

NICARAGUA

Sandinistas seek Somoza's overthrow

With the church supporting the armed guerillas, Somoza's hands were tied.

By Blase Bonpane

THE SEMANTICS OF NEWS REPORTING can be interesting and at times devastating. Some reports have called the invaders of Nicaragua's National Palace "terrorists." A strange term indeed for a force of 23 men and one woman who are welcomed, cheered, applauded, accompanied and honored by the vast majority of Nicaragua's citizens.

The incumbent government and the National Guard have been using methods of terror against the Nicaraguan opponents for over 40 years. That period of history appears to be over.

Such dramatic and brazen action as the occupation of the National Palace of Nicaragua would formerly have been stopped with force. But it is not easy to stop when the highest level of Nicaraguan church leadership physically imposes itself to insure safe passage.

Previously, Somoza had pillars of support called the "trinity": the church, private enterprise and the National Guard. Now he has only the National Guard and there are multiple signs of mutiny. On Aug. 28, Somoza forces arrested 80 National Guardsmen, charging a plot to overthrow the government.

Aside from the military struggle between the Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) and the National Guard, the following elements are visible in Nicaragua:

The Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN). Alfonso Robelo Callejas, 38-year-old MDN representative recently spoke in New York claiming that the Somoza dynasty would be replaced by "constitutional means" before the end of the year. Robelo, an industrialist, stated there were four or five members of the Nicaraguan congress, even members of the Liberal party of Somoza, who would be "acceptable to the National Guard." According to Robelo, an interim president chosen from this group would form a national unity government to finish Somoza's term and prepare for free elections. Robelo went on to insist that such a resolution would not include the FSLN.

The Broad Front of the Twelve. The Twelve are a group of prominent anti-Somoza Nicaraguans who were in exile (see IN THESE TIMES, Aug. 23). Because of their activities against the government they were convicted of various crimes in absentia. They announced their intention to return to their country, Nicaragua's high court overruled their convictions and they were received on July 5 in what was called Nicaragua's largest crowd (200,000). The Twelve are clearly and definitely in opposition to the program of Robelo and the MDN. It was precisely the Twelve's insistence that the Broad Front include the FSLN that led them to win the confidence of Nicaragua's masses.

Both the Broad Front of the Twelve and the FSLN believe a candidate acceptable to the National Guard would simply lead to business as usual and they are highly suspect that this is what the MDN wants.

The goals of the Broad Front of the Twelve are almost the same as the Minimal Plan of the FSLN. But there are some important differences. The Twelve do not include the nationalization of Nicaragua's banks and the FSLN does. The Twelve do not mention women's rights and the FSLN does. Regardless of these differences, the



An injured FSLN guerilla is loaded onto plane after successful palace occupation.

Broad Front of the Twelve is expected to yield to the Minimal Plan of the FSLN. The approach of the combined coalition can be categorized politically as democratic socialism.

The Minimal Plan of the FSLN is:

- Massive expropriation of all the property of the Somoza family. Such property will be placed into production for the benefit of all.

- Total liquidation of the corruption of the Somoza dynasty such as the enslavement of youth for prostitution, gambling, drug traffic, smuggling, embezzlements, evasion of taxes and bribes. The establishment of an honest system of public administration at the service of the people.

- The total purification of the National Guard, including the trial of those responsible for unjust imprisonments, tortures, rapes, robbery and assassination. An authentic national army will then be formed.

- Assurance of enforcement of all democratic guarantees including free organization of political movements and labor unions.

- Nationalization of all businesses that exploit natural resources such as minerals, lumber, seas and marshes.

- Urban and agrarian reform will begin primarily on the lands expropriated from the Somoza family. Rural unemployment will be eliminated and decent homes with good water will be made available to workers.

- Nationalization of the banks will take place with the guarantee that resources be used for national development and for the benefit of all social sectors, especially for those of low income.

- The creation of an efficient and modern system of health care assuring the prevention of disease and bringing sanitary conditions to all.

- The establishment of a massive and effective educational system to completely eliminate illiteracy and to assure primary and secondary education which is public, free and obligatory. The university will contribute directly to the technical, scientific, social and spiritual transformation of the Nicaraguan society.

- Nationalization and radical improvement of public transportation.

- A guarantee of women's rights.

- Minimum wage guarantees with working conditions adjusted to the needs of the workers.

The FSLN believes that any attempt to pacify the corrupt and declining National Guard of Nicaragua by selecting a candidate with their stamp of approval will lead to prolonged civil war. ■

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Pope Paul recognized Communists

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Populorum progressio is an unusual document. Luca Pavolini, writing recently in *Rinascita*, praises the past Pope for "not eluding the problems posed him by a time of profound transformation." Pavolini identifies the innovative nature of the encyclical in the fact that it explicitly links issues of hunger and unemployment, "in short the fundamental problems of modern history," with a discussion of capitalism and imperialism. Hunger and underdevelopment are not simply the products of the ill will of men.

Moreover, the encyclical touched specifically on the unequal exchange relations between Third World countries and the developed world, spoke critically of profit, monopoly and the use of capital. The result was a criticism of the church's role throughout the centuries of colonialism.

At the same time, Pavolini cites a certain timidity in the face of the other great agents of change in today's world—a timidity that leaves Paul VI's encyclical somewhat narrower in breadth compared to the great historic encyclical *Pacem in terris* for which John XXIII is remembered.

But there was in Paul VI's papacy, an awakening recognition of some agents of

change. Here in Rome, an oft-cited memory are the two New Year's visits the communist mayor of Rome, Giulio Carlo Argan, and his municipal council (two-thirds Communist and the rest Socialist) paid to the Vatican. Such visits would have been totally inconceivable under Pius XII; and John XXIII was simply not faced with them, as Rome did not have a left-wing town council during his papacy. Prior to the 1976 elections in Italy, the church admonished those Catholics who showed a marked preference for Communist electoral politics, but by the time of Paul VI's death the church had taken a slightly more tolerant position.

On a broader scale, Paul VI normalized relations with East European countries, signed an understanding with the Russian Orthodox Church, sponsored Vatican participation in the Helsinki Conference on human rights, and showed concern about the war in Vietnam and international peace. And he wrote a letter to the Red Brigades asking them on humanitarian grounds to spare the life of his friend Aldo Moro.

Decline and rise.

It may be that the Pope's anti-progressive position on moral questions was a genuine attempt to safeguard what he saw as the declining prestige of the empire over which he ruled. In the early '70s there was a palpable sense that the church was losing its grip, that young people no longer held faith with it, that traditional ecclesiastical structures were in crisis. It may be, too, that moral rigidity was seen as a way of controlling adherents at a time of sharp ascendancy of the Communist party and pluralist politics in general.

Whatever the explanation, the moral rigidity, while presenting individual faith-

ful with serious problems, and the Italian nation with moral/political dilemmas, seems not to have diminished the prestige of the church. In fact, the church seems to have regained in the last two years much of its lost terrain, so that Paul VI may have left it not too much weaker than he found it. There are several grass-roots Catholic movements into which young people have flocked, and in the scholastic elections last year, lists headed by Catholic candidates did better than the others.

Several assemblies, especially the one called "Evangelization and Human Promotion," seem to have permitted a cultural rebuilding that brings with it a new mobilization of energy and, in some spheres, a new orthodoxy. How long these trends will last, or how profound they are, remains to be seen.

The new Pope will have to concern himself with the regularization of church-state relations. The Vatican has been negotiating a new Concordat with the Italian state for the last ten years, and the Senate was supposed to vote on the proposals next month. Now, everything may be negotiated anew.

What is in question is religious instruction in the schools. As the present proposal has it, a child can decline to take religious instruction, which is offered in the lower schools. The Concordat will also take up church and civil marriages and tax distinctions between various kinds of church societies and organizations. None of this means, obviously, a neat separation between church and state. It looks more like a gradual "unsticking." The "sticking" was done back in 1931, with Mussolini's church-state Concordat. ■ *Jane Hilowitz writes on Italian politics for IN THESE TIMES.*

Time for an American left

If you're not part of the system you can't change it

An interview with G. William Domhoff by Derek Shearer

G. William Domhoff is the author of *Who Rules America?*, *The Higher Circles*, *Fat Cats and Democrats* and, most recently, *Who Governs the Cities?* He teaches sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz and has been active in the Campaign for Economic Democracy.

A few years ago you wrote a book called *FAT CATS AND DEMOCRATS* that suggested that both the Republican and the Democratic Parties were controlled by the ruling elite. Have you changed your mind?

I haven't changed my mind about the Democratic Party, but I've changed my mind about the book. When I wrote it, I came within an inch of putting in a final chapter in which I would've said, now, after saying that the Fat Cats control the Democrats as well as the Republicans, strange as it may sound, I suggest that leftists should be Democrats.

Then I was going to go into what I later advocated in *Ramparts*, that the left should challenge ideologically within the Democratic Party primaries on programs that spell out the assumptions of economic democracy. But I left that out, which was the biggest mistake of the book.

That book and other similar arguments that people on the left made about the Democratic Party led many activists in the '60s to say that the two parties were the same, they were both controlled by Big Business, and that there had to be a third party. Do you agree that the left should build its own third party?

No, that would be futile, assuming we think of a party in the American sense of one that contests within the electoral arena. In the late '60s, I believed third party arguments. By 1972, when *Fat Cats and Democrats* appeared, I no longer did.

I came to believe that even though the Republican and Democratic Parties are coalitions led by parts of the ruling class, leftists should struggle within the Democratic Party. The struggle for economic democracy is ideological, meaning that the liberal ideology that is all pervasive in the U.S. among both liberals and conservatives has to be challenged in a fundamental way. The place to make that challenge is the Democratic Party because the rules of our electoral system almost preclude a third party. They make remote the likelihood of a third party growing slowly. A vote for a third party is a vote for your worst enemy. It sells out the short-run interests of working people. It sets liberals against radicals to the benefit of conservatives.

What kind of rules are you talking about?

Basically, about two sets of rules. One is the presidential system, as opposed to a parliamentary system. In the presidential system the winner takes all. The person who gets the plurality of votes wins, and nobody else gets anything. That leads finally to two candidates fighting it out for this all-important post.

In a parliamentary system, the prime minister is selected by a coalition of parties in parliament after the election.



Bill Domhoff when he was batboy for the Cleveland Indians in 1952.

Stop warming the bench and start playing ball, Domhoff tells socialists. You can't win from the dugout.

Second, we elect people from geographic districts, not by proportional representation. If you get the plurality of votes in your district, you go to the legislature and the loser gets nothing.

The presidential system and the single member district system are both strong forces towards a two-party system. If you have a parliamentary system with proportional representation, you're likely to have four or five or more political parties. All this is an old story to political scientists, but not to leftists who have never taken the structure of government seriously.

Would you agree with critics of the new left that the American party system is not only structured in a way that excludes the possibility of third parties winning representation, but that the party system is more open than those of other countries?

What makes it true is the primaries. If we look at the Progressive Era, we find it was the rigidity of the two-party system that led to our primaries, which are a unique adaptation to the rules that unwit-

tingly created the two-party system. Primaries have made the system much more open. This hasn't been recognized enough by leftists.

The full significance of this hasn't been drawn, partly because it wasn't until after WWII, really until the '60s, that primaries became very important. Estes Kefauver was the first person in recent history to demonstrate their usefulness to insurgents. Then Eugene McCarthy demonstrated it. That's when I started to think about the Democratic Party, to go back and learn about structure, to take seriously various arguments that had been advanced by mainstream political scientists. Because McCarthy was able to go into that primary in New Hampshire and turn it into a referendum on the war. When he announced I was cynical. I didn't think it was a good idea. By the end of McCarthy's campaign, I was impressed by how far he went with so little, whereas many of the people who had been involved with him from the start were now turned off. It was a paradoxical

changing of positions.

People said, oh the system doesn't work, and I thought, my God, how far it went with so little planning, with so little program, and such a late start.

Since then there have been more primaries that have made it easier to challenge ideologically.

Why do you think so few leftists initially agreed with you? Why has it taken so long for '60s activists to agree with this strategy?

Lots of reasons. I don't know how much weight to give each. On one level, a theoretical level, the whole left paradigm, particularly "Marxism," doesn't give much role to electoral politics, and doesn't attach much importance to the particular structure of government. So, the Democrat argument is regarded as superficial by our "heavy" thinkers on the left. I won't name names.

Intimately related to that is the fact that part of this argument had been put forth by mainstreamers, and mainstreamers, by definition, are wrong and apologists. That kind of mentality is a potent factor on the left—not being able to pick and choose and sort out among what mainstream social scientists say and try to use what is useful.

Also the Democratic Party has been controlled by Southern Democrats and by urban machine Democrats. It was not until the '60s that there was much chance of having an impact within the party. So the history of trying to work within the Democratic Party, except in California, which hadn't been a machine state, had been dreary.

On another level, leftists frequently say, "But the Democrats are immoral. The Democrats sell out. The Democrats make compromises." This response impressed upon me the strong moralistic streak in leftists that made it hard for them to be involved with anything that was in any way impure. And, God knows, the Democratic Party is impure. It's a mixture of all kinds of elements.

Once I presented my argument to a convention of Peace and Freedom Party people in northern California. They said to me, "But the Democrats are corrupt." This was right after it had been revealed that some Peace and Freedom Party candidates had received money from Republicans in California, because Republicans had hoped that the Peace and Freedom candidates would take enough votes away to defeat Democrats. It seemed to me that this was also corrupt. But beyond that trifle, the very fact that Republicans had given money to Peace and Freedom was the most wonderful and obvious evidence for the validity of my argument.

What we don't want is to be divided from liberals. We're never going to get into very much of a coalition with conservatives. They're not likely to be the first people we convince. We're more likely to gain new adherents from people who are left liberals and then moderate liberals and so on.