions and popular movements that brought Evo Morales to power through the ballot box, and which forced the resignation of successive neoliberal governments prior to his election, organize a strong fight-back to the coup. On the political side, the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) political party, which controls the national legislature, managed to run a police gauntlet and achieve a quorum to elect new officers in place of those forced out by the army. They now have the stronger case of constitutional succession to the presidency than the racist Jeanine Anez! Whether the constitutional order will be restored will depend on the courage of the Bolivian people and the solidarity of the international community.

As far as the Nicaraguan opposition goes, we know them by their words and their actions. Below are some of their tweets, with English translations further below. Pay particular attention to what our former friends in the MRS have to say, especially their praise for the Bolivian army and police and their claim of proven electoral fraud, when three weeks after the election not a shred of evidence of fraud has been presented in any national or international forum.

Tweets and Facebook quotes about Bolivia from opposition groups in Nicaragua, November 2019

Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy, 11 Nov at 18:09:
Bolivians demonstrated that unity is the key to asserting the will of the people.
"…THESE EVENTS SEND A STRONG SIGNAL TO THE ILLEGITIMATE REGIMES IN VENEZUELA AND NICARAGUA THAT DEMOCRACY AND THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS PREVAIL" – Extract from President Donald J. Trump's statement on the resignation of Bolivian President Evo Morales – 10 Nov. 2019

Articulation of Social Movements and CSOs Nicaragua, 6 h:

From the Articulation of Social Movements we embrace the demands of the Bolivian people who have achieved the resignation of Evo Morales, in their legitimate right to social protest and in the defense of the popular will that can remove or put aside their rulers when they stop listening to and obeying those who are owed, the people. #OnlythePeopleSavethePeople
TRIUMPH BELONGS TO THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE, AND THE PEOPLE HAVE TO REMAIN

University Coordinator – D…, CudjNicaragua:
In Bolivia, the power of the united people triumphed, because Evo Morales has just resigned from the presidency and left the country.
VIVA BOLIVIA LIBRE!
THE POLICE WITH THEIR PEOPLE!

Blue and White National Unity, 10 Nov, at 17:09:
The great achievement of the people of Bolivia brings us hope, only a people in Resistance guarantees freedom!
National Unity
CONGRATULATIONS BOLIVIAN PEOPLE
Nicaragua is with you

Peasant Movement of Nicaragua from Exile, Nov 10, at 15:43:
#The Last dictator Evo Morales RESIGNS the Presidency!
Congratulations to Our Bolivarian Brother People

Sandinista Renewal Movement (Official Website), November 10 at 4:08 PM:

Victory for democracy in Bolivia

The MRS salutes, and feels as its own, the democratic struggle in Bolivia that has culminated in the resignation of Evo Morales.

Evo Morales, contrary to the popular will expressed in the 2016 referendum, in which the majority of the population said NO to re-election, resorted to legal tricks to participate in the elections of October 27, in which he executed a fraud to remain in power.

The mobilization of the Bolivian people, the international pressure, the decorous role of the armed forces and the police, who refused to repress the Bolivian people, have achieved not only the convocation of new elections, but also the resignation of Morales, the main architect of the proven fraud and the main obstacle to respect for Bolivian institutions.

Nicaraguans will continue the heroic citizen mobilization that has taken place in the last 17 months and that, despite the crimes and repression of the Ortega Murillo dictatorship, have made possible the national and international isolation of the regime, to the point of placing it in an irreversible and terminal crisis that can only lead to a Nicaragua with justice and democracy.

Our greetings to the Bolivian people for their democratic conquest.

Managua 10 November 2019

The Briefs which follow are summaries of articles by major Nicaraguan print media. In chronological order, they follow 2019 events of interest related to activities of the opposition.

Related NicaNotes News Briefs

107 Protesters Briefly Detained on Saturday
The National Police released 107 people detained during an opposition demonstration on March 16 in Managua. The detainees were handed over to Apostolic Nuncio Waldemar Stanislaw Sommertag,

Human Rights Ombudsman Dr. Corina Centeno, and members of the Nicaraguan Truth, Justice and Peace Commission. Despite the fact that there was no permit issued by authorities to carry out activities that would threaten the safety of the population, a group of under 150 demonstrated and attacked some people near the Metro Centro Mall. The detainees were in good health when released. (Radio la Primerisima, 3/17/19)

Protesters Create Chaos at Shopping Mall
Three wounded and a brutally beaten citizen is the toll of the small sit-in held the afternoon of March 30 at the Metrocentro mall. Another small group tried to do the same at the Galeria Mall but they were rejected by the shoppers. Nothing similar took place anywhere else in the country. In fact, the beaches were full of people enjoying themselves. The National Police reported that the group brutally beat Germán Félix Dávila Blanco, 70 years old, who was on the outskirts of that shopping center. In a communiqué issued by Commissioner General Jaime Antonio Vanegas, the authorities said that Dávila is hospitalized in a delicate state as a result of the beating. In another video at the mall the protesters verbally abused women and children. The abused, rather than the abusers, were escorted out by mall security. In the images broadcast by the media those who punched and kicked Davila wore hoods. But one of them is seen in another video receiving orientations from Zayda Hernandez, one of the youth leaders with the opposition in the May 2018 dialogue. A small group of opposition members has staged violent protests the last three Saturdays apparently to try to undermine the negotiations between the opposition and the government. See videos in these links: http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/261029/vandalos-golpean-brutalmente-a-un-ciudadano-en-las-afueras-de-metrocentro/, https://www.tn8.tv/nacionales/472079-denuncian-grupos-derecha-agredir-y-provocar-caos-tarde-sabado/ (La Primerisima, Canal 8, 3/31/19)

Daniel Accuses Extremist Groups of Attempting against Nicaragua's Stability
At a meeting with new ambassadors on April 3 President Daniel Ortega highlighted the agreements reached with the opposition at the negotiating table, despite extremist, radical and fascist groups that threaten stability in Nicaragua. "We are committed to peace, in all fields we are committed to peace, we want peace with security, stability, free from threats of the use of force," he said. He added that despite the conspiracies, the government has always bet on dialogue and continues to seek mechanisms to find peace even though time was very short and negotiations complex. "Extremist, radical groups are taking possession, and we are in that struggle seeking peace and stability without ignoring that in our region we are not the only ones in this struggle," Ortega added.

Ortega highlighted Nicaragua's commitment to peace, a peace based on respect for other nations, without intervening and threatening actions that endanger the security of families and the people in general. "We are committed to peace in all areas, we want peace with security, stability, free from threats, the use of force. What country can develop if it is under the threat of the use of force? The United Nations has a very clear article that is a commitment of all the countries that adhere to the United Nations, where we pledge not to use force and not to threaten force."

President Ortega said there is a solution to stop the advance of global warming. He said we need commitments and investments to save life on the planet; also, migration demands investments so that people who are in conditions of greater exclusion and poverty can strengthen themselves. If they do not want rivers of migrants overflowing to Europe and North America, then we have to invest in the countries and the people to stop this problem, taking into account that the people come from countries that have been historically excluded, stripped of their wealth and resources. It is not a question of compensation or of compensating these peoples but of investments, he said.

The new ambassadors are from Norway, Mexico, Sweden, Guatemala, Bulgaria, Zambia, Poland, Panama, Yemen, Cuba, India, Ireland, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Venezuela, Hungary, Vietnam, Cuba, Philippines. (Radio La Primerisima, 4/5/19)

President Daniel Ortega Honors Bismarck Martinez
The government and the FSLN on June 5 paid tribute to Sandinista Bismarck Martinez with posthumous ceremonies at the National Palace of Culture which lasted two days. Thousands of Sandinistas lined up to enter Sandino Hall at the National Palace to pay tribute to the victim of last year's hate crimes whose remains were recently found. President Daniel Ortega said that this was "a horrendous crime, and full of all the evil we can imagine." "Similar to the practices of the fascists who, after starving millions of human beings, Jews, who were persecuted and imprisoned, then took them to concentration camps and to the ovens, to burn them," he said. "It seems that the same fascists who committed those crimes were present here in our homeland, to sow terror." Ortega asked why those who call themselves democrats on the opposition side have not condemned these hate crimes, nor have they issued any communiqués. He added, "Nor have we heard any communiqué from the Bishops. We have not heard it! No communiqué from the Bishop's Conference condemning these crimes and this crime in particular, which was most brutal with his disappearance." "We haven't heard from any of the human rights bodies – they were not concerned about looking for Bismarck's grave." He stated that the murder of Martinez recalls the way in which Anastasio Somoza Garcia ordered the killing of General Augusto C. Sandino, whose body was never found. Ortega called on Nicaraguans to fight for peace, stability, and security even at the cost "of our own lives." (Informe Pastran, 6/5/19; El 19 Digital, 6/6/19; Radiolaprimerisima.com, 6/6/19)

People of Masaya Remember Carolina Collado, Killed in Attempted Coup
Municipal worker Carolina Collado was shot last June 23 in Masaya. On June 21, 2019, the people of Masaya came out to remember her. Collado was one of many people killed in Masaya by the right-wing violence that also tortured and killed police, other citizens, and destroyed dozens of private homes, businesses and government buildings, usually with arson as was the case of the Artisanry Market**.** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSNUskw3Sp8 (el19Digital, 6/23/19)

Sandinistas Honor Bismarck Martinez on the One-Year Anniversary of his Kidnapping
Members of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) honored Bismarck Martinez on the first anniversary of his kidnapping and murder during the failed coup. Martinez worked for the Managua municipality. Martínez was kidnapped on June 29 at a roadblock in Jinotepe. Before killing him, his captors subjected him to torture, which they recorded and then broadcast on social networks. Martinez' body was disappeared and it took the National Police eleven months of investigations to find his remains in a site near the Jinotepe baseball stadium, thanks to the statement of one of the criminals, who appears in a recent documentary narrating what happened. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQVSvxAMnj8 (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/29/19)

National Police Pay Homage to Eight Lieutenants Killed in June 2018
The eight police officers, all Lieutenants, were killed in the line of duty in June 2018 during the failed coup attempt. The names of the eight are: José Abraham Martínez, Dixon Bismark Soza, Douglas Mendiola, Marcos González, Carlos José Zamora, Jean Kerry Luna, Zaira Julisa López. "Their blood was like an offering for the peace that we have today that we consolidate to recover the paths of tranquility that we had before 18 April 2018," said Aldo Sáenz Ulloa, Deputy Director General of the National Police. On the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Police they remembered the sacrifice of the 22 officers killed in the attempted coup d'état. Of the eight lieutenants killed in June, 2018, all were killed with firearms; one was killed in Masaya, one in Nagarote, two in Mulukukú, one in Managua near Radio Ya, two in Barrio San Jose Oriental in Managua, and one in Managua near Metrocentro. They all leave children under twelve. (Radio la Primerisima

Video of Opposition Groups Meeting in Costa Rica: Evidence of Their Violent Past
The video of the meeting of Nicaraguan opposition groups in Costa Rica on July 28 was a massive confession of criminal acts perpetrated during the attempted coup d'état of April 2018 that destabilized the country with violence and submerged Nicaragua in instability, said National Assembly Deputy Wilfredo Navarro. "The roadblocks were neither a peaceful nor a civic struggle."

Navarro said, “What happened in Costa Rica reflects the lack of support for the Civic Alliance and was a Mafia fight among themselves; they confess that they committed criminal terrorist acts, murdered people; that they used weapons; they recognize that they murdered Sandinistas. That is to say, those videos from Costa Rica reflect what has been said – that they are the ones who orchestrated the failed coup d’état.” He added that the accomplices of these terrorist acts “are the gringos [United States]” who financed the murder of civilians in Nicaragua. (Canal 8, 7/29/19)

Matagalpa remembers Lenin Mendiola on the First Anniversary of his Assassination
On the one year anniversary of the murder of Sandinista Lenin Mendiola on August 11, family and friends paid tribute to him by taking flowers to his tomb. Four men shot him in Matagalpa during a march that was arranged as a cover for his murder. Mendiola, is the son of well-known and much-loved Sandinistas, Bernardino Diaz Ochoa and Benigna Mendiola, historic peasant and union leaders, both tortured and imprisoned by the Somoza National Guard. The Municipal Cemetery visit was led by his mother, Benigna Mendiola. There was also a church service and commemorative activities at the “Heroes and Martyrs” Cultural Center in Matagalpa. (el19Digistal, 8/12/19)

National Assembly Reforms Law against Money Laundering
The Nicaragua National Assembly approved the Reform to the Financial Analysis Unit (UAF) Law, establishing an institutional link between the UAF and the specialized unit to be created in the Judiciary to receive reports of unusual operations generated by lawyers and notaries public as subjects bound by the law against money laundering. Congressman Walmaro Gutiérrez, President of the Commission on Economy and Budget of the National Assembly, explained the purpose of the reforms and noted that Nicaragua intends to maintain strict compliance with the recommendations issued by the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFILAT), “because we are aware of the need to combat … organized crime in all its expressions.” Nicaragua is a full member of the International Financial Action Group (GAFI) and the Latin America Financial Action Group (GAFILAT). (Nicaragua News, 9/6/19)

Opposition Member Returns to Nicaragua After a Year in the US
Lesther Aleman became well-known in Nicaragua after he yelled at President Ortega and demanded his resignation on the first day of the Dialogue in May 2018. He says he has returned to help unify the divided opposition in order to win the 2021 elections. He also told a group of at least twenty journalists on October 7 who met him at the airport that he would join the opposition group Civic Alliance. “I took up the struggle in the first days of April and that hasn’t changed. I have the same unmovable beliefs…we went to the streets to bring about change” proclaimed Aleman. In recent weeks a number of well-known opposition members have returned to Nicaragua. And some reorganized and went to Washington DC to ask for more sanctions. (La Prensa, 10/7/19)

Opposition Members and Groups at War over US Funding
During recent weeks, opposition groups have been busy disqualifying one another in their fight over US funds. One opposition member, Victor Cuadras, who is living in Costa Rica, started a social media war among the opposition groups on Oct. 10 when he revealed that, thus far in 2019, opposition groups have received US$7.37 million of an alleged US$15 million from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) “and other Washington-based agencies.” He wrote, “The biggest recipients of this money are the Civic Alliance, UNAB (Blue and White National Unity) and the people that make up these groups.” Felix Maradiaga on television recently said that the opposition has received US$15 million since 2015 from USAID – but he claims it’s all above board because it was used for 70 activities (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_aZ0wdMFDM)! Others complain because there is no accounting for money.

In other opposition news, big business is not currently supporting strikes and civil disobedience because they disrupt their businesses. They won’t allow businesswoman Irlanda Jerez to be part of the new Civic Alliance Board due to her strident calls from Miami for civil unrest. And finally,

opposition leader Bosco Matamorros attacked the Civic Alliance for wanting hegemony with the government in electoral law negotiations. (Radio La Primerisima, 10/11/19, youtube)

Deputy Navarro Says Opposition Money Should be Investigated
The president of the Constitutionalist Liberal Movement Party, Deputy Wilfredo Navarro, is of the opinion that the government should investigate the destination and use of the money that the United States has given to the opposition, "because there are business foundations that are receiving and distributing millions of dollars and that is not in the scope of their work; and there are banks that allow them to have bank accounts for that." "There is a big party with that money, a mess, a division that is not ideological, but about money…" he said. "That is illegal money because it is for destabilization of Nicaragua, and they are handling the cash at their discretion, but it is absolutely clear that most of that money goes into their pockets." Navarro asked how all their airfare, hotels, and travel expenses are paid, both in Nicaragua and abroad, "because they say they haven't received any money, but on the USAID website there is information about everything they have been given." Navarro considers that "the government and the Financial Analysis Unit can investigate the millions that have entered the country and the criminal authorities must investigate it because that is money laundering and has not gone through the proper controls." He exemplified that the entry into the country of more than US$10 thousand has to be reported "because otherwise it becomes a crime of evasion and money laundering and violates the Criminal Code and the FAU can determine to whom the money was given…, whether or not it complies with banking regulations, money laundering, bank controls against terrorism and whether that money entered illegally. The money was handed over, the money was received, Maradiaga accepted it in public," said Deputy Narvaez.

The opposition alliance alleges they did not receive part of the 17, 15 or 13 million dollars through USAID, but in recent days they bought 10 new Chevrolet vans for more than US$250,000. If they don't receive US financing where did the money come from? The vans were distributed to opposition leaders. And what about today's airline tickets and reservations for 15 people who will travel to Washington in the next few days, who paid for them? (Informe Pastran, 10/15/19)

Rift between Opposition Groups
A group of activists who call themselves an association of political prisoners protested in a private meeting because the *Alliance* dominated by businessmen and the UNAB-MRS do not support them, put obstacles in their way because they do not want them to go on hunger strike, nor do they want them to take over the Catholic churches. In a meeting led by José Merlo, father of Scannierth Merlo Lacayo, whose audio of the meeting was leaked, Merlo accuses the *Alliance* and UNAB-MRS of sabotaging them saying that he had to speak directly with the U.S. ambassador to the OAS, Carlos Trujillo. This group complains that they have not been given any of the US$17 million USAID dollars for the opposition. Some of those who claimed to be on hunger strike admitted that they were eating in the church and that they left not of their own free will but because the priests in charge of the Managua Cathedral and Sister Arelys demanded they leave the church. "We were told to go," they said. One of the women present said that *Alliance* activist Leslie Rayo called them on the phone to ask them to leave the Cathedral and tell them to coordinate with the *Alliance*. Merlo said they have not received money from businessmen that USAID had given for them. (Informe Pastran 11/25/19)

Opposition News
Recently opposition activists set off bombs in Masaya in an effort to terrorize the local population. On Nov. 14, a group of 13 opposition activists were detained by the police in Masaya. They said they were there to deliver water and medicine to a group of hunger strikers in the San Miguel Church, however police found a cache of weapons and explosives on them and they were therefore arrested. Corporate media, Amnesty International and the like seem to always print the opposition narrative, in this case, that they were unjustly arrested and that this represents a 'new wave of repression' by the government. Government fears are based on previous opposition use of churches as command posts for armed attacks as they did during the coup.

In a different incident, at the end of November, two police officers were killed by an armed opposition gang in Masaya. Four gang members also died and two were arrested; the opposition is now claiming that they were their supporters. If this is true, it means that the opposition is effectively admitting that they are armed (several weapons were recovered in both incidents). Masaya residents are fearful of a return to violence and have welcomed the police presence in their city as a way of ensuring their safety.

On 25 November, opposition journalist Carlos Fernando Chamorro returned, bringing an end to almost a year of self-imposed exile in Costa Rica. At least seven more former exiles arrived with him, five of whom are opposition journalists. This seems to be a clear signal that Nicaragua's opposition is once again preparing for action here. Already, fake news stories are appearing almost daily on social media, some of them even using video footage from last year and claiming that it is related to events taking place now. And, as in 2018, corporate media such as the UK Guardian merely repeat the false claims and accusations of the opposition. It is interesting to note that even these high-level opposition members admit they did not have one problem returning to Nicaragua. (NSCAG report, Informe Pastran, Radiolaprimerisima, late Nov., early Dec., 2019)

Opposition Leader Aspires to the Presidency
Felix Maradiaga acknowledged that the opposition hasn't agreed on a coalition. Maradiaga maintains that he is entitled to his presidential aspirations but would like to be the opposition candidate through a primary election process and not just named. He said he would agree to much of the Sandinista government's social programs "that aren't necessarily bad", exalting Zero Hunger, microcredit, disaster prevention, among others. But he also said he would eliminate transportation subsidies for the poor. Maradiaga has to displace several other candidates from big capital, which looks improbable. (Radiolaprimerisima, Informe Pastran, 12/13/19, Accion 10, 12/3/19)

Opposition Leader Offends Humble Street Vender and Taunts the Police
After a meeting at an expensive hotel by the Metrocentro Mall in Managua on Dec. 12, a small group of the opposition headed by Juan Sebastian Chamorro tried to incite violence. Chamorro shouted insults at a street vendor and pushed a woman. This can be seen in videos and photos circulating on social media. Also clear is how the group of opposition provoked the police that were there to maintain order and safety for the people. In the first short video Chamorro can be clearly seen angrily calling the street vendor a "piece of sh*t". Then in the second video the humble man says "No, you are the piece of sh*t, because it's you all who sell out the country." In the third video Chamorro and a few others taunt the police who have arrived on the scene. http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/274885/juan-chamorro-agrede-a-mujer-y-un-vendedor-en-metrocentro/

As usual, the opposition that attempted a coup in 2018 continues to try to create chaos to sell the false idea that Nicaragua is not at peace, and also to justify the millions of dollars sent to them by the foreign agencies that sponsor coups d'état. "Every day we see the arrogance of certain people, who in addition to believing themselves to be superior, are traitors and believe that their ancestry and surnames give them the right to mistreat, offend and humiliate the humble people," lamented the Vice President Rosario Murillo. "Every day we talk about those who ignore the human rights of people, always, historically, and above all, never speak of the human rights of the impoverished, of the excluded, of those discarded by them," she added. (Radiolaprimerisima, 12/13/19)

Young Man Attacked at UCA Demands Justice
José Leonel Suazo, who works as a gardener in a Managua hospital and was savagely attacked by a group of delinquents at the Central American University (UCA), demanded justice in this case on Feb. 5 because his rights were violated. In declarations to Juventud Presidente, Suazo explained that when he went to seek information at the UCA to study English he had no idea that he would be savagely attacked. "I was there to preregister for English; when I was leaving, I found that the gate was closed and that there was a protest. They were yelling at me but I didn't think about it because I

thought it wasn't me, but then they jumped me and took my phone, and they began to beat me," said Suazo. One of the aggressors hit him with a belt on his back, while others kicked him, at which time the UCA security guards arrived but the situation got worse. "Suddenly I felt the blow on one part of my hand and that is why it is so swollen. They held me and hit me one after the other," added Suazo. They demanded, and he proceeded to show them his documents, where they found a card from the National Police Commissariat, and they continued beating him. "They said I was a policeman, however the card does not say that I am a policeman; I am a gardener, I make an honest living, I work in a hospital," he stressed.

Suazo asked the authorities at the Central American University to expel his attackers. "I am asking that my rights be respected; it is regrettable that a human rights organization such as the IACHR has not taken a stand on my case, so I am going to take precautionary measures, I am going to demand my legal rights. Today it happened to me, we don't know who it will happen to next." Short documentary here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_jd9lG5FYZg (Radiolaprimerisima, 2/6/20)

Opposition Member Admits They Lobby for Sanctions

Opposition activist Violeta Granera admitted that they have lobbied for the aggressions against Nicaragua, which they call sanctions, and that they ask for external pressure to help them with their internal pretensions. On Radio Corporación she said that they "have always lobbied for international sanctions to be stronger every day against Nicaragua." (Informe Pastran, 3/13/20)

Afterword

Nicaragua Puts People First In Pandemic Response

Nan McCurdy

Recently a Nicaraguan friend who works in El Salvador was in her hometown of Estelí and wrote this:

I remember it was mid-February when I came to the Hospital in Estelí to talk with the assistant director of the Lab, and I asked him: do you think that coronavirus will come to these countries? He said: of course, no one can stop that virus, it is on its way now. Then he said that Ministry of Health workers had already received three preparatory trainings in Managua with PAHO (Pan-American Health Organization) staff. He said: We have already begun to prepare for the pandemic.

If you go to the end of this Epilogue and read through the NicaNotes news briefs, you will understand the enormous efforts that Nicaragua has made to plan, organize, train personnel, and prepare the health system to prevent and then contain the virus, while ensuring that the health system was ready to treat people once it arrived and at the same time continue to provide universal healthcare and treatment for other illnesses.

There is a wealth of information and facts in the news briefs at the end of this chapter as well as in the superb articles included below. Nevertheless, it is important to mention here a few of the things that Nicaragua is doing and for which they will likely someday be lauded and emulated, beginning with how incredibly well they are managing the pandemic given a scarcity of funds due to the cruel and internationally illegal US sanctions against the country.

Nicaragua continues to be an example to the world with their forethought, hard work and vision, especially so for other impoverished nations that cannot afford to impose a quarantine given that so many of their people live hand to mouth. The government has truly mastered doing everything possible to contain Covid-19 while keeping much of the economy open and the people free from hunger. For example, Nicaragua maintained their national school lunch program for all preschool and primary school students which adds to the food security and health of the population; secondary students in the countryside also benefit.

This was possible because of the national food security development policies over the last fourteen years, making sure sufficient corn, beans, rice, milk, plantain, vegetables and more are produced so that the people can be healthy. Another amazing example for the world. Nicaragua has even sent beans to El Salvador. In the articles below that compare how Nicaragua has dealt with the virus in contrast to El Salvador and Honduras, you will read the tragic news of growing hunger in neighboring countries.

Another point to note is that Nicaragua has the best public health system by far in the region including in comparisons and percentage of GDP spent, even with Mexico. Their model of community-based health training of local volunteers who accompany the Health Ministry (MINSA) in all of their campaigns is an example for the world. The Sandinistas initiated award-winning health work including world-renowned vaccination campaigns, elimination of polio and great reduction in malaria, measles, dengue and other illnesses in 1979, with the triumph of the Revolution.

MINSA began to train community members to help carry out those campaigns. I remember riding donkeys and horses to the remote villages of the municipality of San Juan de Limay with other health Brigadistas and MINSA personnel from 1985 to 1988 to vaccinate babies, children and women. Seventeen years of three neo-liberal governments by and for the wealthy eliminated much of this, but since 2007 the Sandinista government has made free health care and education again their priority. A recent July 7 Finance Ministry report showed that 40 cents of every dollar spent is for health care and education. An extremely high percentage of Nicaragua's population are vaccinated against twelve diseases, and at-risk populations are now vaccinated for influenza and pneumonia. Parasite medicine is provided to children every six months. Every effort is made to eliminate two kinds of disease-vector mosquitos that can carry malaria, dengue, Zika and chikungunya, among other preventive actions.

The Sandinista government has built 18 hospitals and planned the construction of 14 more hospitals, 6 of which are under construction.

New Leon Hospital will open in 2020 19Digital

On February 9 MINSA released a "Protocol of Preparation and Response to the Risk of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Nicaragua, "to ensure surveillance and early detection of suspected and confirmed cases. Nicaragua early on trained nearly 40,000 health personnel in prevention and treatment of Covid-19; the more than 150,000 community volunteer health promotors (Brigadistas) who are in every corner of the nation were also trained. In February an educational campaign began in schools, door to door home visits, and in radio and TV spots about the importance of hand washing to kill the virus. Many public hand-washing stations were set up and local authorities began to fumigate buses, markets and other public spaces.

Once Covid-19 arrived people were asked to social distance and use masks where appropriate and take extra precautions if they have pre-existing conditions. Government experts emphasized to the family members of the elderly that they must take extreme care with them. All state institutions, stores, etc. require masks, provide hand sanitizer, check your temperature and have you step on a disinfectant mat before entering. Health professionals and Brigadistas by now have made over 5 million home visits, or at least 4 visits to each home to educate, prevent and check to see if anyone has symptoms of Covid or other illness.

Nicaragua has a free Covid-hotline: phone #132 with 150 staff. The National Covid Information Center is open 24/7 so that anyone can call with any Covid related questions they may have. Frequently when people think they have symptoms they call the hotline, MINSA comes, tests them, comes back with results and provides medicines, and hospitalization if required. All of this completely for free.

Even when there were just a few imported cases, Health centers called MINSA when they suspected a patient might have Covid; MINSA would send a vehicle to pick the person up and take them to the Health Ministry for testing. They also did random tests of health personnel and patients to check for community contagion.

Contrary to the lock down policy in the prison system in the United States, Nicaragua has released into house arrest several thousand prisoners, who have committed less serious offenses, in order to reduce risk of infection in the prison system.

MINSA has also taken serious measures at all entry points like borders and the airport checking people for temperature, countries visited, asking many questions, as well as giving recommendations and requesting them to self-isolate for 14 days. It should be noted that although the procedures have become more stringent with Covid, Nicaragua has done thermal checks of people on entry since the 2009 N1H1 influenza. MINSA then visits and calls those who have arrived to check on their status over the quarantine period. The army is mobilized along the borders with Honduras and Costa Rica to intercept those who cross at blind spots other than official border crossings – not to punish them, but to educate, quarantine and follow up on them. Health Brigadistas report to MINSA when a local who has been working in Costa Rica shows up in the community so MINSA can do their follow-up to manage community contagion.

Nicaragua has reinforced its available human and material resources with medical professionals from Cuba, medicines, protective equipment and hospital equipment from countries like India, Italy, the Russian Federation, Taiwan and South Korea as well as from multilateral institutions like the Pan-American Health Organization and the Bank for Central American Economic Integration. In early July Nicaragua received new ICU beds, ventilators and monitors and more items it had purchased from foreign corporations with money from the national budget.

Along with staff training, 19 hospitals nationwide whose preparation, staffing and equipment was approved by the Pan American Health Organization to deal with the serious Covid-19 cases. The health system has also continued to treat other diseases and ailments of the people such as kidney dialysis, cancer treatment such as radiation and chemotherapy, physical therapy and other procedures and operations. When someone comes to a health center or hospital with symptoms they frequently are tested and/or taken to the correct hospital for treatment.

President Daniel Ortega, in a TV broadcast, made the point that the numbers of deaths from many ailments is higher than those from Covid-19. Official data show that pneumonia cases through May 15 2020 were higher than 2019 but lower than 2016. Being near the equator with two kinds of disease-carrying mosquitos, Nicaragua has many illnesses to deal with that are not a problem in most of the US and Europe. Nicaragua can't just close things down and only treat Covid-19. For example, MINSA continues with house to house fumigation as a major preventative measure against dengue.

The first case of Covid-19 was on March 18 and good contact tracing showed that the cases for nearly two months were limited to those who entered the country with Covid and people who came in contact with them. By May 10 the government was monitoring hundreds of people who had had contact with an imported Covid 19 case and it wasn't until mid-May that some of them started showing symptoms and testing positive. Thus, Nicaragua through all their work was able to avoid community contagion for nearly two months. The vast majority of people who have since died with Covid-19 had serious preexisting conditions like obesity, heart disease, diabetes, renal failure, a variety of lung diseases, cancer and others.

The 1980s saw the literacy campaign, vaccination campaigns to eliminate polio, the efforts to decrease malaria and measles numbers. From 2007 till now stunning improvements in poverty reduction, maternal mortality, infant mortality, life span, a free public health care system with nearly 20 new state of the art hospitals with modern health equipment like linear accelerators, twice as many doctors as in 2007 and more, allowed Nicaragua to lead in the fight against Covid that other nations should emulate.

It is no surprise then that the US has used the Covid-19 crisis for another attempted coup against Nicaragua – the Covid coup. The US has directed, often through its embassy and funding organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy and US Aid for International Development, giving millions of dollars to many of the same

people and nongovernmental organizations that carried out the 2018 coup attempt. They also coerced certain wealthy Nicaraguans to contribute to the regime change efforts by threatening to sanction them individually. These players, the same who headed the US 2018 coup efforts, have led the legion of lies against Nicaragua. One example is when the US financed opposition media claimed that by May there would be more than 20,000 dead from Covid-19; by May 1 there were just two dead.

Terrorizing the population to create panic was an objective in 2018, and also is one now. Unfortunately, this terror campaign worked on a small but significant percentage of people who sadly didn't go to a hospital when they should have, out of fear. Some have paid for that fear with their lives.

In the Nicaraguan opposition press, lies, lies and more lies are printed and televised. Poorly made fake videos abound. And the US and European press, just like in 2018 reprint the articles without ever questioning them or sending reporters to do serious investigation. The US-led opposition has been able to determine the storyline that the international corporate media repeats about Nicaragua and Covid-19, which has been a narrative that says that Nicaragua has been irresponsible in their actions related to Covid-19. There is a media chapter in this book with ample details and examples.

Nicaragua has played an essential role in development of a regional plan to deal with Covid-19 in the Central America Integration System (SICA). Nicaragua helped them work together to jointly request international funding to deal with the Pandemic. However, due to US sanctions very little funding has been received compared to the rest of Central America. Nicaragua has not received emergency funds or concessions from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the Interamerican Development Bank, despite the fact that its programs and execution rate were always cited as being some of the best in the region.

Nicaragua was able to renegotiate a transportation project with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration to use a part of the total amount to support government efforts to deal with the pandemic. And the country has also counted on the solidarity of Cuba, South Korea, Taiwan and PAHO. Unfortunately, in reality, Nicaragua has received little international financial support compared to her neighbors, thanks to continuing US pressure and illegal sanctions.

Honduras, for example, has had several donations directly from the US as well as three large loans from the World Bank for medical supplies. Notoriously, it also has a government which is already accused in the Honduran press and by civil society groups of corruption and misuse of the money. Despite the scale of the assistance, its limited number of hospitals, which are poorly resourced, struggle to cope with the pandemic. At the time of writing (mid-July) there have been over 27,000 virus cases and more than 700 deaths in Honduras, with reports of the health system having collapsed in some departments, such as Choluteca.

But in spite of the restrictions which it suffers, Nicaragua has had more success than her neighbors in handling the pandemic thanks to fourteen years of capacity and infrastructure building in the health sector, excellent planning and coordination with the PAHO and friendly nations as soon as the news of the virus came out, and complete mobilization once it was declared a pandemic.

Time will be the judge with respect to knowing what might have been the very best way to proceed to keep all deaths low for impoverished nations like Nicaragua. "In a context of already gaping inequalities, high levels of informal labor and fragmented health services, the most vulnerable populations and individuals are once again being hit the hardest," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a recent statement. The UN stated on July 9 that the COVID-19 pandemic could push 45 million people from the middle classes into poverty in already economically troubled Latin America and the Caribbean. The World Food Program is fundraising because it has seen that the Covid-19 crisis is causing famine. This is because governments declared quarantine for healthy people, not just for the at-risk populations, and practically closed their economies. Well-off people have savings, pensions and more so that they can stay home for many months. But the majority of the world's population – more than 6 billion people do not have this luxury.

Our educated guess is that the path Nicaragua has chosen of not declaring a quarantine, and their other health and economic policies and programs implemented during the pandemic will result in fewer deaths overall, proportionally, than their neighbors, especially Honduras and Guatemala. And when we say fewer deaths we are talking overall fewer deaths from any illness or suicide during this time period – illnesses that are likely to go up in countries with quarantines related to more unemployment, hunger and thus resulting illnesses.

The following articles are about Nicaragua's Response to Covid-19.

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NicaNotes News Briefs Related to Covid-19 Through July 7, 2020

Modern Mental Health Clinic Inaugurated (Nicaragua News, 2/14/20)
On Feb.14 a mental health clinic was inaugurated at the "Dr. Alejandro Dávila Bolaños" Military Hospital in Managua. In addition to caring for patients with addictions and psychiatric pathologies, the clinic will provide treatment for people under severe stress and will implement training programs for elementary and high school teachers throughout the country for early detection of physical,

sexual and psychological abuse. The Director of the hospital, Dr. Leonso Esquivel said, “The mental health clinic has a team of psychiatrists and psychologists with extensive experience in the treatment of mental disorders in a safe and welcoming environment.

Nicaragua Among Biggest Investors in Public Health (Nicaragua News, 2/18/20)
Feb. 17 the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) presented a report on the percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that each country invests in public health. The report states that Nicaragua is the second highest country in Central American with GDP (7.8%) which puts it in the top ten countries in the continent.

Nicaragua is Building an Unprecedented number of Health Facilities in 2020
(Informe Pastran, 3/11/20)
The Ministry of Health is currently working on 16 hospitals and 41 other health infrastructures. The departmental hospitals in Chinandega and Nueva Segovia, the Leon regional hospital, the Nuevo Amanecer regional hospital on the northern Caribbean coast, the San José de Matiguás primary hospital, the Los Chiles primary hospital in Río San Juan. Some hospitals being rebuilt include: those of Juigalpa which is nearly finished; the primary hospital in Corinto; operating rooms in Managua’s women’s hospital, among others. The Interamerican Development Bank and Nicaragua will build Primary hospitals in Waslala, Matagalpa; Quilalí, Nueva Segovia; Wiwili; Mina El Limón; Jalapa, Nueva Segovia; Nueva Guinea; Siuna; and will rebuild Aldo Chavarria in Managua.

PAHO Recognizes Nicaragua’s Work to Prevent and Prepare for the COVID Virus
(Radiolaprimerisima, 3/12/20) On March 12, the Pan American Health Organization recognized that Nicaragua is working on the preparation for COVID-19 according to the scientific evidence available. “I congratulate the efforts of the Government in the face of this Pandemic, its preparation and the joint and permanent work with PAHO. I reiterate that PAHO will continue to accompany…Nicaragua, hoping that other donors will join the efforts currently being made in all areas of prevention and preparedness,” said Ana Treasure, PAHO representative. “There is no case now in Nicaragua,” the PAHO representative acknowledged. “PAHO will provide technical cooperation for public health issues and to respond to this disease that is new, that we know little about, but that we already have valuable information provided by the Chinese authorities,” she added.

New Oncology Ward Inaugurated at Women’s Hospital (Nicaragua News, 3/12/20)
The Nicaragua Ministry of Health (MINSA) inaugurated the new “Dr. Clemente Guido” Oncology ward at the Bertha Calderón Hospital in Managua. The US$588,581 unit has hospitalization rooms, outpatient clinic, mammography equipment, linear accelerators for radiotherapy, a psychological care unit and nutrition unit. Funding for the oncology ward came from the General Budget of the Republic with support from Taiwan.

Central America Regional Plan in Relation to COVID-19 (Radiolaprimerisima, 3/12/20)
The Central American presidents agreed March 12, through the Central American Integration System (SICA), to implement a regional contingency plan for the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19 and other diseases. The Plan includes joint negotiation and coordination for the purchase of medicines, medical devices and basic materials to avoid shortages, hoarding, and price speculation. They will have common procedures to guarantee migratory conditions protecting human health and safety without distinction of nationality, as well as joint actions to request money from international financial institutions to fund the Regional Contingency Plan that includes measures to mitigate the negative impact of the coronavirus on economic activity. The Heads of State requested that the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), facilitate efforts so that countries can get emergency funds.

Nicaragua Has no Cases of COVID-19 **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 3/15/20)

The Central American Integration System reported on progress made on contingency plans for the prevention and care of COVID-19. Nicaragua, El Salvador and Belize have no cases of COVID-19, while Guatemala has 1, Honduras 3, Costa Rica 26, Panama 36 and the Dominican Republic 11. According to SICA, joint actions have already been identified between the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA) and the Coordination for the Prevention of Disasters in Central America and the Dominican Republic (CEPREDENAC), to activate emergency alerts and link humanitarian responses as soon as possible.

All Borders and Airport Equipped to Detect COVID-19 **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 3/16/20)
The government installed thermal thermometers at migration points to measure the temperature of travelers entering in order to immediately identify possible cases of COVID-19. Since Jan. 30, the government has been implementing health measures to prevent COVID-19, especially at the 15 points of entry into the country. Enrique Bárcenas, Immigration and Foreign Affairs Officer, confirmed that on entering Nicaragua people's temperature is measured by the International Health Office, and if there is no suspicion, they move on to the immigration office and enter Nicaragua without any problem. To see a picture: http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/280689/puestos-fronterizos-cuentan-con-equipos-para-detectar-covid-19/

World Health Organization Working Closely with Nicaragua
(Radiolaprimerisima, 3/16/20, Nicaragua Sandino 3/16/20)
Nicaragua has 19 hospitals prepared for treating people with the virus. It has a Level 3 Biosecurity Lab that can have results in 3 hours. Private and public health staff have been trained in all 153 municipalities. And Nicaragua has testing in all entrances to the country. Ana Solís Ortega, World Health Organization representative said that since this organization declared an international health emergency they have worked with the government in preparedness. "The laboratories have been strengthened with trained personnel to be able to do the tests for Covid-19." WHO/PAHO will continue to work in all aspects with the Ministry of Health and with the inter-institutional commission formed by the government to manage the emergency.

CABEI Will Loan up to 50 Million Dollars to Face the COVID-19 (Radiolaprimerisima, 3/16/20)
The Central American Integration System on March 16 said that the Central American Bank for Economic Integration will provide credit of up to US$50 million per country to face the COVID-19. The Central American Council for Consumer Protection (CONCADECO) has carried out constant monitoring of the different commercialization sites to avoid shortages, hoarding and price speculation of basic consumer goods, medicines, medical devices, raw materials and other goods necessary for the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19.

PAHO/WHO Again Recognizes Nicaragua's Health Preparedness (Radiolaprimerisima, 3/18/20)
March 18, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) again recognized that Nicaragua has a robust health model: "Here in Nicaragua we are working with the health authorities to strengthen the model of family and community care, a robust model that allows us to have a whole network of health services that goes from hospitals to the community and that can carry out measures that we are asking of countries. We are supporting the Ministry of Health, based on the protocols," said PAHO/WHO representative Ana Carolina Solis.

Coronavirus Prevention and Education in Schools (Nicaragua News, 3/18/20) The Ministry of Health and Education, implemented the School Preventative Healthcare Plan to put into practice preventative measures established by the Pan American Health Organization for coronavirus. The plan includes awareness talks with students, teachers, and staff, medical monitoring and increased handwashing.

Training for Vaccination Campaign **(**Nicaragua News, 3/19/20)

Immunization workshops will be organized to train 10,000 medical staff of the 19 Local Healthcare Systems (SILAIS) for the upcoming National Vaccination Campaign to be held in April. Campaigns immunize children, pregnant women and the elderly. This year is particularly important due to the risk of coronavirus that disproportionately attacks people with compromised immune systems.

Nicaragua Well Prepared to Diagnose and Treat Coronavirus (Informe Pastran, 3/20/20)
On Jan. 30, a national inter-institutional commission was set up to strengthen surveillance at the country's entry points, the same day World Health Program (WHO) declared the COVID-19 alert of international importance. The commission includes the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Government, DGA, Civil Aeronautics, Airport Administration, National Port Authority, IPSA, MARENA and the central government. Nicaragua's preparedness and response protocols are updated according to WHO recommendations. Nineteen hospitals are prepared with ventilators, suction devices, vital signs monitors and protective equipment for workers. Health centers and posts are organized for early detection and mechanisms for transfer to designated hospitals. Staff were trained and drills have been conducted in all hospitals and entry points to the country to verify our response capacity.

MINSA diagnoses COVID-19 in the national reference laboratory, recognized by the Pan American Health Organization, PAHO. Nicaragua has learned from meetings with specialists from Taiwanese China, PAHO and the head of the Cuban Medical Brigade, Henry Reeve, on the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. For detection, a swab is taken in the nose or oropharynx and introduced into a viral transport medium and sent to MINSA's Center for Diagnosis. In the lab the virus is destroyed to extract the ribonucleic acid (RNA) with different reagents. A strand of RNA is amplified millions of times so they can see it and determine if the test is positive or not. Nicaragua has a pioneer molecular biology laboratory and is the only one in the region that produces reagents for the serological diagnosis of dengue, for example.

Cuban Doctors in Nicaragua (Radiolaprimerisima, 3/18/20, Informe Pastran, 3/20/20)
The Cuban medical brigade that will help in the containment and care of the COVID-19 cases arrived March 18. Michel Cabrera, head of the delegation, said they will share Cuba's experience in dealing with COVID-19, in prevention and attention. "The objective is to offer our modest experience in the work we have done so far in relation to COVID-19." "We will share our experiences with health officials, and we will learn from their experiences." Roberto López, president of the Institute of Social Security (INSS) said the medicines provided by Cuba were used in China, such as Interferon. "This is comprehensive support and the brigade is composed of epidemiologists, virologists, laboratory specialists. Cuban epidemiologist Yurién Negrín Calvo, who is part of the Medical Brigade that is participating in the prevention and control of coronavirus in Nicaragua, said they are working as a team with MINSA. "It will be, as always, a solidary and unconditional kind of help." They are giving advice on drug protocols including the human recombinant Interferon alpha-2B.

Production of Interferon ALPHA 2B Being Considered **(**Nicaragua News, 3/22/20)
The Health Ministry and Bio Cuba Farma are evaluating mechanisms for the production of Interferon ALFA 2B in Nicaragua. During a visit to the MECHNIKOV Biotechnology plant in Managua, Bio Cuba Farma Representative Martha Ayala said, "Nicaragua already produces drugs such as the H1N1 influenza vaccine at this plant and we believe it is very possible that it can produce interferon ALFA 2B and other drugs made in Cuba that have been effective in treating coronavirus."

Health Brigadistas Visit 453,347 Homes Around the Country **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 3/22/20)
Vice President Rosario Murillo said that on March 20 and 21, more than 150,000 health Brigadistas visited 453,347 homes to educate about preventive measures established by the Pan American Health Organization. They also monitored the health of family members and have been taught to detect respiratory disorders and fever. "We made 450,000 visits to families all over the country. And we know that this supportive, close communication, to educate and to take care of the people is very effective, and very appreciated by the families. Our model is one of direct presence in the community

with solidarity and respect," the vice-president stressed. A million flyers about the coronavirus will be handed out as the brigades continue to visit families to prevent this pandemic.

Buses are Being Fumigated **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 3/23/20)
Buses are being fumigated as part of the measures to prevent the COVID-19. Although the influx of passengers has decreased considerably, the service will remain so people can travel home especially for the Easter season. In addition, about 60 merchants of the Mayoreo market were trained on the hygienic measures they must comply with to prevent COVID-19, according to Dr. Javier Alfaro, epidemiologist of the Roger Osorio Health Center.

Nicaraguan Opposition Makes Wild Accusations about Covid-19 Plans
(Radiolaprimerisima, 3/24/20) On March 24 Nicaragua journalists described the treatment of Covid-19 by the opposition as an "invasion of lies and false news through social networks." Panelists from the news magazine "Live", channel 4, said that it is wrong to take advantage of the global health crisis for political purposes. "Their only contribution is to lie, create panic and do harm without contributing to a solution of a planetary health crisis," said journalist Tirsa Saenz about the opposition that uses the current situation to try to adversely affect the government. Journalist Adolfo Pastrán referred to a letter sent on March 23 to PAHO by the National Coalition (opposition), in which they criticize the actions of the PAHO representative in Nicaragua, Ana Emilia Solís, whom they condemn for endorsing the government's policies of prevention and identification of Covid-19.

CELAC and PAHO Learn from Chinese Specialists (Nicaragua News, 3/25/20)
During a videoconference held March 24, member countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and representatives of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), exchanged experiences with specialists from China on the management of the CORONAVIRUS crisis. The Chinese officials emphasized that the epidemiological prevention and control mechanism that they applied since January has shown sustained positive results. They also detailed the criteria for blood plasma therapies and oxygenation equipment. The Chinese representatives reiterated their "full disposition to help Latin American and Caribbean countries by sharing their experience in dealing with this healthcare emergency that does not recognize borders or ideologies."

Patient Number Two Dies (Radiolaprimerisima, 3/26/20)
The Ministry of Health announced the death of the person known as patient number two on March 26. He presented multiple health weaknesses associated with his condition as a carrier of the HIV virus. His family members were notified first and the corresponding protocol will be implemented under these circumstances.
Two New Patients, both from the US **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 3/27/20)
March 27, Vice President Murillo announced two new cases, both recent arrivals from the US: a 70-year-old man and a 52-year-old woman both of whom are being treated according to protocols.

PAHO Reiterates Support For Nicaragua **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 3/27/20)
The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reiterated its support for Nicaragua and technical cooperation to combat Covid-19. "We reiterate our support and technical cooperation to continue working, to support public health issues and to accompany the preparation for the response to this health emergency," said Ana Solis Treasure, PAHO/WHO representative.

During a March 26 press conference she reported "The Pan American Health Organization recognizes that there was an involuntary error in the digitization of one of the instruments it uses for reporting officially confirmed cases in Nicaragua." It was brought to their attention earlier that day that their website said that Nicaragua had 6 cases, when it actually had 2. "The maps published on our website now show the confirmed cases with the correct data," said the PAHO representative. "We reiterate that for Nicaragua so far there are only 2 confirmed cases. We apologize to the people

of Nicaragua and their government for the concern this error may have caused," she said. "This error will be quickly corrected, and we will ensure that it is not repeated." Solís was accompanied by Health Minister Dr. Carolina Dávila, and Health Ministry Secretary General Dr. Carlos Sáenz, who accepted the apologies offered by PAHO on behalf of the Government of Nicaragua. "We ask PAHO/WHO to be more careful in the security and safeguarding of the data issued by the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity of the Republic of Nicaragua," Saenz said.

Nicaragua Helps Develop Central America Plan (Radiolaprimerisima, 3/27/20)
The Contingency Plan for a united response to the coronavirus of the Central American Integration System was approved March 26. With SICA, the Central American governments will promote plans to tackle Covid in three major components: health and risk management; trade and finance; security, justice and migration. To avoid shortages and difficulties in intraregional trade, freedom of transit of goods, in coordination with the Council of Health Ministers of Central America and Dominican Republic (COMISCA), will be ensured. Freedom of transit of goods and their transporters through the countries of the SICA region will be maintained, prioritizing medicines, medical devices and equipment, food and other goods. Indicators for a Regional Impact Study that will support aid requests from international organizations was adopted. They will work on the migration of citizens stranded in other countries in order to repatriate them, creating a humanitarian corridor for that purpose. Border security plans will be implemented in coordination with local governments, ministries of health, police forces, migration and the armed forces to meet health and security challenges posed by migration.

US$1.91 Billion from CABEI **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 3/27/20)
Central America Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) Executive President Dante Mossi announced the news of US$1.91 billion to help Central American countries tackle the health and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19. Mossi said this program will be implemented in the short and medium term and includes US$550 million in emergency budget support, US$1 billion for central banks, US$350 million to provide liquidity support to commercial banks to support micro, small and medium enterprises and US$2.1 million to purchase 150,000 COVID-19 test kits. In the virtual session Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega said that SICA's plan provides encouragement to the people of Central America and the Dominican Republic. This regional plan follows Nicaragua's lead, which focuses on small businesses. SICA officials agreed that while the crisis lasts, it will be important to involve small businesses in the purchases and contracts of the States.

Rigorous Prevention Measures at Border Posts **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 3/28/20)
Vice President Murillo announced March 28th that all precautionary and preventive measures are being applied at all entry points, airports and borders. She expressed her admiration, recognition and respect for all those who work in the application of measures of precaution and prevention, migrants, the Ministry of Government, the police, the army, "who are taking care of those who are in transit and taking care of us all. Tests continue to be carried out on people who merit it. All of them have come out negative." The Penitentiary System and the National Police's preventive prisons report shows measures are being applied, all is normal and that visits are taking place.

SICA Recognizes Nicaragua's Efforts (Informe Pastran, 3/30/20)
The Secretary General of the Central American Integration System (SICA), Vinicio Cerezo, in a letter to President Daniel Ortega and Vice-President Rosario Murillo, recognized the efforts Nicaragua is making to contain the corona virus and the support of Nicaragua for the region's contingency plans. The letter thanked them for their determined support and commitment to the region in the midst of this crisis without precedent in recent human history. Cerezo said that he saw in the crisis many challenges to overcome but at the same time he saw the opportunity to construct a new region with more solidarity, social justice, and harmony with the environment.

Direct Phone Line for Questions about Covid–19 **(**Nicaragua Sandino, 3/30/20)

Nicaragua established a 24/7 hotline telephone #132 number for citizens to call with questions and concerns about Covid-19. Calls are attended by 150 qualified personal.

Nicaraguan Efforts against Covid-19 Acknowledged **(**Nicaragua News, 3/31/20)
Vinicio Cerezo, the Secretary General of the Central American Integration System said, "Your decisive support and commitment to the region in the midst of this unprecedented crisis is appreciated. We have many challenges to overcome, but at the same time it represents an opportunity to build a new region, with more solidarity, social justice and in harmony with the environment.

Leaders Confident of Preparedness Informe Pastran, 3/31/20)
Carlos Saenz, Secretary General of MINSA said, "The success is in containing the virus – those who have had contact with the positive cases are tested and given strict follow-up including people who traveled on the plane. Follow-up includes daily visits." National Assembly President Gustavo Porras said all positive cases are imported such that monitoring people from abroad at all entry points is key. He added, "We have respiratory therapy equipment and people who know how to handle this."

Covid-19 Information Call Center Opens **(**Informe Pastran, 3/31/20, 19Digistal, 4/6/20)
March 30 a National Information Call Center was opened and "stands out among the actions taken by Nicaragua in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic," according to Prensa Latina. The Center has 150 operators 24 hours a day, seven days a week and "provides attention and information in the midst of the crisis," said director Dr. Humberto Román. Through a free phone line #132 operators provide information requested about Covid 19 and also receive possible suspicious cases, the doctor added. The center received more than 15,000 calls in its first week. See video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqts6c8JAdM&t=1s

Cases of Diseases Lower than 2019 (Informe Pastran, 3/31/20)
A Ministry of Health report shows that dengue cases have fallen by 64% and that pneumonia cases have fallen by 11%, with 35% fewer deaths from this disease, compared to the previous period. Malaria decreased by 20% compared to the same period in 2019 and there were 45% fewer cases of influenza. This week MINSA is attending 64,000 people with Mobile Clinics in 900 communities with the participation of 4,500 health workers. See video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRi1evzQP4w

Suspension of Debt Payments Proposed Informe Pastran 4/1/20)
Central American governments propose to jointly negotiate suspension of debt payments with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to help sustain the economies with the Covid crisis to avoid unemployment and impoverishment.

Best Strategy to Contain Covid-19 (Nicaragua News, 4/1/20)
Health Ministry spokesperson Carlos Sáenz reported that Nicaragua consulted with experts from China, Italy, Spain, Taiwan, and Singapore to strengthen the national strategy through a better understanding of the behavior of the virus. "The key to fighting the virus is to contain its spread through measures established by the World Health Organization such as frequent hand washing, early identification of positive cases, contact tracing and strict monitoring of suspicious cases." He noted that the Nicaragua Family and Community Healthcare Model is very effective for this type of situation because it is intertwined in all levels of society, helping to quickly identify a possible case.

Central America Bank for Economic Integration approves nearly $2 billion
(Radiolaprimerisima, 4/3/20) CABEI approved US$1.9 billion to address the Covid-19 in Central America and the Dominican Republic through the Regional Contingency Plan.

Taiwan Donates for Covid-19 (Nicaragua News, 4/3/20)

Vinicio Cerezo, SICA Secretary General reported that Taiwan donated US$4 million to support the Regional Emergency Fund for Belize, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Honduras in the fight against the pandemic. The SICA Secretary General stated, “The support of the Republic of China-Taiwan has been key in the regional integration process and Taiwan continues to show solidarity.”

Six COVID-19 Cases (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/5/20)
In Nicaragua there have been six corona virus cases and one of those people has died. There are no local transmission cases – only imported cases. Dr. Carlos Sáenz, Secretary General of the Health Ministry stated there are three people currently fighting the disease. April 5 an imported case of Covid-19 was detected from the US – a 33-year old man who is in delicate but stable condition. A 70-year-old man, who arrived from the US, is in delicate health, but stable. Dr. Saenz said that a 76-year-old man, who also entered from the US has multiple chronic conditions, and is delicate, but stable. A 52-year-old woman, who entered from the US with Covid-19, has already recovered and been discharged. Still another person has recuperated, and one person died of the disease.

Few Cases of Respiratory Diseases in 2020 (Informe Pastran, 4/6/20)
Dr. Carlos Sáenz said that there is close monitoring of other respiratory diseases such as pneumonia, “and the cases this year have been fewer than previous years; it has helped that we have applied vaccines against Influenza and pneumococcal diseases.” In 2019 nearly one million people were vaccinated against influenza and pneumococcus. “And medicines used successfully in China and other nations are already being used, such as Interferon Alpha 2B, antivirals and retrovirals. The 2009 H1N1 pandemic gave us a great experience in treating respiratory diseases.”

26,000 more COVID-19 Test Kits (Informe Pastran, 4/6/20, Radiolaprimerisima, 4/7/20)
The Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) donated more than 180,000 COVID-19 test kits for the SICA member countries thanks to a donation from South Korea. Nicaragua received their 26,000 test kits on April 6. The tests have a 99% certainty and are compatible with those used by all SICA member countries, except Belize, which is why they declined the donation.

1,700 in Prison System Will Join Families (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/8/20)
On April 8, 1,700 prisoners were given the chance the chance to serve out their sentences under house arrest. Amelia Coronel, head of the Ministry of the Interior, stressed that this state policy has been in effect for a little over five years. “Today, Holy Wednesday, we celebrate Easter with this policy of family reunification.” http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/281975/gobierno-excarcela-1700-reos-por-semana-santa/

8,000 Doses of Interferon Alfa from Cuba (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/8/20)
An additional 8,000 doses of Interferon Alfa arrived from Cuba to help deal with future cases of COVID-19. This immune-booster is produced by the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology of Cuba, whose Director, Dr. Marta Ayala Avila, has accompanied the organization of Prevention, Epidemiological Surveillance and Preparation for COVID-19. And Nicaragua sent 600,000 doses of Influenza vaccine to Cuba that will be used in routine vaccination campaigns. The influenza vaccine was produced by the Mechnikov vaccine plant in Nicaragua as a result of scientific and technological collaboration between Russia, Nicaragua and Cuba. http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/282014/cuba-envia-8-mil-dosis-adicionales-de-farmaco-para-atender-casos-de-covid-19/ (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/8/20)

Strict Protocols against Covid-19 According to Health Ministry Secretary General
(Nicaragua News, 4/8/20) Carlos Sáenz explained that Nicaragua has established strict protocols that are followed when a positive case of Covid-19 is detected: “From the moment a case is confirmed positive, the patient receives medical treatment, contact tracing starts immediately and

home isolation for contacts with daily follow-up by phone calls and visits by Health personnel." Each Local Comprehensive Health System (SILAIS) has access to the database of all those under fourteen-day home isolation either because they are contacts of positive cases or have arrived from other countries but remain asymptomatic. "At this time, Nicaragua does not have community transmission and to maintain this situation it is essential that we continue to apply a protocol of early identification, contact tracing and isolation endorsed by the Pan American Health Organization."

Taiwan Donates Masks and Thermometers (Informe Pastran, 4/13/20)
In the next few days 300,000 masks along with thermometers will arrive in Nicaragua as part of a donation from Taiwan. Vice-President Rosario Murillo thanked Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and the people of Taiwan for the donation.

Nicaragua Has Lowest Contagion Rate in Americas **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 4/14/20)
April 14 there have been a total of nine people diagnosed with Covid-19. Of those nine, five have fully recuperated, three are in treatment, and one has died. Nicaragua has the lowest contagion rate in all of the Americas. There are no local transmission cases.

Presidential Address on Nicaragua and Covid-19 (Nicaragua News, 4/16/20)
During a national address delivered on April 16, President Daniel Ortega stated that Nicaragua is facing the coronavirus pandemic applying measures established by the World Health Organization taking into account the realities of the country. "Since January of this year, when the WHO issued its alert on the spread of coronavirus, Nicaragua began to prepare by training doctors in the handling of the virus, establishing preventive information campaigns, border control, equipping 19 hospitals for the care of cases, acquiring reagents to diagnose cases and mobilizing medical brigades to disseminate preventive information house to house and monitor the health of Nicaraguans." The President also stressed that "the country has been able to continue working and producing to guarantee food security for the population, relying on the discipline and responsibility of Nicaraguans to follow the measures announced by the Health. This does not mean that we are exempt from the effects of the virus, it is a reality that it has entered the country with 9 cases already detected of which one person has died, however, the spread has been slow and so far, we do not have local transmission, this is due to the protocols for early detection, contact tracing, monitoring and the responsibility of the population."

Nicaragua Purchasing More Test Kits (Nicaragua News, 4/16/20)
On April 15 President Ortega authorized Finance Minister Iván Acosta to sign an agreement with CABEI to purchase test kits produced by South Korea for early detection of the coronavirus. The US$2.1 million agreement is part of the support provided by CABEI to member states of the Central American Integration System (SICA).

Taiwan Donates Masks (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/16/20)
The Government of Taiwan donated 280,000 masks on April 15 to guarantee the protection of health personnel dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic.

Daniel Corners Social Networks with Hospitals vs. Bombs Speech
(Radiolaprimerisima, 4/17/20) In a matter of a few hours, President Daniel Ortega became the greatest influence in the country's recent history by dominating social networks without having an official account in any of them. Companies that measure the traffic and interaction on the networks said that from late afternoon of April 15 until the morning of April 16, 34 million people had seen Daniel's 32-minute speech calling on the world to invest in hospitals not nuclear bombs. Even the opposition media on social networks transmitted the presidential message on their platforms and it was reported by FOX, CNN, Univision, Bloomberg, TELESUR, BBC, all the international news

agencies and all the main media of the Americas including The Washington Post and New York Times, El País from Spain; among others

WHO Acknowledges Confinement Hurts Poorest **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 4/17/20)
On April 16, World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that physical isolation "is almost impossible" in poor countries being hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and called on their governments to be cautious about imposing containment. Authorities "should consider that in some countries and communities, orders to stay home may not be practical, and may even cause unintended harm," Tedros said at his weekly meeting with international diplomatic missions in Geneva. "Millions of people around the world have to work every day to put a plate on the table, and they cannot stay home for long periods of time without assistance," he said, expressing concern about violence in various parts of the world due to restrictions. Tedros added that the pandemic has forced children out of school, "putting some at greater risk of abuse," and depriving children from attending schools that are often their main access to food and health care.
http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/282435/confinamiento-perjudica-a-los-mas-pobres-reconoce-oms/#

Over 3 Million Home Visits (Nicaragua News, 4/20/20)
The Health Ministry reported that medical brigades have made more than 3 million house-to-house visits, educating on prevention measures recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and to monitor the health of Nicaragua families

3 Week Campaign Vaccinates Against 12 Illnesses (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/20/20)
Nearly 2 million vaccines against twelve diseases will be given to children, young people and adults during the National Immunization Campaign, which began April 15 and will end on May 8. Over 1.2 million children between 6 months and 8 years will also receive the corresponding dose of vitamin A and 1.6 million children between 1 and 12 years of age will receive deworming treatment. "Vaccines will be applied in neighborhoods, health centers and house to house, with the health *Brigadistas*," said Dr. Ligia Aragon. The *Brigadistas* will vaccinate against Polio, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Hepatitis, Pertussis, Influenza B, Pneumococcus, Measles, Rubella, Mumps, Influenza and Rotovirus.

Ten Cases Total of COVID-19 (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/21/20)
Thirty-three days after registering its first case of Covid-19 on March 18, there have been a total of ten cases of Covid-19, of which seven recovered, two died and one is under treatment. Nicaragua continues to have the lowest contagion rate of Covid-19 in all of the Americas. The latest Health Ministry report reveals that a 58-year-old man who came into contact with an imported case is patient number 10 and is in poor health. There are currently 12 people who had contact with one of the cases and who tested negative but are being closely followed.

Medical Screenings, Contact Information at All Borders **(**Nicaragua News, 4/22/20)
The Director General of the Immigration and Citizenship Bureau, Juan Emilio Rivas, and Carlos Sáenz, Secretary General of the Health Ministry (MINSA), attended a virtual meeting April 22 with the Iberoamerican Network of Immigration Authorities to evaluate protocols established at borders to control the spread of CORONAVIRUS and identify technical and financial resources to strengthen prevention protocols at points of entry. During the meeting, Rivas explained the measures being implemented in Nicaragua to protect immigration personnel, including hand washing, social distancing, as well as the use of gloves and masks. Dr. Sáenz explained that medical screenings have been established at border posts including temperature checks, medical history queries, collection of contact information and home isolation for a period of 21 days with daily monitoring by MINSA. ([Note from Nan: I can verify this as I entered the country from Mexico on March 31 and doctors called to check on me every other day.]

Nicaragua at OAS calls for End to Sanctions (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/24/20)
At the Organization of American States, Nicaraguan Ambassador Luis Alvarado stated, "The voices of peoples such as the Nicaraguan people and nations of the world are still echoing, demanding an end to the illegal unilateral policies called sanctions that are in contravention of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and this transgression endangers international peace and security." He stressed that Nicaragua will continue to work for peace, protection of life, health and security. "These are times of profound changes working towards solidarity and peace among the peoples of the world. It is the call of nature, it is the call of God, to humanity for a change of heart," he said. He added that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that in developed countries, health systems were not designed to serve the impoverished population or protect workers, but only to serve the wealthy people who can pay the onerous health expenses of these systems.

Nicaragua with Lowest Covid-19 Contagion in Americas (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/28/20)
The Health Ministry confirmed on April 28 that there is still no local community transmission of Covid-19. There has been a total of 13 cases of Covid-19. Currently there are three active cases in treatment. Responsible and careful follow-up is given to those who deserve it, either because they were in contact with citizens of other nationalities or with the cases that have been confirmed. Nicaragua is the country in the Americas with the fewest cases of Covid-19 and only three deaths, and the lowest contagion rate, thanks to the actions that the Sandinista government has been implementing to prevent the pandemic.

Public Outreach and Sanitation Measures Continue (Informe Pastran, 4/28/20)
Vice President Rosario Murillo said April 28 that in the three cycles of visits made by medical brigades and community networks nationwide, they have visited 3,844,762 homes, and verified that prevention and precautionary measures against COVID-19 are taken. The educational campaign will be reinforced through the media and efforts will be made to disinfect interurban, urban, interdepartmental transportation, as well as bus stops, markets, study centers, work centers, homes and neighborhoods.

Military Detachment Locates Citizens Crossing Illegally (19 Digital, 4/28/20)
From April 20 to 26, 2020, in compliance with the State Border Protection Plan and in support of the Ministry of Health's (MINSA) COVID-19 Protocol, military personnel from the Army's Southern Military Detachment, located and held 71 Nicaraguan citizens in the sectors of the Palo de Arco, La Ñoca and San Pancho military border posts, San Carlos, department of Río San Juan, who entered through unauthorized crossings from Costa Rica. The citizens were handed over to the corresponding authorities in order to comply with the established health control. Thirty-five military personnel were employed during the detention.

Nicaragua Adequately Reporting on Covid-19 Cases (La Prensa, 4/28/20)
The Pan-American Health Organization says Nicaragua is adequately reporting the advance of coronavirus. The affirmation comes a week after the organization said that communication with the Nicaraguan government had diminished. Dr. Ciro Ugarte, director of Health Emergencies at PAHO made the statement. According to Ugarte Nicaragua actively participates in regular meetings and trainings with regional public health systems and follows PAHO technical assistance guides. [Editor's note: This comes from US-funded opposition newspaper La Prensa, and is especially significant because daily the opposition, their media and US media that print their narratives allege that there are many cases of the virus being hidden.]

Fight against Covid-19 Strengthened Before Rains (Radiolaprimerisima, 4/30/20)
On April 28, Health Minister Dr. Martha Reyes, during a virtual meeting with all the country's mayors recommended the promotion of personal distance and the use of masks to prevent Covid-19, especially in the elderly and infirm, people who present respiratory symptoms or care for patients. These actions are in addition to those that the government has been implementing since the

coronavirus pandemic was decreed, such as prevention like hand washing and timely information to the population. In part, the additional recommendations have to do with the onset of the rainy season when respiratory illnesses increase in Nicaragua. Likewise, the disinfection of schools, work centers, parks, markets, houses, public transport, personal vehicles and healthcare units will continue.

President Ortega Calls for Unity to End Illegal Sanctions at Non-Aligned Summit
(Informe Pastran, 5/4/20)
On May 4, President Daniel Ortega, during a virtual meeting at the Non-Aligned Summit on the Coronavirus pandemic, advocated for the respect of international law and the end of the United States' aggressions. "We emphasize that the international laws that the entire world community have committed to, continue to be violated. The COVID pandemic has not stopped the violations of the principles of the United Nations. Something more terrible: they [US and Europe] are taking advantage of the pandemic to intensify aggressions against peaceful peoples in different regions of the planet," he said. "I think we are facing a hunger pandemic, we all know that, hunger is produced by the practice of savage capitalism; and we are facing the pandemic of the violation of the human rights of the peoples," he said, mentioning Cuba, "where instead of suspending the sanctions, they are intensifying them in the midst of the pandemic and encouraging acts that are true state terrorism. The biggest terrorists in the world are the United States with its policies of military and economic aggression, what they call sanctions, that are aggressions, because the United Nations has not approved sanctions against Cuba, nor against Venezuela; rather the sanctions promote the occupation of more Palestinian territory.

President Ortega pointed out that today "the most terrible pandemic facing humanity is the use of force, the threat of the use of force, and the wars promoted by the powers that be and in particular by the United States of America," adding that "we are facing the pandemic of global warming, we are facing the pandemic of the weakening of the most sensitive bodies of the United Nations that have to do with the sensitivity of essential rights of the people and that have to do with the very survival of the planet and of the human species." "The Non-Aligned Movement Countries must unite today more than ever, in our spirit of solidarity and our attachment to international law and in this way, use our influence so that the model that has been imposed on the planet and that has millions of human beings suffering human rights violations can be changed," he exhorted.

Weekly Covid Report for April 28 to May 4 from the Health Ministry (19Digital, 5/5/20)
During the last week there were 3 new Covid deaths for a total of 5 deaths (1 in March, 1 in April and 3 in May). There were 16 new cases of Covid-19.

Plan for Maternal Health Implemented (Nicaragua News, 5/8/20)
During the virtual seminar "Continuity of Healthcare Services for Pregnancy, Childbirth, Postpartum, and Family Planning in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic" organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Dr. Matilde Román, MINSA head of Epidemiological Surveillance presented the prevention measures being implemented for maternity care in hospitals, maternity homes and medical posts. A Comprehensive Plan for Maternal, Perinatal and Postnatal Health in the Context of Covid-19 is being implemented to monitor cases with obstetric complications, increased monitoring of health of pregnant women and more access to family planning strategies.

UNI Creates Application to Monitor Covid-19 Patients (Radiolaprimerisima, 5/9/20)
Engineers and other specialists at the National Engineering University (UNI), including Fernando Duarte, Walter Izaguirre, Guillermo Salazar, and Ramsés Rivas, have designed an application to support efforts to reduce the impact of the Covid-19 in Nicaragua during a marathon event promoted by the National University of Distance Education of Costa Rica. Some innovations include reducing the time for virus detection tests and applications that make doctors' care more effective. This application would identify and monitor patients with COVID-19 including those who remain at home

or under medical supervision; the application would allow health authorities to monitor patients well, according to Engineer Guillermo Salazar.

Nicaraguan Workers Cannot Return to Costa Rica (Radiolaprimerisima, 5/10/20)
Thousands of foreigners have been unable to enter Costa Rica since its government decided to close the borders on March 19 to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. As of May 9th, 10,062 Nicaraguans have been prevented from entering Costa Rica, according to information provided by the General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners (DGME). The remaining rejected migrants are Panamanians, Colombians, Ecuadorians, Cubans, Hondurans, Indians, Salvadorans, Mexicans, Germans, and British. The border closure means that foreigners cannot enter and those who leave cannot return. Only Costa Ricans and residents are allowed to enter and most of them have returned on repatriation flights. Border closures will be extended until June 15.

IMF Recognizes Nicaragua's Fine Work on Covid-19 (Informe Pastran, 5/12/20)
As part of a series of analyses of member countries, the International Monetary Fund has recognized that Nicaragua is fighting COVID-19 and that it has adopted measures to counteract it. It states, "Confirmed cases have been treated in accordance with international protocols" such as those of the WHO and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). The IMF notes, "On January 30, the National Inter-Institutional Commission for the Early Detection, Care and Prevention of COVID-19 was created. A total of 19 hospitals have been officially designated throughout the country for the care of COVID-19 cases following detection." The analysis states that "doctors and relevant health personnel of the Ministry of Health have been trained on prevention, detection, containment and treatment of COVID-19 and exchanged experiences on these issues with international experts. On April 27, the government launched a campaign to clean and disinfect schools, public transport units, markets and other public spaces. The Health Ministry is promoting a campaign of preventive measures that include proper hand washing, physical distancing, appropriate use of masks and care for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and those with chronic diseases," the multilateral agency stressed. "The government has continued to prioritize programs to strengthen the social safety net, including the provision of food packages for vulnerable families. Sixty thousand food packages were distributed in April," the IMF's country analysis indicates.

Twenty-Five Confirmed Covid-19 Cases (19 Digital, 5/12/20)
The Health Ministry in its weekly report said that, as of May 12, twenty-five people have tested positive for Covid-19 in Nicaragua since the first case on March 18. There have been 8 deaths, 3 of them in the last week. 7 people have fully recovered and 10 are in treatment. All Covid-19 Positives arrived from the exterior with Covid-19 or have been traced to another contact.

Thousands Sent Home from Prison (Radiolaprimerisima, 5/13/20)
The Ministry of the Interior released 2,815 inmates May 13, including elderly people with chronic illnesses who were serving sentences in the country's various prisons, all of whom received the benefit of the *family life regime* (house arrest). Eighty-eight are women and 2,727 are men, from all the country's prisons. At the government's request the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was an observer at the family reunification event. The Government, through the Ministry of the Interior, continues to work to ratify its commitment to peace, good governance and the protection of health and life: http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/283505/gobierno-excarcela-a-2815-reos/

COVID-19 Information Line a Success (Nicaragua News, 5/13/20)
The Health Ministry reported that the COVID-19 emergency line (132) has received 110,000 thousand calls over the past month, requesting information on COVID-19 prevention measures and steps to follow when possible symptoms arise.

Council on Hemispheric Affairs article: Public Health and Food Security are Priorities
(Nicaragua News, 5/14/20)

COHA published an article on “Food Security in Nicaragua in the Context of the Health Crisis Created by COVID-19” written by Professor Yorlis Luna, Specialist in Ecology and Sustainable Development. The article states that “Nicaragua is implementing a COVID prevention and management plan adapted to its reality and the strengths of its public healthcare system to protect lives and maintain the popular economy that produces 90% of the food consumed.” The article also details that medical brigades are visiting families in their homes to raise awareness about COVID-19 prevention measures generating confidence that the public healthcare system is accessible to all regardless of economic status. “The public policies being implemented by the Government based on the principle that healthcare and food security are sovereign rights, together with the creativity of the population, ensure that the country is in a solid position to guarantee an effective response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Weekly Report For May 12 to 18 of Covid-19 Cases (Radiolaprimerisima, 5/19/20)
Over the last week there were 9 new deaths for a total of 17 since March 18. Currently there are 63 people with Covid-19.

Nicaragua Carefully Monitors all Incoming Travelers (Nicaragua News, 5/20/20)
The Health Ministry reported that from March 18th when the first Covid-19 case was detected till May 19, they have monitored 42,326 travelers coming to Nicaragua through border crossings from Costa Rica, Honduras and through the airport. Those entering were questioned and counseled and sent to quarantine for a 21- day period. Health Minister Martha Reyes stated that so far 279 Covid positive cases have been detected by tests or symptoms. Of these, 199 people have recovered, 17 are deceased and 63 are active and undergoing treatment. Thirty-nine individuals are being monitored and tested as they came in contact with a positive case.

Nicaragua Avoids Added Poverty of Quarantines (Nicaragua News, 5/21/20)
Health Minister Martha Reyes, in a video conference of the Non-Aligned Movement to evaluate the situation of Covid-19 in the 125 member states said, “January 21, Nicaragua activated the Covid-19 Prevention and Management Protocol, designating and equipping 19 hospitals for the care of cases. Likewise, 4.6 million house visits were made to educate the population on preventive measures; periodic disinfection of public spaces and transportation units is being carried out.” The Minister said that Nicaragua avoided shutting down the economy. She explained, “As countries emerge from quarantines that have destroyed the world economy, we must learn to fight the virus and at the same time function as caring societies avoiding an increase in poverty and inequality to ensure a fairer and healthier future of hope for all.”

Improvements at Women’s Hospital **(**Nicaragua News, 5/21/20)
Remodeled operating rooms at the Bertha Calderón Hospital in Managua were inaugurated May 20. The project included installation of a new electricity and emergency system in four operating rooms. The US$470,588 financing is part of the Hospital Maintenance and Repair Cooperation Agreement between MINSA and Taiwan.

Panama Thanks Nicaragua for Care of 3 Truckers (Radiolaprimerisima, 5/23/20)
The Government of Panama, through its ambassador in Nicaragua, José de Jesús Martínez, thanked Nicaragua for the support given to three national transporters that were on their way to Panama, and showed positive results for COVID-19 as they were stuck in the line to get into Costa Rica. “The three carriers unfortunately tested positive in COVID-19, and they could not cross the border Nicaragua-Costa Rica. Ambassador Martínez said that one of the transporters has diabetes and the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health has provided him with medications. “I want to acknowledge the support the Nicaraguan Government gave him at all times … MINSA offered assistance, medicines, insulin and hospitalized him in San Carlos.”

White Paper on Nicaragua’s Actions on Covid-19

(Radiolaprimerisima, 5/25/20, Tortillaconsal.com) A unique Strategy-White Paper that describes activities and strategies implemented to address the Covid-19 pandemic was released by the Sandinista Government on May 25. It summarizes how Nicaragua prepared for this fight against Covid-19 in part due to the strengthening of the health system from 2007 to 2020 and many preparations since January 2020.

Covid-19 in Nicaragua from May 19 to 25 (Radiolaprimerisima 5/26/20)
The Health Ministry reported 18 people dead this week from Covid-19 bringing the total dead since March 18 to 35. This past week there were 480 new cases of Covid-19.

Recovered Patients Describe Experiences in Health System (19Digital, 5/30/20)
New short documentaries from *Sin Filtro* share recovered patients' experiences of medical care received until they fully recovered. Felix, from a village near Yalagüina, said that when he began to present symptoms, he was transferred to a health unit. "I was getting pretty bad, but the attention was great. [There are] doctors, nurses and medicine. I saw that in Nicaragua we have quality health care and a good government that cares for the poor," said patient Felix.

Fewer Covid Deaths, More People Recovered from May 26 to June 1
(Radiolaprimerisima, 6/2/20) The Health Ministry in the weekly review of Covid-19 reports that as of June 2 there have been at least 1,118 people with Covid-19, 619 have recuperated, 46 have died and 381 are sick at this moment.

Short Documentary about Care of Covid-19 Patients (19Digital, 6/2/20)
The digital platform Juventud Presidente shared a video report *"Doctors in Nicaragua: Example of Love for Life"* about health personnel who care for Covid-19 patients. In the report, Dr. Erick Uriarte, shares his experience at the Hospital Fernando Velez Paiz, one of the most modern hospitals in Central America. "We have been preparing by examining what worked for other countries, what alternatives they applied. Early preparation helped us manage today's situation of hospitalized Covid patients," said the doctor. He added that he and other health personnel in Nicaragua have found how important emotional support is for the patients. "One sees the world differently and I realized that my patients not only require medicine and serum, but the patient requires support from his family, to be able to talk to them and others. I have seen people in a bad state, I have seen people die, but fortunately I have seen many more go home with their family, hugging, crying, happy. It is very rewarding." Uriarte told *Juventud Presidente*.

$32 Million in Loans for Health Care **(**Radiolaprimerisima, 6/4/20)
The government signed loans worth nearly US$32 million with an Indian bank and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI). The Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) granted a credit of US$20.1 million for the reconstruction of the Aldo Chavarria National Rehabilitation Hospital. The CABEI loan of US$11.7 million will be used for the Emergency, Prevention and Containment Program of Covid-19. http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/general/284659/nicaragua-obtiene-recursos-para-fortalecer-sector-salud/

Opposition Busy Creating Fake Deaths like in 2018 (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/7/20)
The opposition continues to manipulate and misrepresent information as part of a sustained campaign to promote panic among the population about the situation with the Covid-19 pandemic. Opposition members post on social media that people have died when they haven't and family members of many people who died of other causes complain that the opposition has posted that they died with Covid. It is a strong campaign to try to discredit the government. Recently a new 'Nicaraguan Medical Association' was created that is making much of the fake news.

New Cases and Deaths of Covid-19 Down from June 2 to 8 (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/9/20)

The numbers of new cases and deaths over the last week are lower than the previous week signifying that Nicaragua may be past its peak of Covid-19 infections. Health Ministry authorities reported that from March 18 to date, 1,464 people have been treated for Covid-19 and 953 Nicaraguans have managed to recover, and 456 people are still fighting it. In total there have been 55 deaths, 9 in the last week. Those who have died with Covid-19 have a number of underlying conditions including diabetes, heart disease, obesity, immunodeficiency, chronic renal failure, history of stroke, pulmonary tuberculosis and chronic lung disease.

Funding Agreement Modified for Containment of Covid-19 **(**Nicaragua News, 6/12/20)
The Cooperation Agreement for "Improvement of the Nejapa-El Crucero-Diriamba Jinotepe-Nandaime Highway Project" subscribed with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration will be modified. The authorized change will transfer to the Health Ministry US$11.7 million to support the "Program for Emergency Prevention and Containment of COVID-19 in Nicaragua".

Covid-19 cases Week of June 9 to 15 (Health Ministry, Radiolaprimerisma, 6/16/20)
The weekly report from the Health Ministry June 16 shows 197 new cases and 9 new deaths. Thus, since May 26, every week there have been fewer new positive cases. Included in the government's positive cases are not only those who actually test positive but also those who show typical Covid-19 symptoms. Nicaragua as of this report has 1,864 total cases and of these, 522 are active, 1,238 have recuperated and a total of 64 people have died. Using data from Statista.com, Nicaragua has a current Covid-19 mortality rate of approximately .98 per 100,000, the US has a rate of at least 35.39 per 100,000 and the global average is 5.43.

Honduras Emulates Medical Brigades of Nicaragua (Informe Pastran, 6/16/20)
The Honduras Health Ministry will emulate the Nicaragua medical brigades which Guatemala also began to do recently. This is an attempt to have a more timely detection of people with COVID-19. Honduras launched an initiative June 15 in which 25 medical teams will go home to home to look for infected people. The project will be in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula and the Sula Valley. Neither in Guatemala, nor in Honduras, nor the Nicaraguan opposition, nor the OAS, nor the IACHR, nor the UNHCHR, nor PAHO have criticized this measure in those countries by saying that the Health Ministries are unnecessarily exposing health workers. But this is what those same actors said about Nicaragua's strategy in which more than 5 million home visits have been made.

4.5 Million Home Prevention Visits Against Disease (Redvolucion, 6/17/20)
The Health Ministry reported that the 2020 Safe Rainy Season Prevention Plan will begin this week and includes 4.5 million visits to fumigate homes to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds to prevent the spread of diseases, as well as rat extermination in 130 thousand public spaces to prevent leptospirosis; and inspection of potable water quality through residual chlorine measurement and bacteriological analysis. Likewise, all health centers and hospital emergency plans will be updated.

The Population Trusts Health System and Believes Life Will Return to Normal
(Radiolaprimerisima, 6/20/20) More than 54 percent of Nicaraguans valued the work done by the Health Ministry in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic as positive, as reflected in a survey released June 20 by *MyR Consultores*. The survey entitled "Pandemic and its impact on the emotional stability of Nicaraguans" was conducted throughout the country with a sample of more than 6,000 people, of which only 15% said that the work of health authorities is so-so. Despite the amount of fake news to which the population is exposed, more than 80% of Nicaraguans are confident that the health crisis will be overcome and that everything will return to normal. 50% of the population are worried about Covid-19, a figure that has dropped considerably despite a great deal of false news. Fear and anxiety are two factors that affect 71% because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is explained by the consulting firm as being partly due to the large amount of fake news.

Recovered Patients Share Their Experiences (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/20/20)

Patients discharged from different hospitals confirm that the Health Ministry is guaranteeing the medicines to defeat the virus in the shortest time possible. They say that if they had not gone to the hospitals, they might already be dead and add that the medical attention is high quality. Hundreds of recovered patients have given testimony to the hard work of the Health Ministry staff.

Grace Periods and Negotiations with Debtors will be Required of Banks
(Radiolaprimerisima, 6/23/20) Banks must grant a grace period or negotiate with debtors who have personal loans, credit cards or vehicle financing according to a provision announced by the governing body of the financial institutions. The Bank Superintendent issued a resolution which grants temporary credit conditions. Banks are to give a grace period of up to 6 months. Financial institutions may defer payments and extend the originally agreed payment period for loans requested before March 31, 2020. The document states, "The installment payments of principal and interest of the grace period may be redistributed over the remaining term of the credit, in a different term or through a lump sum payment at the end of the original term of the credit. In no case shall interest be charged on unpaid interest." The different financial institutions may also negotiate the balance of the credit card debt under new more favorable conditions through a personal credit.

Weekly Health Ministry Report for June 16 through 22 **(**19Digital, 6/23/20)
The Health Ministry reported June 23 there have been 1,910 cases of people with Covid-19 since March 18. In the last week there were 86 new cases, 251 people recuperated, and 10 persons died with Covid-19 bringing total deaths to 74.

Virtual Workshop from India on Covid-19 (Nicaragua News, 6/25/20)
Health Ministry representatives participated in the virtual workshop: "Managing the COVID-19 Pandemic: Experiences and Best Practices." Organized by the India Institute of Medical Sciences and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the course was convened to explain the protocols established in India for respiratory health, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use and management, as well as measures implemented for healthcare personnel in the fight against Covid-19.

ALBA Members Promote Health and Food Security (19Digital, 6/29/20)
Vice President Murillo highlighted the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA-TCP) meeting held June 29 to develop a plan to promote health security, reactivate the ALBA Health program, promote food security with the ALBA Food program and re-launch the 15-year-old Petrocaribe initiative which brought about many social advances in member countries. "in the midst of difficulties and aggressions we are always trying to make advancements for our peoples."

New Electric Beds for Covid-19 Patients (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/29/20)
The Health Ministry purchases 40 new electric beds that will be distributed in different hospitals to strengthen patent attention in the context Covid-19. The beds were imported by the Health Ministry from the US to guarantee quality care in the public hospitals, especially where patients with Covid19 are being treated. The Government invested US$114,752.61 in the purchase of these beds.

Nicaragua Assumes Presidency of SICA Health Ministers **(**Nicaragua News, 6/29/20)
The 52nd Meeting of the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and the Dominican Republic (COMISCA) was held virtually to organize and transfer the Pro-Tempore Presidency of COMISCA from Honduras to Nicaragua. Health Minister Martha Reyes noted that "the Nicaragua Government is committed to continue working to achieve the objectives of the regional plan in the fight against Covid" and emphasized the need to achieve further progress on the Regional Health Agenda. Nicaragua will hold the SICA Presidency for the period covering July-December 2020.

IMF Highlights Government Actions Against Covid-19 (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/30/20)

A recent analysis by the International Monetary Fund on the fight against COVID-19 highlights that confirmed cases have been treated in accordance with international protocols and that the government has implemented measures, including the declaration of a national alert state, the implementation of epidemiological surveillance protocols nationally and sanitary control measures at land, air and sea entry points in accordance with international protocols. "The Health Ministry provides weekly reports on the status of outbreaks. Health personnel have received training on prevention, detection, containment and treatment of VOC-19 and have exchanged experiences on these issues with international experts," the multilateral agency's analysis states.

"The government has continued to prioritize programs to strengthen the social safety net, including the provision of food packages among vulnerable families. 60,000 food packages were distributed in April. On 26 May 2020, the National Commission of Microfinance (CONAMI) introduced a temporary reform (from 7/1/20 to 6/30/21) to the "Standard on credit risk management for microfinance institutions" to reduce specific provisioning requirements for their personal loan portfolios," noting and emphasizing that "on 15 June 2020, the NCB temporarily reduced the reserve requirements from 7/1/20 to 6/30/21. During this period, banks can reduce the proportion of required reserves in national currency to 4.5% from 15% if they provide credit to the private sector."

The IMF notes that "on June 19, 2020, the Superintendency of Banks (SIBOIF) issued a temporary financial regulation, allowing banks to negotiate, at the request of their clients, an increase in the maturity of their loans and/or a moratorium on monthly payments of up to 6 months on loans granted before March 31, 2020. Borrowers may request this until Dec. 31, 2020. The SIBOIF issued another temporary financial regulation that reduced the minimum monthly payment for credit cards from 3 to 2% of total debt, including interest. This will be in effect until March 31, 2021," notes the IMF

Fewer Deaths from Covid-19 During Week of June 23-29 (Radiolaprimerisima, 6/30/20)
Through July 29, 1,750 Nicaraguans have recovered from Covid-19. Since the first case until June 30, 2,182 people have been attended and given Responsible and Careful Follow-up. Nine people died with Covid-19 in the last week and the total number of Covid-19 deaths since March is 83.

Deaths from Covid Decreasing (Radiolaprimerisima, 7/7/20)
As of July 7, Nicaragua has had a total of 2,411 confirmed cases of Covid-19. 1,993 people are known to have recuperated from Covid. There were 8 deaths from June 30 to July 6 and there has been a total of 91 deaths giving Nicaragua a mortality rate from Covid-19 of 1.4 per 100,000. In the US the mortality rate is 38 per 100,000 and the average worldwide is more than 5 per 100,000.

80 Mobile Clinics Bring Health to the People (19Digital, 7/5/20)
Vice President Rosario Murillo reported that Nicaragua has 80 new mobile clinics to bring health and life to families. "New mobile clinics have been renovated, others are completely new for a total of 80 that will be mobilized throughout the country in health fairs. Their interiors, the equipment and even the stretchers are beautiful."

New Equipment for 19 hospitals (19Digital, 7/6/20)
The Government purchased new special equipment for intensive care units for the 19 public hospitals prepared to treat Covid patients including 70 new ventilators with monitors, 40 new ICU beds, stretchers for transporting patients and 40 ultrasound machines. The ventilators important for very serious Covid patients as well as for other serious respiratory conditions.

Resources

Nicaragua and the OAS Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts:
An anti-paradigm of bad faith reporting

A briefing prepared for the Alliance for Global Justice and The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group by Stephen Sefton, John Perry and Jorge Capélan

Two conflicting accounts dominate reporting of the violent crisis in Nicaragua during 2018. The Nicaraguan authorities insist the crisis was driven by a violent failed coup attempt. The political opposition and its foreign supporters argue that a peaceful majority popular uprising suffered brutal murderous repression by the government. The latter version has generally prevailed in large part because it has been categorically adopted by the Inter American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR), in particular by its Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts on Nicaragua (GIEI).

However, the work of the GIEI does not even meet generally accepted basic requirements of reporting and documentation. The GIEI has systematically suppressed or excluded from its account of the 2018 crisis in Nicaragua witness testimony, documentary evidence and audio-visual material contradicting its account. This is demonstrably and egregiously so in its reporting of every one of the four incidents it has prioritized in the internet presentation of its reporting on Nicaragua.

Oblivious to earlier criticisms, the GIEI has now repeated its approach and its mistakes in its latest report on Nicaragua, published on May 30, 2020. This is why an open letter was sent to the IACHR in July 2020 from individuals in Nicaragua and from individuals and solidarity groups across North and South American and in Europe.

The GIEI's fundamental cynical deceit is fourfold.

- the GIEI abused the confidence of the Nicaraguan authorities violating the terms of its invitation by failing to coordinate its research and investigation with the Commission for Truth, Justice and Peace appointed by Nicaragua's legislature
- the GIEI falsely pretend that during the crisis the Nicaraguan authorities were not responding to deliberate extremely violent attacks by hundreds of often well armed opposition activists
- the GIEI claims that almost all the victims of the violence were peaceful protestors but omitted, without investigation, well founded reports that over 400

police officers suffered gunshot wounds, 23 officers were killed, a total of over 60 Sandinista supporters were killed and many hundreds injured, as well as over 100 people not directly involved in the conflict being killed and many hundreds more bystanders injured as a direct result of opposition violence
- although failing to take testimony from the many hundreds of victims of opposition violence, by contrast the GIEI have repeated without independent corroboration reports and claims from supporters and members of Nicaragua's political opposition as well as non-governmental organizations explicitly aligned with the country's political opposition and all funded by the US government.

In effect, the IACHR, its parent body the Organization of American States and its subsidiary body the GIEI have all falsely accused Nicaragua's government by

- basing their accusations on the reports and testimony from supporters and members of Nicaragua's US -government funded political opposition and their associated organizations and media
- systematically failing to secure genuinely independent corroboration of those accusations
- negligently failing to investigate credible reports and testimony contradicting those false accusations
- deliberately suppressing evidence presented by the Nicaraguan authorities contradicting those false accusations
- evading their duty to explain why they discount or dismiss competing rival versions of the events on which they are reporting.

The open letter and accompanying articles presented here only examine the latest of various incidents highlighted by the GIEI in its reporting on the events in Nicaragua in 2018. However, the material demonstrates beyond question that the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts on Nicaragua has not acted or reported in good faith. It is also further confirmation of the broader reality that the OAS as an institution acts deliberately in the service of the United States government's regional foreign policy, as it did for example in the 2019 Bolivian elections, facilitating a US government-supported coup against Bolivia's legitimately elected government.

The open letter and articles can be seen at the links listed below.
Open Letter to the President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and to the IACHR Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts on Nicaragua, the Argentinian Team of Forensic Anthropology and SITU Research of New York
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