



Sergio Ramirez: "His kind of capitalist had no place here."

Robelo talks about the risks involved in remaining in Nicaragua—that his house was seized by mobs in front of a National Directorate post, and that the attack was ordered by FSLN Directorate member Bayardo Arce.

That is completely false. After Robelo left the country and his house was given to UNAG [a Sandinista organization of small cattle ranchers and farmers], everything inside was found untouched, including his pre-Columbian archeological collection, which was given to the Ministry of Culture. He didn't flee. He left at a calculated political moment.

Robelo states that the principal motive for his self-exile was the fact that the civic road, as he puts it, was totally closed.

It goes deeper than that. Some leaders of the opposition who are also now leaders of the counter-revolution—like Robelo—believe that our confrontation with the Reagan administration will be a short one—that we will be dislodged from power due to pressures from the U.S. destabilization program. Thus, an anti-Sandinista leader figures that armed counter-revolution is the most rapid way to come to power. That's why Robelo left the country.

There's still room to move here politically. There are opposition parties. Yet one shouldn't forget that Nicaragua is now in a situation that is not only influenced by political considerations, but by military ones as well.

The counter-revolutionary groups are a genuine military force who receive sophisticated arms, munitions and logistic aid from the CIA and the Honduran government. As a result, Robelo has more faith in armed struggle than in civic struggle. His alliance with Pastora is an example. But they are acting as though we are just another traditional government, rather than a revolutionary government—with an infinite popular base—that can defend itself better than any government in Latin America. Robelo has a problem understanding what opposition means in terms of a revolutionary government. He thought the junta should be replaced little by little with the most recalcitrant anti-Communists who would reject any kind of political and social change. He expected to use anti-communism as a banner to reject any change that limits the power and the privilege of the former ruling class.

Robelo says he's not anti-Communist—that he's a revolutionary and a Sandinista, that it's the junta and the FSLN National Directorate who are the counter-revolutionaries because they pushed aside the original principles of the revolution: political pluralism, a mixed economy and non-alignment.

Those are ideological phrases—rhetoric that doesn't fit the context of the situation here. What's real is that this is Nicaragua three years after the revolution. After 50 years of Somocismo, it's now trying to raise itself up from its past and create a new state—independent and able to stand on its own two feet.

Our revolutionary plan wasn't made by the millionaires, but by the poor. During 20 years of fighting the National Guard clandestinely, workers, inhabitants of the poor barrios and so on, were often accused by these same millionaires of being thieves and bandits. Now we say those millionaires will have a role in our struggle for reconstruction. Private enterprise can produce riches for the country.

But people who have never had a chance to make decisions will now have that chance. We will organize the poor, the workers, the peasants and the professionals, and they will finally have a voice. Now, if a peasant doesn't have land in areas where there are large landholdings and if a landowner is affected by the agrarian reform law, the state will pay the landowner, and the peasants will be able to stay. We will give them deeds—that's the minimum the revolution can do for them.

The problem is that the political interests of people like Robelo have been affected. He left the country because he felt that the kind of capitalist he was didn't have a future in Nicaragua, except within the range that the revolution guarantees. Here, money doesn't automatically mean power the way it does in the U.S. People like Robelo were schooled in the North American capitalist ideology.

In Nicaragua, everyone says Robelo and Eden Pastora are accepting U.S. funds. Robelo denies this. Do you have any evidence of direct U.S. support?

We don't have concrete information on how many checks they have received, but we're sure they're being financed by the U.S. because we don't see any other way they could finance a counter-revolution. From the U.S. perspective, the best option is to have one counter-revolution, with Robelo/Pastora at the head of all the groups. Politically, National Guard members are useless for the U.S. But men who participated in the revolution—one a commander and the other a former junta member—are more credible. I'm not saying Robelo/Pastora will go to a classic CIA agent with a black hat who will give them checks, but there will be a plan whereby a money pipeline will appear to finance political action, propaganda and military activity. If Robelo talks of an anti-Sandinista radio station in Costa Rica, this costs money.

He says it's inside Nicaragua and it's called the Voice of Sandino.

No, it's just outside San Jose in a neighborhood called Escazu. Our intelligence tells us that, as well as where the Honduran Somocista station "15 of September" is located.

Where?

Outside San Marcos de Colon, and another outside Puerto Lempira. One of the errors one can make in dealing with us as a government is not to treat us as if we were also conspirators. We have 20

years experience as conspirators in all of Central America, Mexico and the U.S. We are professional conspirators, perhaps the best in Latin America.

One of Robelo's strategies is to subvert support that Nicaragua has from sympathetic countries, especially Venezuela and Mexico. In Venezuela's case, the Costa Rican minister of justice told us that Pastora arrived in Costa Rica on an official Venezuelan passport, a charge that Venezuelan President Herrera Campins denied on July 19.

The word of President Herrera Campins is good enough for us.

What about Mexico? Pastora reportedly flew into Costa Rica on a PRI (Party of the Institutionalized Revolution) airplane and is said to be close friends with Miguel de la Madrid [the president-elect of Mexico]. Do you foresee any change of policy toward Nicaragua under him?

Pastora could not have better relations with PRI than we have. If there exists a tight relationship in Latin America, it's between the PRI and the FSLN. Also, I spoke personally with Miguel de la Madrid only last week in Mexico for two hours on a series of topics, and I don't see any problem.

Robelo accuses the FSLN Directorate of being more Marxist-Leninist and ideological than nationalistic—that the FSLN is delivering the revolution to the Cubans and the Soviets.

You can't find a leadership on the continent more nationalistic than ours. That we have close ties with Cuba is no secret, and Robelo originally was one of the promoters of closer relations with Cuba. Just a few days after we entered Managua in 1979, the junta received invitations for the July 26 [Cuban day of the revolution] ceremonies in Cuba. Robelo offered to represent the junta, so he participated and wore a red and black neckscarf [the colors of the FSLN] and ended his speech by shouting "Cuba and Nicaragua united will be victorious." Don't you think that Robelo knew Cuba had close ties with the Soviet Union?

He says the Cubans set up a repressive security apparatus that went into effect after the State of Emergency was declared. (Laughs) It's part of the mythology surrounding the Nicaraguan revolution. We are professionals, an intelligent people. We learned rapidly how to use the mechanisms of intelligence and counter-intelligence for the defense and security of the nation.

The head of security, Lenin Cerna is a very talented person. He's a poet and painter, not just an average policeman. We have sufficient talent to develop our own state security apparatus, which, I add, is a humane one. You can't accuse us of torture. We have systematically eliminated torture.

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When you say that, what do you have in mind?

The original direction of the revolution was a Sandinista revolution, one that was based on the principles of Sandino, the doctrine of Sandino, which was never Marxist-Leninist. If there was one outstanding characteristic of Sandino, it was that he was tremendously nationalistic. Now you have the FSLN delivering the country and the revolution to the Cubans and the Soviets because their ideological principles are stronger than their national principles. It is totally against the three key tenets of the revolution: effective pluralism, a well-defined mixed economy and genuine non-alignment in foreign relations. Each and every one has been betrayed.

Reports say a mixed economy does exist, that about 60 percent is in private hands, accounting for about 80 percent of production.

Not 60 percent. Maybe it's 50 percent or 45 percent. But why is that? Is it because they have accepted that private property should play a role in the long-term revolution? No. It's because they need the private sector. It is because they are so lousy as managers, that if they don't allow it, the economy would be even worse.

So you believe the FSLN intends to eliminate the private sector?

The private sector has no future in the Nicaraguan revolution.

Recently while in Panama you said you were ready to fight with Eden Pastora, if necessary. Is that true?

The problem with journalists is that they pick the most sensationalist parts out of long interviews. What I was saying was that if all civic ways to solve the Nicaraguan problem are closed, because of the attitude of the National Directorate, then we would have no other alternative but to fight, to use force. We don't want another war in Nicaragua. Nicaragua has already suffered too much violence.

But you did say you would fight with Eden Pastora?

What I said was that I agreed with him on many points: his criticism of the deviation of the revolution; his nationalistic feelings; his respect for Sandino; that he is an authentic anti-imperialist longing for peace; that we should not be the puppets of either one of the two superpowers,

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EDITORIAL

Manville seeks welfare cheater status

The moral bankruptcy of the Manville Corp. (formerly Johns-Manville Corp.) has been a matter of public record since 1980 when the California Supreme Court ruled that the company had fraudulently concealed from its workers its knowledge of the extremely hazardous nature of asbestos. Now, faced with 16,500 health lawsuits already filed and the possibility that another 35,000 victims of asbestos and lung cancer might also sue, Manville has filed a bankruptcy petition under Chapter 11 of the federal Bankruptcy Code. The effect (see page 4) is to freeze, and possibly to defeat, the suits pending against the company.

The Western world's leading producer of asbestos, Manville is also one of the world's most sued companies, both because of the widespread use of asbestos in industrial processes and because of the mineral's particularly virulent character. But as a corporation, Manville has operated according to the big business norm. Its first and—when push comes to shove—its only loyalty is to its investors. In their behalf it has ignored the hazards posed by the production and use of its product to the health and safety of its employees and the public at large. When finally brought to partial account by the legal action of thousands of its victims, it has sought to escape liability through a bailout by the federal government.

The use of Chapter 11 by a solvent corporation is, as the *Wall Street Journal* says, "highly unusual" because the company is in good shape at the moment and has filed as protection against future liabilities to its victims. Even Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) finds this procedure "dubious and unusual at best," placing as it does "additional strains" on the American bankruptcy system that it "can ill afford" right now. But Manville wants to have more than the protection of temporary bankruptcy. It is also

seeking to have the federal government share the financial burden it faces. John A. McKinney, Manville's chairman, says this would not be a bailout because many of the nine million workers who have been exposed to asbestos over the past 40 years worked in government shipyards during World War II, and that "the government itself needs a bailout from a moral point of view."

But in seeking a bill that would require the federal government to pay almost all the cost of compensating asbestos victims, Manville has not admitted its own moral obligations. Nor does McKinney say whether during World War II the government shared Johns-Manville's

secret about the asbestos hazards.

The Manville case is a classic of corporate irresponsibility. In utter disregard for the public health and safety, it pursues the maximum private gain. Then, when found out and threatened with being brought to account for its actions, it at-

The asbestos company wants the public to pay twice.

tempts to get the public, made up in large part by its own tax-paying victims, to pay again. So the American people are asked to subsidize their corporate rulers first by sacrificing their health and safety and then with their dollars.

And Manville is not alone. A wide variety of other substances, including benzene, DES (diethylstilbestrol), Agent Orange, radioactive material and other industrial products expose workers and citizens to similar or even greater problems. Three Mile Island is another case in point. There, too, corporate disregard for public safety ended in near disaster. And there, too, the corporation (a "public" utility) has been trying to get its victims to pay so that the stockholders can continue to get their guaranteed returns.

We do understand that in Manville's case, as in that of Three Mile Island, the corporation's assets may be insufficient to compensate its victims adequately—and that in this situation the role of government in providing for the general welfare is to help out. But if it does—if the taxpayers' money is used to rescue an incompetent and anti-social corporation—then we, the taxpayers, ought also to become shareholders in such corporations, in order to protect our own investment and the interests of the employees and the public.

Meanwhile, there is also an immediate need to stop the Reagan administration's process of dismantling regulations designed to protect health and safety. Sheldon W. Samuels, director of health, safety and environment for the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, proposes a three-point program. First, "an effective OSHA run by people with the hearts and minds to do the job." Second, a system of "intervention to locate and assist those exposed to hazards, along with research to find ways to protect workers." Third, a system of adequate compensation for victimized workers and their families.

Much of this program was enacted during the Carter administration, however, and the ease with which the Reagan team could dismantle it is instructive. The public health and safety can be protected only by the public and its representatives, not by those whose first priority is corporate profit—or by corporate representatives in government, such as we now have. ■

Now it's time to jump ahead

The outpouring of support in response to our appeal for \$160,000 to guarantee the continued publication of *In These Times* has been overwhelming. So far, with the contributions still pouring in, we have received more than \$100,000 from some 2,436 subscribers, and it now appears certain that we will survive.

The money, of course, is vital, but the expressions of concern and support that have accompanied it have also been tremendously heartening, both as an indication of appreciation for the work by our staff and as a sign of growing determination to build a popular movement for socialism in the U.S. in the '80s. The hundreds of letters and telephone calls are much more than a morale booster for all of us here on Milwaukee Avenue. They make it clear that a new left politics is struggling to be born.

That's the good news. The bad is that many subscribers, quite prudently to be sure, have held up on renewing their subscriptions until they saw the outcome of our dire appeal. Well, the returns are mostly in and it is now safe to renew, and to get your friends and associates to subscribe. The next step in this process is for us to double our circulation. With the kind of support we've been getting these past two months, that no longer seems like a pipe dream. ■



This victim of asbestosis is one of many who have died as a result of inadequate protection against asbestos fibers.

Changing the guard at ITT

Bob Nicklas, our associate publisher of the past three years, has resigned and moved on to the State and Local Leadership Project in Chicago. As everyone who knows him will attest, Bob did an outstanding job for *In These Times* under extremely difficult circumstances. His departure has been expected for some time, but it is still a wrenching experience for us.

That's the bad news. The good news is that Elizabeth Goldstein, who has been our business manager this past year, and who was program director of the Foundation for National Progress in San Francisco before she came here, has replaced Bob as associate publisher. Those of you who have gotten to know Bob will soon get to know Elizabeth. We expect you'll be as impressed with her as we are. ■