

have been murdered, then people's fears of government agencies here—from the police to the public health system—are valid," says Khoury-Quesada.

From the mouth of the beast

Chicago journalist Peter Coogan spent his summer vacation in Nicaragua and filed this report.

On July 19 I travelled to Matagalpa for the eighth anniversary celebration of the Nicaraguan revolution. In his hour-and-20-minute speech President Daniel Ortega relayed some sobering statistics on the effects of the U.S. proxy war. Since 1980 the war has claimed 43,176 victims and drained more than \$1 billion from the economy. The war absorbs 46 percent of the national budget, or 32 percent of the gross national product.

What is the U.S. angle on Ortega's speech? I went to the U.S. Embassy in Managua and asked what it meant.

"Unlike past years, there was nothing in his speech to lift up the true believer in the crowd," said Alberto M. Fernandez, the embassy's press attache and a United States Information Agency officer. "It was grim."

"They thought [the Iran-contra scandal] was the death-knell of the Reagan administration and support for the contras," he said. "They thought, 'We have been delivered. We are home free.' They knew they faced a tough year, but that once that money is gone they were home

Santiago, a Salvadoran promoter who was tortured himself in 1984, expands on this theme: "Their way is to destroy the ability to think, so you think you are dead, that you

free. But the hearings didn't go as they had hoped."

Fernandez explained that Nicaragua is now holding out for a new, perhaps more sympathetic, administration in the White House and that would take two years.

He said current congressional funding of the contras made 1987 a very hot year for Nicaragua. There were more military engagements than ever before. In the first six months of 1987 the government reported 300 military clashes with the contras. This he compared to the 100 clashes reported in 1986. As for 1984 and 1985, he described those as years of slight funding and "low-level conflicts."

Fernandez appealed to me as "part of the left-biased media" not to under-report the contra's military action. He quoted Ortega's speech to note that the contras had 6,000 *efectivos*, or armed men, inside Nicaragua. In late July contra leader Adolfo Calero put that number at 12,000 during a "Cruise for Contras" fundraiser—a tour of Lake Michigan on a boat loaded with admiring Young Republicans.

I asked Fernandez if the contras have successfully disrupted Nicaragua's economy.

"The biggest effect on the Sandinista economy is mismanagement," he answered. "Some is effected by the war, some by the embargo. But they say everything is

are powerless. That is why the refugees are afraid. But the refugees trust the promoters. With us they better."

—Rachel Kreier

due to the aggression. The people aren't buying it. Not after eight years they aren't."

But isn't it the strategy of the contras to destabilize the economy to alienate Nicaraguans from their government?

"The contras' strategy is victory," Fernandez said. "They inflict damage whenever and wherever they can, like the Viet Cong, or the French Resistance. It is a war of aggression. We say it. We are aiding one side of a civil war."

In his speech Ortega had said, "This is not a low-intensity conflict. This is a war of intervention." Fernandez took exception to that. "Why can't it be both?" he asked.

Fernandez also complains about Ortega's death statistics. He said Ortega fails to "break those figures down. Half of [the dead] would be contras. [And he doesn't] include those who died in state security."

As I left his office, Fernandez gave me his business card, and told me to call him if I had any questions. The phone number on his card read "66011." But he said that was a misprint and it was actually 66611. I looked at him, and he volunteered, "The number of the beast!"

I asked if Nicaragua had assigned that number on purpose and if the U.S. had protested.

"No," Fernandez said. "We like to be vilified."

—Peter Coogan

Sister-city ties that bind

In the mid-'50s when President Eisenhower first created Sister Cities International, Nicaragua was ruled by the U.S.-supported Somoza dictatorship. But U.S. and Nicaraguan citizens are maintaining "sister-city" ties between their respective communities even as the Reagan administration tries to topple the Nicaraguan government. In fact, today the two countries have more than 50 sister-city relationships, twice as many as a year ago.

Although Sister Cities International is a non-governmental organization with affiliates in 87 different countries, a portion of its funding comes from the U.S. government's Agency for International Development (AID) and AID does not spend money in countries that have strong political differences with the U.S. Though this does not prevent the Sister Cities International from assisting with linkages to Nicaraguan cities, it does prevent that organization from funding programs in that country.

The irony is that in countries where peaceful exchange is most needed it is being discouraged. The result is that U.S. cities have established relationships with their Nicaraguan sister cities that are in-

dependent of the national organization. The split brings accusations of "politicization" from both sides.

Eisenhower's original idea was that citizens could do more for the peace process than politicians, and he encouraged Americans to learn more about other people and cultures. "I believe that the people in the long run are going to do more to promote peace than governments," he said. "Indeed, I think that the people want peace so much that one of these days governments better get out of their way and let them have it."

Alan Wright, coordinator of the New Haven, Conn., sister-city project, says his organization has sent 24 "thematic" delegations—such as groups of artists, health workers and educators—to its sister city of Leon. "These are not the same old people who protest U.S. Central American policy. These are people who want to do something positive and something that speaks to their needs as well." Wright says some whose skills "might be considered marginal in the U.S. can do work in an orphanage or senior center [in Nicaragua] and make a positive contribution."

Sister-city projects often consist of exchanges of delegations or material aid. A church in Seattle sent a gospel choir to Managua. People

from a La Crosse, Wisc., food cooperative gave five dairy cows to the town of Chiltepe so children could have milk. Members in the New Haven, Conn., area adopted a Leon day-care center, donating paint, labor and playground equipment.

In order to expand this citizens' diplomacy movement, 26 Nicaraguans—including Sandinista officials and church workers—met in June in Seattle with 350 Americans at the "U.S.-Nicaragua Sister Cities 1987 Conference."

Roy Wilson, vice-president of the Seattle-Managua Sister City Association told *In These Times*, "Sister-city relationships are extremely empowering because they give U.S. citizens and their Nicaraguan counterpart a concrete tool to make their lives better and to gain a broader view of the world."

The three-day conference focused on how to start and run cultural and technical exchange programs. Conference participants also discussed how the sister-city movement can be expanded in the U.S. To that end, Gov. Miguel Murillo of Nicaragua's Central Pacific region brought to Seattle portfolios of Nicaraguan towns that are interested in having a U.S. sister city.

—Leslie Florio & Joan E. McGrath

America, in 1977 the U.S. cut off military aid to Guatemala because of a "consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." Nine years later Gen. Benedicto Lucas Garcia, a former chief of staff of the Guatemalan military, told the Tel Aviv newspaper *Ha'aretz* that Israel "was the only country that gave us military support in our battle against the guerrillas." He added, "Israel provided us with advisers who helped us use the military equipment we purchased from Israel." And in 1977 when the U.S. cut off military aid to El Salvador because of gross human rights violations, Israel filled the void. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, between 1975 and 1979, 83 percent of El Salvador's military imports came from Israel. And in 1984 when Congress cut off aid to the contras, Israeli support helped take up the slack. Robert K. Simmons, a former staff director of the Senate Intelligence Committee, told the *Boston Globe* that the aid Israel gave the contras early in 1984 "became crucial to the war's continuation."

Stamping out unjust laws

Want to buy a Nicaraguan postage stamp? For \$1 the Wisconsin-based Trade for Peace, Inc., will sell you this Nicaraguan product and make you a criminal who has violated Treasury Department regulations that prohibit trade with Nicaragua. The regulations were drawn up following President Reagan's Executive Order 12513 of May 1985 that declared economic war on Nicaragua. Trade for Peace, based in Madison, was carefully set up as a legal business to ensure that if the government hauls it to court it will have to be for violating the trade embargo. The company has a three-person board of directors and a corporate motto—"Low-intensity resistance to low-intensity conflict." For sale are several thousand postage stamps, a variety of handcrafts and a few \$200 paintings from Solenginane, an artists' collective founded by Minister of Culture Father Ernesto Cardinal. According to Leonard Cizewski, the coordinator of the project and company director, although Trade for Peace has so far limited its civil disobedience market to Wisconsin, a nationwide mail-order campaign is set for the fall.

I'll take the Karl Marx stamp

No you won't. Nicaragua's Marx postage stamp—the one that Reagan and Bush so often pull out when riding the jingo circuit—is out of print. Trade for Peace (see above story) was also unable to get Thomas Jefferson, George Washington or Babe Ruth stamps that appeared with Marx in a postal series on great world leaders. The company still has stamps commemorating the pope's U.S. visit, but they're selling fast. The one marking Lenin's 115th birthday, however, is available.

Sandinistas and Indians

Struggle over Autonomy: A Report on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, a readable study by the American Friends Service Committee, provides a short political history of the Sandinista's failures—and recent successes—in governing Nicaragua's isolated eastern coast. The Quaker political-action network's report examines the Sandinista's supremely stupid reaction to the movement for autonomy by Nicaragua's indigenous peoples. It tells how in December 1984 the Nicaraguan government, having realized its folly, began negotiating with Brooklyn Rivera, one of the Miskito rebel leaders. Those talks broke down in May 1985. (According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, before contra leader Adolfo Calero testified before Congress he told reporters that some of the money he received from Oliver North was used to pay Rivera to break off negotiations with the Sandinistas.) But diplomatic setbacks aside, that same spring the government established a National Autonomy Commission and charged it with drawing up a plan that offered limited autonomy to the coastal peoples. In September 1986 the commission presented a preliminary draft of autonomy statutes for the Atlantic coast. Among other things, they guarantee the right to a bilingual and bicultural education. And this April, 1,500 representatives from the different coastal ethnic groups ratified the statutes. The report concludes: "Autonomy on the Atlantic coast may well be a beacon for oppressed Indian people throughout the hemisphere. As it succeeds, it will contribute to the overall Indian rights struggle throughout the Americas."

Central America

"You'd be surprised," said Ronald Reagan after a 1982 trip to Latin America. "They're all individual countries."

Despite this epiphany, President Reagan continues to treat those countries as trust territories of a United States of the Free World, dependent on their northern uncle for protection against the intrusion of foreign ideologies.

That world view, largely shared by Latin American leaders in the '50s and '60s, has been supplanted by an understanding that the Latin American nations have more in common with each other than with their giant neighbor.

This understanding inspired five Central American presidents to produce a regional peace agreement, based on the plan put forward by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias last February and continuing the Contadora peace process initiated in 1983 by Latin American neighbors (see "Previous Peace Plans" below, left). The agreement the presidents signed on August 7 in Guatemala City—to which this issue of *In These Times* is devoted—imposed no special conditions on Nicaragua, implicitly treating it as a legitimate member of the Central American community, and affirmed that Latin Americans could find solutions to their own problems without the help of the U.S.

The considerable achievement of getting five leaders with divergent ideologies to commit to the same program was doubly remarkable in the face of U.S. obstruc-

tion. The Reagan administration, sensing that a negotiated settlement was dangerously possible, advanced a plan of its own on August 4 that attempted to isolate Nicaragua from the "four democracies," with the U.S. giving itself the role of regional policeman (see "Two Visions for Central America," below, right). Even the nations most dependent on U.S. subsidies rejected this Cold-War approach to the Western Hemisphere.

From Guatemala City, the road to peace passed through San Salvador, where on August 19 the foreign ministers began hammering out the details, despite foot-dragging by Honduras, and then on August 22 to Caracas, Venezuela, where a pan-Latin American commission on verification was set up. This commission will meet in December to evaluate how well the terms of the accord have been fulfilled.

While the peace process still appears to be on track, it faces landmines in every country involved. *In These Times* asked correspondents in each of the signatories—Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras—to report on the status of the agreement, explore each nation's relationship with the U.S. and examine how their internal situations affect the region's prospects for peace. Despite their differences, the countries are united by a growing independence that promises to survive Reagan's attempts to sabotage the Central American agreement.

PREVIOUS PEACE PLANS

THE ENDERS ROUND

August 12, 1981

The Reagan administration proposed not to use force against Nicaragua and to curb the activities of Nicaraguan expatriates if Nicaragua reduced its armed forces and halted alleged aid to Salvadoran rebels. Arturo Cruz, then Nicaraguan ambassador to the U.S. and later a contra leader, said the U.S. position was "like the conditions of a victorious power."

THE AMBASSADORIAL ROUND

April 8, 1982

In this proposal, the U.S. added stipulations about "political pluralism" to the Enders proposal. These talks were abandoned by the U.S. in August 1982 and leaked White House documents later indicated that the proposal was designed to "co-opt [the] negotiations issue."

CONTADORA SUMMIT

January 8, 1983

Panama, Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia formed the Contadora Group to call for the five Central American countries to negotiate.

CONTADORA DOCUMENT OF OBJECTIVES

September 9, 1983

The Contadora Group and the Central American countries agreed to a framework for an agreement, involving democratization, an end to support for insurgencies, arms reduction and an end to foreign military bases and advisers.

MANZANILLO TALKS

June 1, 1984

Secretary of State George Shultz resumed bilateral negotiations with Nicaragua. The talks were broken off soon after Reagan was re-elected.

CONTADORA DRAFT TREATY

September 7, 1984

This treaty followed the framework of the Document of Objectives. When Nicaragua offered to sign it, U.S. allies reject the pact.

TEGUCIGALPA DRAFT TREATY

October 19, 1984

El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica's draft treaty did not restrict the U.S. military presence in Central America or bind the U.S. to cut off contra aid. Nicaragua declined to sign.

CARABALLEDA DECLARATION

January 12, 1986

The Contadora nations and the Contadora Support Group—Argentina, Peru, Brazil and Uruguay—called on the U.S. to help the peace process by stopping contra aid.

"FINAL" CONTADORA DRAFT TREATY

June 6, 1986

The version Nicaragua agreed to sign was modified by withdrawing provisions on arms limitations and military exercises that were objectionable to the U.S. Honduras and El Salvador still rejected the treaty.

Charts compiled by Jim Naureckas

TWO VISIONS FOR CENTRAL AMERICA

REGIONAL PEACE AGREEMENT

All countries must offer amnesty to insurgents.

All countries must enter into dialogue with unarmed opposition groups.

All countries must end states of emergency.

All countries must hold free elections when terms of present leaders expire. Elections for a Central American parliament will be held in 1988.

All countries must end aid to insurgents and exclude them from their territories.

Negotiations on security issues will involve Central American nations under the Contadora framework.

The Agreement will be verified by Latin Americans.

Measures will go into effect by November with provisions for follow-up negotiations.

REAGAN PLAN

Nicaragua must offer amnesty to the contras.

Nicaragua must negotiate a cease-fire with contras who do not accept the amnesty.

Nicaragua must end its state of emergency.

Nicaragua must hold new elections before the president's term expires.

U.S. will cut off military aid to contras if Nicaragua cuts off military aid from Communist countries and demobilizes its forces. U.S. will maintain "humanitarian" aid to contras.

Security negotiations will include the U.S.

U.S. will unilaterally verify compliance.

Negotiations must be completed by Sept. 30, 1987.

U.S. MILITARY AID TO CENTRAL AMERICA, 1981-1986 (in millions)

El Salvador	\$784.2
Honduras	\$375.7
Costa Rica	\$27.9
Guatemala	\$7.8
Nicaragua	\$0.0

Source: Coalition for a New Foreign Policy

By David R. Dye

MANAGUA

FROM NICARAGUA'S VIEWPOINT, THE KEY planks in the regional peace agreement are Honduras' commitment not to allow its territory to be used as a staging area for the contras, and the fact that for the first time all area countries have called on the U.S. government to stop aid to the Nicaraguan insurgents.

But Nicaraguan leaders caution that peace is not around the corner and that implementation of the accords will be difficult, because they expect Reagan administration sabotage.

"We cannot lower our guard in the defense area," said President Daniel Ortega recently. And Sandinista military leaders have warned troops that the danger of a U.S. invasion is now greater than ever. The war in Nicaragua has so far claimed more than 20,000 lives and caused up to \$3 billion in total losses to the country's economy.

Diplomatic victory: Nevertheless, the government clearly regards the agreement as a diplomatic victory that puts the U.S. on the defensive. Foreign Ministry negotiator Mauricio Herdocia noted that U.S. allies El Salvador and Honduras had bucked Washington's wishes on the accord. And he added, "Everything indicates that the Reagan administration's request for more contra aid faces serious obstacles. Reagan will not be able to impose his plan over the plan of the Central Americans."

The agreement accepts the Nicaraguan principle that all the conditions of peace must go into effect simultaneously. Sandinista officials have stated repeatedly that the government will not carry out its key concession, lifting a five-year state of emergency and restoring full political rights, until aggression against their country ceases. Nicaragua demands both that the U.S. cut off aid to the contras and that Honduras act to disarm insurgent forces and move them back from border areas before the agreement's November 7 deadline.

In order to smooth the diplomatic road, the Sandinistas have made goodwill gestures toward their neighbors, withdrawing a World Court suit charging Costa Rica with supporting the contras as well as postponing a similar suit against Honduras. In a quick trip to Havana, Ortega also elicited a statement of full support for the peace accords from Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

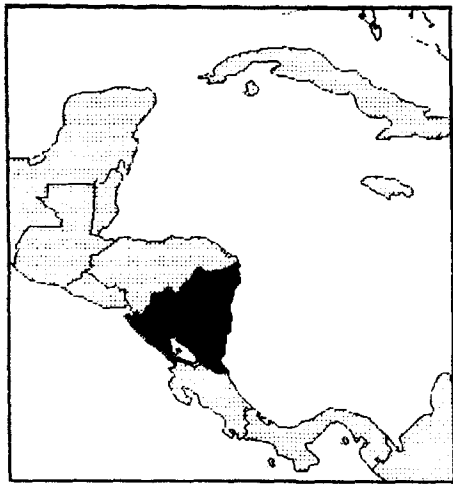
At the same time, realizing the world spotlight is on them, the Nicaraguans have moved rapidly to implement the initial steps called for in the agreement. On August 26 Ortega named the four members of a national reconciliation commission, which will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the agreement. Ortega chose the group from lists provided by the Catholic Church and opposition parties.

The opposition's view: The process of making the lists highlighted the broad split in Nicaraguan opposition forces. One camp consists of political parties that contested the 1984 elections and have been willing to work within the Sandinista political setup to widen the space for liberal democracy. The other centers on the so-called Democratic Coordinator, a coalition of right-wing parties, unions and business groups that have abstained from official political participation.

The two groups were unable to produce a single list, so Ortega chose a candidate from the one drawn up by the more participatory parties: Mauricio Diaz of the Popular Social Christian Party.

A 'diplomatic victory' for Managua

Among the participating parties, response to the agreement has been generally favorable. "We are moderately optimistic," said Luis Humberto Guzmán, parliamentary leader for the Popular Social Christian Party, about prospects for implementation. "By signing this accord, the Nicaraguan govern-



ment has committed itself to a series of steps which tend to democratize our society.

"The U.S. Congress should realize that the best thing to do is to give the Sandinistas an opportunity to fulfill the agreements, freezing financial assistance to the contras," added Guzmán.

Under the agreement, the Sandinistas have reiterated a promise to hold municipal elections next year and agreed to hold elections for a Central American Parliament. Lifting the state of emergency, which allows press censorship and restricts political activity, will facilitate efforts by Guzmán's party to organize political opposition to the Sandinistas in these and subsequent votes. The next presidential balloting is scheduled for 1990.

On the other side of the opposition, leaders of the Democratic Coordinator have criticized the agreement for not incorporating the contras directly into the negotiating process. Coordinator Vice President Ramiro Gurdian was quoted as saying, "What we want most is to sit the counterrevolution and the FSLN [Sandinistas] down with us so that we can define the bases of democracy."

Many in this opposition grouping say that without the contras, the Sandinistas will move toward totalitarian rule. Observers fear those affiliated with Coordinator will work to sabotage the accords, provoking confrontations with the government over ongoing political restrictions—and then blaming the Sandinistas for not keeping promises of political freedom.

On August 15, 200 people inaugurating the Coordinator's new headquarters clashed with police after trying to mount a political rally without prior authorization. (Permits for outdoor demonstrations are required under the country's emergency laws, still in effect.) Authorities arrested several of the group's leaders, including the head of an anti-government human rights commission, accusing them of provocation and attempting to boycott the agreement. The next day the official newspaper *Barricada* published photos of U.S. Vice-Consul Gary Grappo at the Coordinator's event.

The role of the church: In a sustained attempt to torpedo the peace accord internally, much will depend on the attitude of Cardinal Obando, a bitter critic of the Sandinista revolution. The Nicaraguan prelate has so far given little indication of his feel-

ings, merely expressing hope that the agreement can be fulfilled. The new situation may give Obando the chance to exercise a mediating role similar to that he played between the Sandinistas and Somoza in 1979. But observers of church politics note that over the past year the cardinal has quietly obstructed a Vatican-inspired effort to promote dialogue between the Nicaraguan bishops and the Sandinista government.

Ortega appointed Obando from a list of three equally hard-line bishops to the national reconciliation commission. Also named to the commission were Sergio Ramirez, Sandinista vice president, and Gustavo Parajon of the Protestant Ecumenical Council for Development. With Diaz of the Popular Social Christians, the group seems capable of working for democratization within a constitutional framework.

Some Sandinista opponents stress that the government could help the peace effort by taking several unilateral steps short of abrogating the state of emergency at the end of the 90-day term. The Sandinistas have already announced that Bishop Pablo Vega and Father Bismarck Carballo, two exiled Nicaraguan clerics, will be allowed to return. Other possible actions include allowing opposition daily *La Prensa*, closed last year, to reopen with only minor censorship, returning the Catholic Radio station to the church and moving ahead with amnesty for many people accused of collaborating with the contras.

Sandinista Party Vice Coordinator Bayardo Arce in a recent address to party youth leaders indicated the government was

considering these possible steps. Arce also addressed the implications of the regional peace agreement for the party faithful, some of whom have reportedly been disconcerted by the government's concessions.

Arce told his audience, "We have decided to convert these commitments into part of the immediate political program of the Sandinista Front." Noting that "peace has its cost," the Sandinista leader affirmed that when the emergency is lifted, restoring full freedoms, the party must prepare itself for a situation of greater political competition. The opposition, he warned, will have more

NICARAGUA

space to manipulate popular opinion over current economic difficulties.

The view prevailing among political analysts here is that if the peace process can be kept on track, the prospect is for a significant political opening in the country. Nevertheless, optimism is tempered by a recognition that the Reagan administration will do everything in its power to keep the Nicaraguan counterrevolution alive.

The contra question: Excluded from the regional parley, the contras meanwhile insist that they must take part in the peace process and have vowed to continue the struggle against the revolutionary government. But Sandinista military sources report inflicting increasingly heavy losses on waning contra forces, which they estimate at fewer than 6,000.

On August 19, the government presented to the media a man named Lester Ponce Silva, described as head of contra military intelligence in the northern border zone. He told reporters that the regional peace pact had led him to accept amnesty. According to Ponce, many other contras are ready to follow suit.

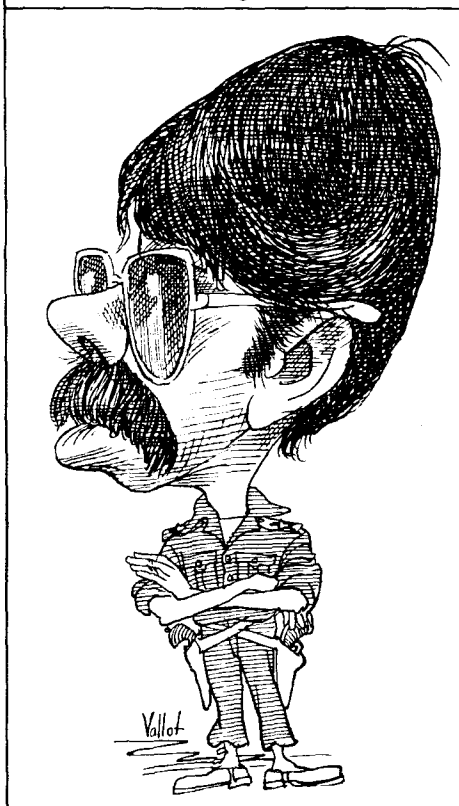
Nicaraguan Chancellor Miguel D'Escoto has rejected attempts by Salvadoran President Jose Napoleon Duarte to condition dialogue with the Sandinistas and the contras. D'Escoto pointed out that the accord stipulates as valid participants in dialogue only those insurgents who have accepted amnesty. He went on to refute the longstanding Reagan thesis of "symmetry" between the two countries' conflicts, noting that U.N. resolutions have called for dialogue with the rebels in El Salvador while backing Nicaragua's stand of insisting on direct talks with Washington. (see story on page 10).

After so many years of war most Nicaraguans seem to regard the regional peace agreement with wary optimism. While those strongly opposed to the Sandinistas voice doubts about the government's willingness to comply with what it has signed, many revolutionary supporters are dubious that the U.S. will allow the peace process to be realized.

The attitude of the wavering but nationalistic center is best summed up in the words of a Managua hotel receptionist, who said, "If the contras lay down their arms, we'll lay ours down, too, but without any commitment not to take them up again. If they attack us, we're going to respond anew."

David R. Dye is a doctoral candidate at Stanford University who has lived in Managua for four years.

President Daniel Ortega



The Sandinistas have agreed to end the state of emergency and restore political rights—but only if the U.S. and Honduras move to end the contra insurgency.