

all you can be. Life's trials aren't always conquered, nor can they be avoided.

Our hero in *Lost in America* was lost for only a short time, long enough to realize that his fantasy wasn't compatible with the actual. The value of dreams is that they don't have to be tested. Albert Brooks, however, tried to make his fantasy into a life. But like all the refugees from the overheated

decade, his psyche crashed on the perilous rocks of empirical evidence. He, at least, has the good sense to reject his bogus fantasy and return to the world that provides him with rewards and satisfaction.

The 60's cultural convulsion has finally passed. The life of escape has been replaced by bourgeois verities. Clearly, the marketers have changed the bourgeois image so that the aspir-

ing middle class can now be yuppies. But it hardly matters. The yellow brick road to contentment is paved with hard work, imagination, and middle-class conventions. As the Buddha (especially the Buddha preached by Irving Babbitt) said, there is no easy way to nirvana, only unremitting effort. cc

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CORRESPONDENCE



Letter From Central America

by Michael Johns

World attention focused on Managua several months ago, as leaders of the Socialist world, led by Fidel Castro, converged on Nicaragua for the most stupendous Marxist levee since Ethiopia's \$100 million bash for Colonel Mengistu. Meanwhile, thousands of Nicaraguan *campesinos*, dubbed "contras" by their enemies, continued to risk their lives in a voluntary, patriotic, and very lonely struggle against totalitarianism.

Recently, these freedom fighters have continued their struggle in the face of literally scores of disparaging and inaccurate accusations being made by those who seek to legitimize another aggressive Soviet satellite in our hemisphere and turn public opinion against the thousands of Nicaraguans who are seeking the restoration of democracy to their homeland. As the recent ultimatum to the Sandinistas signed by leading members of the democratic resistance in San Jose, Costa Rica, makes clear, these are democratic leaders and fighters with Nicaragua's best interests at heart.

Try to tell 18-year-old Scorpion, a two-year veteran of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN) resistance fighters, that his effort against the San-

dinistas is guided by the Central Intelligence Agency. He's never even heard of them. Or try to tell Brenda, a 17-year-old fighter, that she is a hold-over from Anastasio Somoza Debayle's National Guard. She was 11 years old when Somoza fell.

What these two teenagers could tell you about is life in Marxist Nicaragua. Brenda remembers when the Sandinistas blew up her church in 1981 for what the Sandinistas termed "counter-revolutionary" activities. Now Brenda proudly wears a Christian cross around her neck when she enters combat against them. Scorpion could tell you how his family's land was confiscated by the Sandinistas and he was issued ration coupons in return. The sugar his family produced for decades is now being sent to Communist Cuba, with no reimbursement, in exchange for arms, many of which, he claims, are being sent to Marxist guerrillas trying to topple the democratic government of El Salvador. Indeed, the May 13, 1983, report of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence seems to back up Scorpion's remarks. It concluded that there is "active promotion for revolution without frontiers throughout Central America by Cuba and Nicaragua." And by the admission of Sandinista Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge, Marxist revolution "will be exported to El Salvador, then Guatemala, then Honduras, then Mexico

... that is one historical prophecy of Ronald Reagan's that is absolutely true."

The situation for these two teenagers in Marxist Nicaragua was so oppressive that they each marched over 60 miles through some of the most mountainous terrain in Nicaragua to join the freedom fighters in their camps along the Nicaraguan-Honduran border. Each of them has gone two years without seeing or hearing from their families. They have risked their lives almost every day over the past two years in an effort to defeat the "piricuacos" (the FDN's term for the Sandinistas, meaning "rabid dogs"), whom they claim have betrayed their original revolution of 1979 and created a totalitarian climate centered around political indoctrination, a militarized society, control of its citizens, and a gradual suppression of all nonrevolutionary institutions.

The scenario of an anticommunist revolution waged by democrats is by no means uncommon. Despite the Reagan Administration's tough anti-Sandinista rhetoric and the media's talk of "CIA-backed rebels," most of these democratic patriots go virtually unassisted by the country they admire most—America. As aid to these *campesinos* comes before the Congress, America is at a critical point in its treatment of freedom-loving peoples and its official attitude toward aggres-

sive, totalitarian, and, some would argue, illegitimate regimes in our hemispheres. There can be little doubt about traditional U.S. policy on the issue. The Monroe Doctrine declares to foreign powers "that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." It should be noted that the Monroe Doctrine is wholly consistent with the Charters of both the United Nations and the Organization of American States in its recognition of the right of self-determination and collective and individual defense of American nations against nonhemispheric powers.

The world is watching America's response to the plea for assistance from the Nicaraguan rebels for many reasons. If America abandons the *campesinos*, they will most surely be defeated, and the Sandinistas will continue their "revolution without frontiers" unchallenged. This will be a clear signal to the democratic governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Hon-

duras that they can expect as much support from us as we are giving the democratic forces in Nicaragua.

However, the world watches our response for another reason. America, in the midst of a "Reagan revolution," has the potential to remodel its foreign policy forever. Grenada was a start. However, since World War II, America has carried out a foreign policy that has frequently left our allies bewildered and our enemies jubilant.

Today, contradictory policy still dominates our foreign policy and haunts the free world, thanks to a Congress and State Department that care little for Reaganism and less for consistency. As a result, America is assisting the "contras" on one hand and negotiating with the Sandinistas on the other. It is a policy which leaves everyone involved confused, especially the freedom fighters who view themselves as the American minutemen of 1985.

It is now early morning in this FDN camp along the Nicaraguan-Honduran border, and 1,000 *campesinos*

are gathered in a large battlefield strongly clenching their automatic machine guns, most of which were captured from the Sandinistas. Four miles to the south, the sun begins to peek up over the Nicaraguan hills. "Con Dios y patriotismo," the fighters yell in deafening unison, "derrataremos al comunismo." With God and patriotism, they say, we will defeat communism.

Meanwhile, in Nicaragua, the Sandinista national anthem spouts out the lyrics: "Luchemos contra el Yanguí, enemigo de la humanidad." Translation: "Let's fight against the Yankee, enemy of humanity." And in Washington the debate continues. cc

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CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS



Capitalism is now avant-garde. A recent issue of the *New Art Examiner* chronicled the pioneering work of two men from Battle Mountain, Nevada, who together constitute United Art Contractors. UAC explains their breakthrough in conceptual art as a shortcut to success:

Every artist wants success and fame and if they could get it easily they would. We just bought it. Instead of sucking up to get a show—a degrading process—we paid up. So easy, so clean, so American. Just bypass the entire art system of hoping, waiting, praying for the one big break and dance up with the dollars.

We have no talent or ability—just cash.

We paid . . . \$1,000 cash for a show. . . . The show will get great reviews because we'll write the reviews and pay to have them published. Why wait for others to say nasty things about you when you can say nice things about yourself first?

We have no painting or sculpture—buying our way in is our art—there is nothing else.

No talent or ability—just cash? These Nevada artists are wasting their talents. They should move to Hollywood and produce television shows. cc

Poetry has replaced the wrecking ball in the latest version of urban renewal. In a recent issue of *State of the Arts*, the official publication of the California Arts Council, the deputy director of the council commented on a new program which subsidizes local arts initiatives:

There is a pleasing irony: the program combines the idea of the neighborhood and locale—concepts which give and reinforce strong identity—with the forces of art and poetry, which probe frontiers and shatter preconceptions.

There is irony, but perhaps it is not entirely pleasing. The deputy director