

The Heritage Lectures

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Three Nicaraguans on the Betrayal of Their Revolution

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Humberto Belli
Adolfo Calero
Haroldo Montealegre

THE ARTHUR SPITZER INSTITUTE FOR
HEMISPHERIC DEVELOPMENT

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**Humberto Belli
Adolfo Calero
Haroldo Montealegre**

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Participants

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Introduction

THE ARTHUR SPITZER INSTITUTE FOR HEMISPHERIC DEVELOPMENT

It is with great pleasure that The Heritage Foundation announces the establishment of the Arthur Spitzer Institute for Hemispheric Development. It is particularly fitting that the Institute's inaugural publication is the discussion in this volume by three prominent Nicaraguans of how their hopes and their revolution have been betrayed by the Sandinista regime. By mobilizing information and intellectual forces, such as those represented by the contributors to this volume, the Arthur Spitzer Institute seeks to encourage U.S. policy makers and opinion makers to focus on the United States' critically important relations with Latin America.

Modelled on The Heritage Foundation's successful Asian Studies Center and United Nations Assessment Project, the Arthur Spitzer Institute is a non-partisan organization which welcomes different points of view. The premise guiding the Institute's programs is that United States interests are best served by a vitally democratic and non-communist Latin America whose citizens reap the bounty produced by growing free market economies. The Arthur Spitzer Institute will analyze the options available to U.S. policy makers in pursuit of these goals.

In compiling such analyses, the Institute will draw upon the experience and talents of Members of Congress, diplomats, businessmen, academics, journalists, Executive Branch officials and others with backgrounds in the affairs and issues of this hemisphere. The products of these analyses will take the form of background papers, roundtable discussions (such as that published in this volume), lectures, debates, monographs, press and broadcast interviews and briefings for officials.

The Institute has been named for Arthur Spitzer, a distinguished California entrepreneur who has devoted his energies and resources to building a stronger America and a sound U.S. policy toward the nations of this hemisphere. Chairing the Institute's Advisory Council is Richard Stone, the former Democratic Senator from Florida who has served as President Ronald Reagan's special envoy to Central America. He is joined on the Advisory Council by a dozen eminent men and women with backgrounds in international relations and inter-American affairs.

With their assistance, the Arthur Spitzer Institute for Hemispheric Development is certain to help refocus U.S. policy on Latin America. This volume is a fine start for the process.

Edwin J. Feulner, Jr.
President
The Heritage Foundation

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Dr. Mark Falcoff, American Enterprise Institute: When I was a graduate student some years ago at an Ivy League institution, whose name—as Cervantes would say—I do not wish to remember, we were taught that one of the things historians avoid is contrafactual assumptions. In shorthand terms, “what-if” history was out. So, like a lot of things that I learned during graduate school, in subsequent years I found it necessary to unlearn them. Why not “what if” history—if that’s what interests me? Moreover, what other reason is there, really, to study history if not to learn from its mistakes? I think today that is an exercise not only of intellectual importance, but—in the case of Nicaragua—one of concrete policy relevance. Some of the questions that we faced in 1979 we will have to face again—perhaps tomorrow in the Philippines, the day after in Chile, still further down the pike in some other country. So what we are doing this afternoon is not merely an academic exercise but a policy exercise of the greatest importance for the United States, and hopefully, also, for the country of our panelists.

In the case of Nicaragua, events have moved very quickly. One of the things that is interesting about the Nicaraguan revolution is how rapidly the policy and the ideological sands in Washington have been shifting. I am thinking particularly about a remarkable article that appeared on October 4 in *The New Republic* by Robert Leiken of the Carnegie Endowment, an article that should have sent tremors of a new earthquake into Managua. Clearly, there is a very strong desire to learn from what we are doing wrong, and what we have done wrong. I believe that the environment for an objective discussion of Nicaraguan issues is better now in Washington than it has been in a long time. So I am very glad to have this opportunity to participate and to introduce our distinguished panelists. We have not really heard enough Nicaraguan voices in Washington. Some we shall hear today are more well-known than others, but each is distinguished in his own right. I shall introduce them in alphabetical order.

On my left is Mr. Humberto Belli, a former Marxist and member of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). After the revolution of 1979, he served as an editorial page writer for the independent newspaper

La Prensa. He left in 1982 due to the difficulties he faced following the imposition of censorship of the press. I am sure some of you are familiar with his book *Christians Under Fire*.

Next to him is Adolfo Calero, president of the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces, Directorate of the FDN. He was formerly a leader of the historical Conservative Party in Nicaragua and as many of us know a very longtime opponent of the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza.

To my right is Mr. Haroldo Montealegre, who was minister and director of the International Reconstruction Fund, which was a multi-party operation as was characteristic of what had been a coalition government at the very beginning, and a founding member also of the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement, which was one of the important movements against Somoza. He left that in 1981 to return to private life. He remains an active member of Nicaragua's private sector.

I will give each of our distinguished guests about fifteen minutes for their statement and then will invite questions from the audience. Mr. Belli.

Mr. Humberto Belli: I was asked by The Heritage Foundation to share some information about the tactics used by the Marxists in Nicaragua for concealing the nature of the FSLN (the Sandinista Front) and its participation in the revolution and also to explore ways to determine in the future when Marxism-Leninism, and not nationalism, is the power in a revolutionary upheaval.* I like the subject, especially because of one startling fact: we hear that the Marxists have used Nicaragua to conceal their true nature, but the fact is that they did not conceal much of their true nature. They managed to deceive national and international opinion not so much because of their skill in concealing their true intentions, but because of a very deep-seated weakness or malady in Western politics—what is known as a kind of liberal approach to politics.

* Nationalism, and not Marxism-Leninism, was clearly the goal of Augusto Sandino for whom the Front was named. Sandino led a guerrilla war against the U.S. Marines in Nicaragua during the 1920s. Sandino's goal was to restore Nicaragua's sovereignty rather than promote social revolution; his refusal to follow Moscow's directives led him to sever relations with Farabundo Marti, a Salvadoran communist who for some time acted as the Comintern's envoy to the Sandinista forces. As a potent symbol of Nicaraguan nationalism, Sandino's name has proved useful to the Marxist regime in Managua, who could never have come to power without the nationalist mantle.

In 1979 the revolution triumphed in Nicaragua. And in spite of the fact that it was led by the Sandinista Front, a Marxist-Leninist organization since its founding in 1962, there was great joy nationally and internationally. The Sandinistas had the support of Venezuela, the full support of Costa Rica, the full welcome of the Carter Administration, support from Panama, and from nearly all Western countries. There was an unprecedented amount of international and national support within the country too, coming from the business community, most of the independent political parties, and the unions. Although some had reservations, the overwhelming majority supported the Sandinistas. There was a great hope that the Sandinistas were going to bring about a new kind of Nicaragua, an original revolution that would not imitate the one in Cuba or go back to Somoza's times. It would create a new, third way that would establish pluralism, freedom, and respect for religion.

But only a few years later, nearly everyone who had joined the Sandinistas who was not a Marxist from the start was disappointed. The disappointment grew into bitterness and divisiveness as repression took the place of pluralism, coercion took the place of liberty, and alignment with the Soviet Union replaced the promises of nonalignment that the Sandinistas had uttered. So the question arose: "How did this happen? Why could we not have anticipated what was going to happen? Why were so many Nicaraguans taken in by the Sandinista mentality? Why did almost no one in the international arena anticipate the results?" And as I said, the startling fact is not that the Sandinistas were very skillful in covering up their politics but that there was no opposition within the movement to their Marxist-Leninist nature.

I was in Nicaragua all through this process and on July 19, 1979, when the revolution triumphed. A few days later, on July 26, we in Nicaragua saw Fidel Castro on our TV screens, giving his July 26 anniversary speech and greeting the Nicaraguan revolution. He was advising the Sandinistas to be cautious, because he said: "The international reactionaries and the imperialists, they learned something from history. . . . Not much, but they learned something." And when he said not much, he had a kind of very subtle cynical smile on his face, and I could guess why he was saying that. One of the extraordinary things about the Nicaraguan revolution is that it took place nearly twenty years after the Cuban revolution, which is why many people thought it was going to be a democratic revolution. However, in the case of Cuba, there were very few hints that Castro himself was a communist. He had not revealed much of his true ideology before the revolution. Only Che Guevara and a few other hard-core communists were in the 26th of July Movement, and it was the first time that this kind

of revolution took place in Latin America. So it was very natural that many people were taken in and surprised by what came after.

However, the case of Nicaragua was different. It was known to anyone with only an average IQ who wanted to open up the record that the Sandinistas were Marxist-Leninists. The Sandinista movement was founded in 1962. The first seeds were planted by the Cuban ambassador to Nicaragua, Quintin Pino Machado, who founded an organization called Patriotic Youth. The founder of the Sandinista Front in 1962 was Carlos Fonseca Amador. He was a hard-core communist, who had written a book before he became the leader of the FSLN, called *A Nicaraguan in Moscow*, which is an apology for the Soviet system. Throughout the sixties and early seventies, Tomas Borge, Henri Ruiz, the Ortega brothers, Fonseca Amador himself, all communists and the key leaders of the revolution, spent several months and years in communist countries (especially Cuba and the Soviet Union) being trained and studying. So their leanings were very obvious. I was a member of the Sandinista Party. In the underground cell to which I belonged, I was in charge of teaching Marxism-Leninism to the members of the cell and sometimes writing analyses for the Sandinista Front. I think that nearly everyone in Nicaragua, including my two Nicaraguan colleagues here and some more in the audience, can testify to this. It was very clear that they were Marxist-Leninists. One branch of the Sandinista movement even separated itself from the others, calling itself the Marxist-Leninist Sandinista Front Proletariat. It was not until 1978, when the struggle against Somoza* started to heat up, that the Sandinistas started to adopt a more democratic facade. They became interested in uniting themselves with other forces, and they began to talk about establishing a Nicaraguan pluralistic regime, a democracy, nonalignment.

A key strategy they used was to create a front of decent democratic people called the Group of Twelve, a group of Nicaraguan personalities including many truly democratic people like Dr. Arturo Cruz, who became the spokesmen for Sandinistas everywhere. There were some priests in this group, Father Ernesto Cardenal and Father Miguel D'Escoto, a Maryknoll priest, and that they were Marxist priests was not very well known. People would say, "Look there are priests in the Twelve.

* The forty-three years of Somoza rule comprised three members of the one family: General Anastasio Somoza Garcia, elected 1936, assassinated 1956; his older son, Luis Somoza Debayle, 1956-1963; his younger son, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, 1967-1979. The latter includes the brief tenure of Rene Schick.

There are people like Cruz. There are people like Casimiro Sotelo and others who are democratic. This has got to be something different." And this group started to act as ambassadors of the Sandinistas at a time when the Somoza regime was near collapse by its own contradictions; by the murder of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro. The national fear against Somoza was so heavy that people tended to pay attention to the Twelve because of their contention that they were going to install a truly democratic revolution.

By this time—1978—the Venezuelan regime led by Carlos Andres Perez became very supportive of the Sandinistas. The Carter Administration had started to cut off aid to Somoza. Costa Rica had started to allow the Sandinistas to use Costa Rica as a launching base for the guerrillas. Mexico cut off relations with Nicaragua. So the world saw many non-Marxist democratic regimes appear to endorse the struggle of the Sandinistas against Somoza. And most confusing was the fact that many people inside Nicaragua who were not Marxists also approved the Sandinistas and were in union with them. Friends of mine, and many others who are not Marxist and never have been, took positions that were not anti-Sandinista at all. I remember a conversation I had with members of the Nicaraguan political opposition, and I told them, "Look, we are going to run into a bigger problem than Somoza." And a standard answer would be, "Well, let us worry about this after we get rid of Somoza. We can hardly get a more terrible kind of regime than Somoza. It is difficult to get something worse."

So that was the prevailing mood. We had to get rid of Somoza at any cost, and the fact that this mood was so prevalent inside Nicaragua, which can be explained by a lot of psychological and sociological reasons, created much confusion abroad. I do not think that the Carter-Mondale Administration or many Democrats in this country are much to blame for having been deceived by the way the Sandinistas acted. If any observers were to examine Nicaragua and find so many democratic people siding with the Sandinistas, they would not have easily believed that the Sandinistas, in fact, were a true Marxist-Leninist threat. And I remember the international media played a big role in selling the idea that the Sandinistas were patriots with some kind of Marxist-Leninist leanings, but fundamentally patriots open to democracy and human rights. I remember an article signed by Alan Riding of *The New York Times* that said: "The Sandinistas are patriots first, Marxists second." So there were many fallacies around in spite of the fact that in August of 1978 the Sandinistas took the national palace by assault, kidnapping thousands of people inside. They released a document that was Marxist-Leninist from

the beginning to the end. All the kinds of Marxist-Leninist approach were very clear. And in spite of that, the illusion that they were going to lead the country to something different persisted.

I think that this illusion was based on three wrong principles. First, the fallacy that the Sandinistas could be won into moderation by love and open hands. I would say this is the Carter-Mondale syndrome, thinking that by loving the Sandinistas, by being helpful to the Sandinistas, they were going to become good guys and behave in a good way. It was only a matter of patience and understanding. The second fallacy was that the Marxism-Leninism of the Sandinista leaders was pragmatic. "Yes," it said, "they are Marxist-Leninist. But the Marxist-Leninists in the tropics are different than those in Europe. They are more open; they are more pragmatic; they have some kind of inputs from Christianity; they are going to be different." And the third hope or fallacy was that many moderates—Arturo Cruz, Alfonso Robelo, the widow of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, Mrs. Violeta Chamorro, all democrats—were in the Nicaraguan government, and that many democratic regimes, Venezuela, the United States, Costa Rica, Panama, were involved in helping the Sandinistas, and this was going to moderate them. They would have to listen to what the people said; this country would be under a good deal of pressure. All these things would combine to open up a door. It was important not to be pessimistic, to give the change a chance.

Then the disillusion came, and now we have a country that became radicalized to the left, not because it was pushed to the left by the hostility of the United States. It can be very well documented that the opposite took place during the first two years of the Sandinista regime. No country in the world offered as open a hand to the Sandinistas as the United States did. But they started to radicalize the revolution from the very onset, from the very first weeks they moved to the left, and that is natural. As a former Marxist-Leninist, I know that a Marxist-Leninist wants a totalitarian state because he wants to achieve a super utopian air, and if he moves to something that to us seems repressive, it is because it fits his philosophy. They do not need to be pushed. They will go that way because that is what they consider good and proper and good and just.

But I do not want to elaborate too much on how to identify when Marxist-Leninists are in a national upheaval—how to discern when we are going to be deceived. The problem today is not that the wolf disguises itself in sheep's clothing. The problem today is that no one believes that there are wolves around. The problem is that we believe that, if we see a wolf, he can be tamed; that if we smile at him, he will not bite. And I think that the West has lost its sense of absolute goodness and absolute evil. It

also has been prone to seek accommodation with totalitarian forces out of the fear of confronting unpleasant realities. I feel that this scenario took place in my own country and in others too. People who knew the Sandinistas were communists were afraid to admit it. It was very unpleasant to accept. It put them in a very difficult position. So they chose to accommodate, to indulge in wishful thinking, hoping that by a happy turn of events, the Sandinistas would become democratic and pluralistic.

Mr. Adolfo Calero: To the five years of patience, tolerance, comprehension, understanding, Congress last night added five more months. I hope that now the news media will stop calling us the U.S.-supported or U.S.-created or the CIA-backed and what-not rebels. At least what we have gained by the cutoff in May and this other cutoff is that we be considered by others what we really are. We are independent, we are Nicaraguans, we are nationalists, we are not anyone's creation. We are going to continue our struggle, not Congress, which is the greatest and biggest and most democratic on earth. We, not Congress, determine what we are going to do. Even though we appreciate, and have been grateful for, the support of this country and other countries and peoples, our struggle does not depend on anything except ourselves and our own willpower. As one of the young commanders, who for over a year has been deep inside Nicaragua within 60, 70, 80, or 100 miles from Managua, told me the other day, "Willpower is what counts. The rest—don't worry. We'll take care of ourselves."

Last night, the expected happened. We thought we would be cut off from U.S. support. But we are not like Somoza. Somoza blamed his downfall on the United States. There is a book, *Nicaragua Betrayed*. It should have been called *Somoza Betrayed* in any case, and the Sandinistas blamed it on disaster; on the United States. We of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force—we Nicaraguan democrats—we people, who share ideals and principles and civilization with you and our sister countries and European countries also, believe like Churchill that democracy is not a good kind of government, but we do not know a better one. And I apply the same principle to the United States, they are not a good ally, but show me a better one. The relations between Nicaragua and the United States throughout the years have been very intimate. The first timid application of the Monroe Doctrine concerning Nicaragua took place between the United States and England in the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850. Of course, Nicaragua did not participate. The United States was preoccupied with European penetration in Central America, and even though the

British retreated after the Treaty, they sent in their commercial agents, which in those days were the equivalent of political penetration. Obviously, the relations between Nicaragua and the United States must be analyzed in the context of the time when they took place. And at this time, Americans were not investing in Latin America. But Europeans were even sending gunboats. There was an incident—the Eisendoch Incident. The daughter of the German Counsel ran away with a Nicaraguan, and it became an international scandal, and the Germans had a gunboat in Corinto on account of this romantic incident. So you can imagine what would have happened if the Nicaraguans had not paid debts and so on through the years.

In 1927, after fifteen years of having the Marines in Nicaragua, a legation guard came to serve, to help stabilize the country. I would not know whether they were requested or whether they were sent, but anyway they were there, and they should not have been. I would not have appreciated any foreign troops in my country, and that is why I am doing what I am doing now—because we do not appreciate the Cubans in our country. We do not want the Soviets there, nor the Bulgarians, nor anybody. We should not have any foreign troops in our country. But in 1927, the United States applied in Nicaragua what was suggested in the Senate just the other day. They were trying to phase out our struggle—our effort. Let us give the Contras, which is a word I do not like, let us give the Contras a few million dollars and phase them out. Get them rifles, get them out, settle them in Honduras and in Costa Rica. That attitude—and apparently people do not learn from experience—that attitude was the same one that motivated Sandino to go into the mountains and to fight the United States Marines for six years until the Marines left. And as I said to someone when I heard the proposal, “We are not up for sale.” Sandino was not up for sale. He did not accept the five dollars or ten dollars that Mr. Stimson, if I remember correctly, gave the Nicaraguan liberal troops, who were fighting the conservatives, for their rifles. Sandino took his men and his rifles, went up into the mountains, and carried on his fight. We would have done exactly the same thing. Sandino, if he were alive and he should be known by you people, would be fighting with us right now against the occupation of Nicaragua, because he would not hate the United States. He appreciated the United States. His brother had lived in New York, and he had visited the United States. Soon after he came out of the mountains, he said so, “I fought the U.S. occupation. I did not fight the United States. I would fight foreign troops in my country, wherever they came from.”

Now after Sandino, we come to the Somoza age—1936. I was doing

some statistics last night and found that Somoza was in power from 1936 to 1979. And the first twenty years, when he solidified or consolidated his power, were twenty years of Democratic government in this country. And out of the forty-three years that Somoza was in power, twenty-seven were during Democratic administrations in the U.S. and only sixteen during Republican. I have no comment on that. I am just mentioning the statistics. And it so happened that when Nicaragua fell into the hands of a communist government, because it is a communist government, it was also under a Democratic U.S. administration. A coincidence, again, I have no comment.

But, at any rate, Somoza came into power in 1936. In 1947, the United States did not recognize Somoza's continuation in power when he kicked out Dr. Leopoldo Arguello. In 1956, old Somoza died and it was Ambassador Thomas Whelan, a Truman appointee, who helped keep the young Somoza in power. He was the mastermind who supported the continuity of the Somozas, because he thought that was the best thing for the country. It was not American Marines, but it was this one individual—this older man. Maybe he did help, in the sense that there was not a tremendous amount of revengeful bloodshed in Nicaragua at the time.

There were many attempts to get rid of the Somozas by force of arms, because we thought that it was impossible any other way. I had a very minor part in the 1954 attempt, which is the first time I participated, because I had graduated in 1953 and returned home only at the end of the year 1953. In 1959, there was another attempt to get rid of Somoza. Then Somoza was more of a politician. He tried—he would have tried, he would have liked for Nicaragua—to establish a revolutionary party, as in Mexico, with a party that assumes power and has different leaders every year. Then in 1963, we had President Rene Schick Gutierrez. Schick was trying to pull the rug from under the Somozas. There were times in Nicaragua when there was freedom of the press. There was an opening up to democracy and the Somozas played it smart. They satisfied the people's desires at times.

In 1966, "Tachito" Somoza, Jr., came to power. His first term in government went more or less well. World economic conditions were pretty good, and that helped him get along. The Nicaraguans, like any other people, if there is economic bounty, economic progress, forget their little beef about the political situation. But, in 1972, as Somoza vied for his second term, came the earthquake. There ensued rampant corruption in the country. It was then that the Nicaraguans made up their minds to get rid of Somoza, and things turned against him, especially after Carter took over in 1976. We appreciated the human rights policy of President

Carter. We thought that it was bringing this great country down to a preoccupation for the individual, and we thought that that would help us in our struggle against Somoza, as it did. In 1978, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro was assassinated. That really marked the end of Somoza. There was a decision on the part of the Nicaraguans to get rid of Somoza, no matter what. I would say the great majority of the people had that attitude. Immediately after the death of Pedro, there were strikes—businessmen on strike, lockouts. There was a mediation effort in which the United States was to participate, and the United States should never have participated if they were not going to carry the full weight of getting rid of Somoza. That did not happen. Our friend, Ambassador William Bowdler, was called back to Washington during November 1978. He came back, apparently with different instructions, and the push he had shown at the beginning and the expectations he had created in the Nicaraguan people for a peaceful transition were simply abandoned because of the influence of Mr. Jack Murphy, who was a member of Congress in the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee.

Mr. Haroldo Montealegre: Mr. Belli and Mr. Calero have given a bit of Nicaraguan history, and now we will focus on U.S. policy toward Nicaragua during the Carter Administration. The guiding principles of the Carter team toward Latin America were from the beginning human rights and nonintervention. The objectives Carter had for Central America were first the Panama Canal Treaty, and second, disassociation from the Somoza regime. And also, as was said many times, they wanted a peaceful demise of the Somoza regime. But, of course, any set of objectives requires good instruments, and there were some problems. The basic problems their policy had were the following:

First, there was no clear priority set between the human rights policy and the nonintervention policy. What if a choice had to be made between the two? Which one would come first? That was never resolved.

Second, there was lack of clarity, of focus, of an ultimate objective, if you will, in the human rights policy. For instance, there was no definition to say that a country, whether a dictatorship of the left or of the right, which established a free and democratic system of perfect checks and balances with the guarantee that more elections would follow, had a regime that could be considered as respecting human rights. Is that the ultimate criterion? No such definition was made. And as a consequence of that, the policy was somewhat amorphous. Criticisms would be made of regimes of the right, none would be made of regimes of the left, but then what was the solution for regimes of the right? It was never stated in theory, but in practice, free and democratic elections had to be the

ultimate criteria. As a consequence of that lack of clarity, a definition that is a Manichaeian approach was often adopted, in the sense that if a regime was bad, everything that opposed it was necessarily good, and it need not be that way. Of course, if there is no ultimate criterion to apply to the group opposing the group that is bad, then there is no way to tell whether it is also bad or whether some are good and some are bad.

And then the third problem they had was the assumption clearly stated from the beginning of the Carter regime that no challenge to U.S. interests could come from Central America. This was clearly stated from the beginning, and in fact in a hearing before the subcommittee that handled military assistance programs of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. Wilson Benson, who was Under Secretary of State for Security, was asked what would be the reaction of the State Department if this Committee were to suspend all aid to Nicaragua? What would be lost to the United States and would there be a violation of our security interests? Mr. Benson replied, "I cannot think of a single thing." Consequently, the policy of containment that had been applied to Central America since Truman's Administration was not considered relevant anymore. In fact, there was a lot of talk in the sense that the policy of containment that was being applied to Cuba was not appropriate, perhaps because Castro would behave well. This was in 1977. Of course, in a way this opened the door for the Soviet Union to take the strategic offensive in Central America.

A fourth point that should be mentioned is the lack of understanding of the historical roots of the problem on the part of President Carter. President Carter and his team had no real concept of the historical roots of the Nicaraguan problem. It was easy to make accusations and to blame poverty or injustice, or this or that. But Nicaragua has had a very close relationship with the United States, as Mr. Calero and Mr. Belli have explained, and we in Nicaragua thought of Somoza as someone who was in power largely because he had the support of the United States. He was not well liked. There were good times; there were bad, but Somoza was part of reality. We did not like it, but it was our reality. We thought he had the support of the United States, and of course, he often used the United States or the U.S. would use him. That is also reality. And that was our perception. We were of course used to the idea of the U.S. playing a leadership role in the area. So we did not think the U.S. would opt out or simply support other interests that also had a role in the area, albeit a negative one. We thought it was very possible that the U.S. could support the democratic opposition, but we did not foresee that the U.S. under Carter would indirectly support the nondemocratic opposition to Somoza.

As Mr. Calero has explained, the opposition in Nicaragua really picked

up in the first few months of the Carter Administration. And by the end of 1977, there were some dialogues and meetings with Somoza. The democratic opposition had some dialogue with Somoza, we wanted to pressure him to hold free and democratic elections, and we did receive some support from the Carter Administration. But it was not clear that the Carter team supported free and democratic elections by way of solution. It was not clear what the solution was to them. So it was an amorphous approach.

Then, in January 1978, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro was murdered, and as Mr. Calero has said, this was the end of the Somoza regime in the sense that in Nicaragua no one wanted to put up with Somoza anymore. At the time, the Sandinistas were a very small group. It was a group that was communist; they did not hide their orientation, and they were very small. No one knew them; people knew of them, but they had few converts. The private sector went on strike as a way to pressure Somoza to permit free and democratic elections or leave the country, and we had some encouragement from the U.S. at the time. The U.S. did not deliver. In conversations we had with U.S. State Department officials, they indicated that they would put pressure on Somoza to solve what could develop into an explosive problem before it did. We saw the situation in Nicaragua after the strikes and after many workers went into the streets after Pedro Joaquin Chamorro was killed. We clearly saw that the situation in Nicaragua could polarize if something were not done quickly. Something needed to be done, and it should have been done quickly and intelligently. So we thought we should pressure Somoza to resign, and the U.S. indicated that they would put pressure on him too. They did not. At the same time they were encouraging Nicaragua to export meat, but they did not send inspectors to inspect the meat to be sent to the United States, so there was some pressure on Somoza, but no decisive pressure.

In September 1978 a war broke out between the Sandinistas and the Somoza government. We in the private sector and the democratic opposition did not participate. We did not support either side. The Sandinistas were completely defeated by Somoza, and after that, we had the mediation effort. In the mediation effort, three countries participated—the United States, Dominican Republic, and Guatemala—and when they arrived some of the members stated clearly that they wanted to oust Somoza before it was too late, before a new war would come, before the FSLN and the Sandinistas attracted new supporters and new people, and before Venezuela could continue its effort of financing the FSLN. It must be mentioned that Venezuela was financing the FSLN at the time, as were Panama and Cuba to some extent. And they were using Costa

Rica as a base. The United States was not following the containment policy toward Nicaragua at the time. They simply watched them. They never applied any pressure on Venezuela, Panama, or Cuba to stop sending weapons to the Sandinistas.

So it was a delicate situation—where we saw that Nicaragua could easily be lost completely to the communists because Somoza's reputation in Nicaragua was eroding every day. People did not want to have anything to do with Somoza. He had no credibility. When the mediation team arrived, they indicated that the U.S. government was going to apply all the pressure on Somoza so that he could leave the government. An interim government would be formed with the democratic opposition and the Liberal Party of Somoza, but without the Sandinistas, because they withdrew from the mediation effort, even though a member of the Group of Twelve participated in the beginning of the mediation effort. After a few meetings the Sandinistas withdrew, because they said that the Carter team wanted to establish a type of system that was not what they wanted. They called it a Somoza system without Somoza. What the democratic opposition wanted was a free and democratic system, and the Sandinistas of course did not want that. But the United States did not apply the pressure it had indicated it would apply. They had some conversations with Somoza, they checked him, but they did not checkmate him, and they could have done it.

In December of that year, the mediation team was called back. In January of 1979, Bowdler came back with no new proposal and the mediation was finished. It was a difficult situation for the private sector and for the democratic opposition. Expectations in Nicaragua were such that the people thought that the United States would put pressure on Somoza. And now it is not that we are saying that the United States had to come and save us. It is that the perception of the people was such that Somoza was like a product of the United States in Nicaragua. And the Carter regime had indicated that they were going to apply all the pressure. So naturally, expectations were raised. It was a critical moment. The people had no confidence in Somoza.

At any rate, in January of 1979, the private sector and the democratic opposition found themselves in a situation where expectations had been raised; they wanted to get rid of Somoza and there was no way to do it. The mediation mission had failed; there was nothing to do and then we saw something horrible. For the next few months—from January to April—we saw many people who were part of the opposition supporting the Sandinistas. They were supporting the Sandinistas in the sense that they said, okay, these people are the only way to get rid of Somoza, since

they have the support of Venezuela, of Costa Rica, of Panama (Cuba was little mentioned), and the United States was in constant communication with those governments. And in Nicaragua it was not evident to everyone that the United States had abandoned the policy of containment, and the policy of containment of the United States meant that the United States was in the game. Humberto Belli, my good friend here, has said that some of the members of the private sector were not opposed to the Sandinistas. Toward the end of May 1979 the private sector was evidently still opposed to them but not as openly as before the failure of the mediation team. In fact, some political parties of the democratic opposition had reached a nonaggression understanding with the Group of Twelve. They were strong; Venezuela and other countries were fully behind the Sandinistas. The United States had withdrawn its ambassador from Nicaragua in January 1979, which I think was a big mistake. (There is something to be learned from that. It is not intelligent to withdraw your ambassador from a place that is going through a critical situation. It would be silly to withdraw the U.S. ambassador from Lebanon at this moment, frankly. It does not make sense, because you withdraw the one person who has contacts with all sectors, and if you end that, you lose a great deal.)

Anyway, there was a nonaggression understanding; the democratic opposition would not oppose the Sandinistas by May of 1979. We saw reality. We saw the inevitable. We saw a situation where either a peacekeeping force would come into Nicaragua and would play a role because it had to report to the Organization of American States and the Andean Pact would assume responsibility, or the Sandinistas would perhaps win and so there was no point in entering into a war against two sides. We mostly remained silent. We were not major players anymore. The democratic opposition had lost all its cards. We were not sitting at the table any more. We were watching the players. There was Somoza, and there were the Sandinistas who had the support of many countries.

The outcome, of course, is history. There was the resolution of the Organization of American States asking for a coalition government. Some of us of the private sector did participate for a short time in the coalition government; then we left, once we realized that they had no intention of keeping a coalition government and the democratic commitments they had made.

There are some lessons to be learned, as I have mentioned. One is not to withdraw the U.S. ambassador if there is a critical situation. A second one I think is very important. It does not make sense to let the Soviet Union take the strategic offensive in a place where at little cost the United States can make sure they do not. At no cost, the United States could have made

sure that the USSR did not take a strategic offensive in Nicaragua. They could have told Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, and others to stop their support for the FSLN—the Sandinistas—because they are communist, at least most of them are communist, even though some of the Group of Twelve were not. The U.S. should have made clear that they believed in the containment policy. Had that been done, perhaps the outcome would have been different. But that was not done. Also, had the U.S. applied the necessary pressure against Somoza during the mediation effort, Somoza would have left, the democratic opposition would have had a government without the Sandinistas. We would have more democratic elections, and the war would have been avoided. This is very important. The war and its aftermath could have been avoided through decisive action on the part of the Carter Administration.

Then, a third point is that the United States should not let groups of countries guide U.S. action where it has a clear interest, such as in Central America. Groups of countries never take personal responsibility. There has to be personal responsibility. Otherwise everything is diluted and what happens is not in the U.S. interest and not according to U.S. objectives.

The next point is that, in the meeting of the Organization of American States on June 23, 1979, the United States proposed a peacekeeping force, and then withdrew the proposal. Then there was the resolution of the Organization of American States condemning Somoza. If the U.S. really believed that a peacekeeping force was necessary, they should have sent it and then later invited participation by other countries. Committee decisions have never worked.

These are the major lessons to be learned. I think they are applicable because, unfortunately from following recent developments in the thinking of the people around the Carter team, one can see that the plans they have for the future, if they had a chance to implement them, are very similar to the ones they had before. Nothing has been learned.

Mr. Falcoff: Thank you very much. I think we have heard some extraordinarily interesting things today and I am sure many of you have questions, so we will proceed to them now.

Mr. Rick Marshall of *Defense and Foreign Affairs*: I have a question for Mr. Calero. It appears as if the Sandinista election is going to take place in November. What are your intentions now that it looks as if you are not going to be able to change the nature of those elections. What are your immediate and, if I could ask, long-term intentions?

Mr. Calero: Our intentions in the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN) are to continue our struggle until democracy is restored in Nicaragua. The elections that the Sandinistas have set for November 4* are not elections in the concept that we have of elections in the U.S. and that democratic countries in Central America also have of elections. We will continue our struggle.

Mr. Marshall: Armed struggle?

Mr. Calero: Armed struggle, yes sir, although that does not mean that we will exclude the political or the negotiation possibilities.

Mr. Falcoff: The question was that, if an agreement were reached between the unarmed Coordinator** and the Sandinistas, would the armed resistance of the FDN agree to a ceasefire?

Mr. Calero: We have frequently stated a willingness to put down arms in case the Sandinistas gave up their own declared objectives and their own program of government and the commitments that they made to the Organization of American States. If the Sandinistas will give in to the demands the Coordinator and the Conservative Party have placed before them, we would negotiate a ceasefire—a classical ceasefire. Of course, we would have to have concurrence on the side of the Sandinistas, otherwise it would be a unilateral situation which we would not put up with.

Mr. Peter Vonocort of Legal Services Corporation: I have two questions for Mr. Montealegre. I was confused about what you meant by saying the Carter Administration had Somoza in check but not checkmate. Also, how could the United States have prevented the Soviet Union from taking the strategic offensive?

Mr. Montealegre: First, how was Somoza checked but not checkmated.

*This discussion of course preceded the presidential elections, which were held in November 1984. Dr. Arturo Cruz, the chief opposition candidate, withdrew from the race to protest the Sandinista government's use of coercion in the campaign. Lacking real opposition, Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista's candidate, won the election with approximately 60 percent of the vote.

**Democratic Coordinator, a nonmilitary coalition of political parties opposing the Sandinistas, which tried to negotiate fair election conditions with the Sandinista government.

During the mediation, Ambassador Bowdler, the head of the U.S. team, met with Somoza on several occasions, and he asked Somoza to resign. And Somoza said no thank you. So the U.S. had him checked, but the United States did not force him—did not apply all the pressure the U.S. could have applied. For instance, Somoza had many assets in the United States. And Somoza himself had told many of his collaborators that, if they really wanted to force him out, they could and he was ready to go, but they did not apply all the pressure they could have. And the pressure they did apply came too late. So they needed an extra horse, or something else, to checkmate.

How could the U.S. have prevented the USSR from taking the strategic offensive? I think that basically what happened was that Carter was perceived as being a weak person, someone who did not understand the realities of Central America. Carter, I am sure, honestly thought that it was extremely unlikely that the USSR would take the strategic offensive in Central America. I am sure he thought that it was very unlikely that they would want to expend the money necessary to take advantage of the opportunity. He simply thought that the problem was one of human rights. Somoza was bad, everything opposing Somoza was good, and that was it. He could have avoided that if his approach had been one of saying “Okay, we believe in free and democratic elections, we apply the same criteria to Poland as to Somoza—the same criteria.” Now since Somoza was a sort of ally, we had a system of constructive engagement to deal with him. We put all possible pressure, and if we could have forced him out, we knew what we wanted—free and democratic elections right away, a free and democratic system. But some people took a different approach. They said everything opposing him is good. Venezuela was arming the Sandinistas, so was Panama, so was Cuba, to some extent Costa Rica. And nothing was said about that. The U.S. at the time had an alliance or pact with Nicaragua so the United States could have told those countries there was a policy to stop the supply of weapons to these people who were attacking from the outside.

Mr. Vonocort: So the United States recognized this?

Mr. Montealegre: The United States was well aware of that. Yes, and they did nothing about it.

Mr. Phil Nicolaides, of Accuracy in Media: It seems to me that there is kind of a strange mutual causality here, a pattern that resembles a few people arriving at a picnic and one saying “Well, I thought you were going

to bring. . . . No, I thought you were.” In one sense you are saying that Nicaraguans thought that this movement must be a respectable popular front because it seemed to have the approval of the American press and even to some extent the American government. On the other hand, there were many people, presumably in the American press and the American government, who said that this movement must be okay because of all the genuinely democratic people in the Front—a very similar situation to that in Cuba and often the press is blamed. Shirley Christian back in 1982 wrote about how the press did not want to look at the ideology. But you might say (and I do not want to be particularly a defender of Shirley Christian or Karen de Young and some others), were they perhaps deceived by the fact that there were a number of Nicaraguans who were not Marxist-Leninists, who were in this and said “Yes, there are some Marxist-Leninists, but it’s really going to be different.” Who is fooling whom and is there a pattern here that we can examine?

Mr. Montealegre: I think that there was a reciprocity, and it was a fact that there were many Nicaraguans who were deceived by the Sandinistas. They were led to think that the Sandinistas, in spite of their being Marxist, were going to behave in a different way. When these people started to support them, that made it easier for the liberal, leftist press around the world to justify their support to the Sandinistas, and that in turn affected the perception of things in Nicaragua, because when the Sandinistas attempted to get international support, they became more courageous and took a more powerful leadership role in the country, which encouraged those who doubted them to side with them. So it was a vicious circle with one group’s perceptions reinforcing the other’s.

Guest: In Cambodia, for instance, the Khmer Rouge was supposed to be better than the corrupt and repressive Lon Nol regime. There is always this search for something admirable in the revolutionary movement that affects the American press and the world press. How did Nicaragua respond to the American press?

Mr. Montealegre: I can tell you from personal experience that we knew nothing about the Sandinistas when they started. Absolutely nothing. The first article I saw on them was given to me by Alan Riding. Alan Riding gave me a copy of some articles he had written on the Sandinistas and so I knew that they were somehow a force. Of course, I had known they existed, but I did not know that they were a force. I tend to think that Shirley Christian is very good, very accurate. There is no question about

the fact that the U.S. press had some influence in the Nicaraguans' perceptions. But let me clarify again. I do not think most Nicaraguans were in favor of the Sandinistas at all. I think that after March 1979, after the complete failure of the mediation effort, when it was inevitable that they would launch another war, then people said, maybe this is coming. We won't oppose it. But while the mediation effort was still going on, most people were opposed to the Sandinistas. When the Sandinistas withdrew from the mediation, most people applauded. They thought that then they would not have to deal with them. That was the way most people felt. And this was perhaps not properly reported by the press.

Mr. Calero: I want to make a comment. At one point in 1979, Somoza was seen by the Nicaraguans to have been saved by the United States. Because of the mediation effort, everybody was sure that the expectations were created. Everybody was certain that, if the United States would come together with other countries and if they put on enough pressure, Somoza would leave. But when this pressure did not come, then there was disillusionment. The moderate forces lost the leadership in the fight against Somoza, and the Sandinistas with all their attacks captured the imagination of the people. And the Nicaraguan people turned not to favor the Sandinistas necessarily, but they accepted their leadership to get Somoza out. What really bothers me right now, and this is the part of this history that should be learned. Right now, there are Nicaraguans who perceive the United States as saving the Sandinistas, just as they saw the United States try to save Somoza, because the United States has in fact a part to play, to continue to be the leader of Western democracy, and during Somoza's time, the U.S. should have done what it did seven months later. Somoza finally left. The arrangements for his departure were made with Ambassador Lawrence Pezzulo. Everything was planned with the United States, but seven or eight months too late. Right now, the Sandinistas are in a very bad situation. The people in Nicaragua are coming to that same level of anti-Sandinismo as they did to anti-Somozismo, and the United States is cutting back, withholding support. So we are falling for the same thing again. There will be problems stemming from this. There will be disillusionment on the part of the Nicaraguan people. As far as the Nicaraguans are concerned, the United States will appear to be helping the side that it is not helping.

Mr. Sam Dickens, of the American Security Council: I want to come back to the Contadora process, Senor Calero. I have studied the 21 points in the Contadora process. I do not know how many people in this room have

studied them, but there is only one conclusion to be drawn. The Contadora process will confirm the Sandinistas in power in Nicaragua, and they are a communist power. We have spent some 40 years in the Western Hemisphere building up agreements and treaties to prevent what has happened in Nicaragua from ever happening. And now we have ignored all that, and yet do I hear you still saying some positive things about the Contadora process?

Mr. Calero: What we have said is that we have supported efforts made toward negotiated durable peace in Nicaragua, but we do not believe that it is possible by the force of arms to reach a solution in Nicaragua, although we believe force is an absolute component of the solution—the force of arms that is why we are in it. As it stands right now, the Contadora is just words. It has absolutely no mechanisms for enforcement of any of its clauses, and the Sandinistas have announced that they are willing to sign it and that they want the United States also to sign it. And I believe that if such a thing happened and they signed the draft of the Acta as it is right now, it would tie the hands of the United States and would tie the hands of the rest of the Central American countries. And the Sandinistas would be free to expand Marxism in Central America and everywhere else too.

Guest: I assume that political polling is illegal in Nicaragua, but do you have any idea of what percentage of the public supports the Sandinistas?

Mr. Belli: I participated in the last legal poll that was done in Nicaragua, which was in August 1981. When the Sandinistas knew that we were going to publish the results of the poll, they forbade all kinds of polling without the approval of the state. We interviewed 900 households in seven Nicaraguan cities. We found that about 60 percent of the people interviewed were against the Sandinistas and were deeply disillusioned with the revolution. We found about a 30 percent support and about 10 percent were undecided. I imagine that now the support has deteriorated even further. Something interesting we found in the poll was that the poorer the people interviewed, the more they were against the Sandinistas. It was in the middle bureaucratic class in Managua that there was more support for the Sandinistas. We did not interview peasants, but it is very clear that the peasants are much more against the Sandinista regime than any other sector in Nicaraguan society.

Guest from the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Con-

gress: It seems to me as if the non-Marxist elements are all co-opted by the FSLN. Is it somehow conspiratorially that they are able to call all the shots? It seems to me that an alternative explanation is that in a way some of these agreements represented some of the force of various people who had political power in the country. Is it not true that people like Robelo and Mrs. Chamorro had some clout and participated on their own and were not being manipulated by the FSLN? Then the second question is why did they not more effectively mobilize support when the Sandinistas moved in a more Marxist direction?

Mr. Belli: I think that this is an extremely important question. To answer it, I do not question the integrity of the people who were co-opted or who were deceived by the Sandinistas, although I question their wisdom. I think many of them were very naive. Many of them did not have a clear idea of what communism is, which is one of the greatest failures in the Nicaraguan story and also around the world. And something more important is that, perhaps if you did not listen to the army, you would find more moderates or non-Marxists in the Nicaraguan government than Marxist-Leninists. However, those who were Marxist-Leninist were a small group, a very united, coherent group with a very clear sense of purpose and with a very clear sense of how to achieve power and keep it. However, those others like Arturo Cruz and Mrs. Chamorro were acting as individuals. They were not united among themselves. They had a loose kind of identity. So it did not matter how many they were. What mattered was that the Sandinista minority was very clear about its purposes, and they had control of the military. So it did not matter that Alfonso Robelo was a member of the Junta. The ones who had the weapons in their hands were at the top rank in Sandinista Marxism-Leninism. The common wisdom is the phrase by Mao Tse-tung that "Power comes from the barrel of a gun." That is the truth. Whoever has the military in its hands has the ultimate source of power, and that was not given much consideration in Nicaragua.

Mr. Scott Powell: I am a free-lance writer. I have a question dealing with human rights for Mr. Humberto Belli. Human rights is a concept that appeals to liberal minded people around the world, but it is clear that most of the human rights groups in the United States at this particular time tend to be dominated by leftists. They tend to be critical of human rights in certain countries but uncritical of human rights conditions in the Marxist countries. I would like to know in your experience in the FSLN how the Sandinistas viewed human rights at that critical transition period

when human rights were being used as a political tool, and perhaps you might comment on the human rights situation currently in Latin America. There, the debate on human rights is difficult because the countries are not always so democratic—they do not live up to the standards of the United States. How do the Marxists see human rights—as a political tool?

Mr. Belli: The human rights issue is crucial. The leftists have found that exposing human rights violations of the right-wing regimes is extremely useful for the advancement of their goals, as it paralyzes any support for the government against which they are fighting. And you know if I were to be a Marxist right now, if I were able to advise Marxists what to do, I would tell them to fight against those countries that had the lowest record of human rights in Latin America. Because if they did, there would be no force to keep this government from being cut off from help from all other corners. So I think that this has become a very powerful weapon for the left, especially when there is a lack of democratic standards. One of the problems that keeps reinforcing this pattern is that usually it is easier to see human rights violations committed by governments than it is to see the ones by those who are fighting against governments. I remember many violations of human rights committed by Somoza. There were many institutions trying to denounce them, but meanwhile the Sandinista guerrillas were committing massive violations of human rights too, as the Salvadoran guerrillas are now in El Salvador. There were people in the neighborhoods in Managua whom they thought were Somozistas, who were informing the National Guard about what the guerrillas were doing, and they would enter the house of the supposed informer; they would machine gun him and his family or burn the house, and these things took place on a daily basis. However, they were not reported as violations of human rights; they were reported as executions, retaliation by the people, that sort of thing.

Guest: I have a question for Adolfo Calero. What are your perceptions of the Sandinista army? Have there been any defections and that sort of thing? And second, how do you think the Sandinistas will attempt to get the Nicaraguan people to do what they want in the elections, and how successful do you think they will be?

Mr. Calero: Well, it is not a matter of perception as far as the Sandinista army is concerned. We have units hiding deep inside Nicaragua which I know are 40 percent former Sandinista militia, soldiers, or conscripts. The territorial militia was a division of the militia, but the Sandinista militia

has practically disappeared in Nicaragua. It has been called in because the Sandinistas found that they were going over to our side with arms and ammunition and training. So that has disappeared. Army morale is low. We find that we have to go after the Sandinistas. We have to keep up the war at all times. It is not they who are coming after us. The support we have of the rural populations is good, but it could be greater. And the morale of our troops could be better. That is the situation that exists now.

As far as the election is concerned, the Nicaraguans registered on account of repression. They registered because the rumor had spread that if you do not have a registration card you will not be given any food stamps; you will not be given any gasoline; you will not be given a driver's license even if you are a driver; and you will be kicked out of a job if you have a job. The people live under a constant threat and many people had experienced that sort of situation—I remember that I had to get a letter from the CDS, that is, the Sandinista Defense Committee, to get my driver's license or to get a gun permit or to get a passport way back just after the revolution. So the people have registered in Nicaragua. In the election, people will go out and vote, and they probably will vote for all six or seven candidates in order to ruin the ballot—there will be a lot of that. But they will vote, and they will receive most probably a certificate of having voted which is what happened under Somoza. Somoza would extend a certificate that was called a “magnificat,” which is a prayer to the Holy Virgin, I think, so with that prayer, you get your tires or whatever, and you are satisfied. So the Sandinistas operated exactly like Somoza, but with sophisticated improvements, I would say.

Guest: What is your opinion as to what the Catholic Church will do after November 4 if a fair, free open election is not held—beginning a month from now?

Mr. Belli: The Church will continue its policy of the past fifteen or twenty years, which was under Somoza to denounce violations of human rights. Some spokesmen of the Church have said already to the Nicaraguan Bishops Conference that there are no conditions for true elections, and after the election if there are any, there will be a debate on the national election. I assume that the Church is going to speak up again denouncing the nature of the election taking place. Then the Sandinistas will retaliate again.

Mr. Calero: Somoza used to call Archbishop Miguel Obando Comandant Miguel after the Sandinistas. And now the Sandinistas call him El Lacayo, the lackey of imperialism.

Guest: It used to be said about the Salvadoran conflict that it would be resolved by U.S. public opinion, press, and the Congress. Fortunately, it appears to be on its way to a resolution. The same things are being said now about Nicaragua, especially in the aftermath of a recent propaganda blitz about members of the Sandinista government. After the election on November 4, there will be people in the Congress and people throughout the United States who will proclaim that those elections were free and fair. And yet they are being administered by a system that is party-controlled. The Election Commission of the government, the polling booths, and all are being controlled by the party. If a party in the United States would so much as place people at polling places or even come close, the outcry would be so great that it would be heard around the world. How do you assess the attitude of those people who will continue to believe that the elections were fair and that the object was to give the Sandinistas a chance to reform?

Mr. Calero: I would start by asking those people if they would permit any of the situations—any, not to say all of the situations that exist in Nicaragua—if they would permit them in this country, if they would want those conditions for this country. And I believe that there will be people who will say they were fair elections, but I certainly expect that there will also be people who will be calling the attention of American public opinion to the fact that the elections were fraudulent; that there were no elections as such; that there was no opposition in the elections because it was not permitted. Out of this situation will come the realization on the part of the United States House of Representatives that, by the position they have adopted, they have been abetting the Sandinistas and that the Sandinistas right now feel that they have the backing of the majority of this country. And that will lead them into making serious new errors.

They always blow up anything that looks like support for the Sandinista government in the United States as something much greater than it is. They multiply any demonstration by an integer of 10—if 10,000 people, 100,000 and so on. And they also quite purposefully represent opposition in the U.S. Congress to aid to the FDN and other rebel forces as if this automatically implies sympathy with the Sandinista government. Even though Ambassador Anthony Quainton told me recently that, when he used to go in to see Sandinista leaders with members of the liberal democratic side of the House, including Congressman Stephen Solarz (D-NY), by the way, that they were really disabused of the notion by people like Solarz that, in voting against Contra aid, they had any particular solidarity with what the Sandinistas were doing. I must admit I was fairly surprised when told this, but I consider Ambassador Quainton credible.

So obviously there is an element of self-deception here at work that may lead to very counterproductive things because, if the upcoming elections are clearly fraudulent, there may be a big turnaround. The U.S. may be glad five months from now that Congress voted the way it did last night.

You asked about the relationship with Mexico. We have been very critical of the Mexican government for their attitude toward the Sandinistas, and we have also stated repeatedly that the Mexican government does not have the moral authority to be dictating to us Central Americans. There has been talk of a change of attitude in Mexico, which would seem to favor a more neutral position on the part of the Mexican government. However, we have not yet seen any results of that situation, and we will keep on insisting that the Mexican government have a democratic attitude in their intervention or their participation in Contadora or whatever process takes place with regard to the situation.

Mr. Belli: I would like to comment on the statement of the Mexican president. He was being interviewed by the newsmen, and he was saying how the problem in Central America is due to the fact that we have so many injustices and social inequalities in our countries and so the journalists told him, "Well if that were the case, Mexico would be burning." Social inequality and social injustices in Mexico are even more acute than in Central America.

Mr. Falcoff: That is statistically correct, as Robert Pastor pointed it out in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Guest: Does any panelist see any possibility of American military intervention in Nicaragua?

Mr. Montealegre: It is difficult to answer that question because on the one hand, one can see the Soviet presence in Central America right now. Nicaragua is a source of the big problem in Central America. Because contrary to what many people believe, if the roots of the problem were social and economic injustices, then the Marxist's recipe would be the last one to apply. They only worsen the situation; they are not improving it. Regarding a U.S. military intervention, it is very difficult to say. I have no way to evaluate what the U.S. will do; what the U.S. will want to do.

Mr. Calero: I would say that, if we Nicaraguans are given the material support with which to do our own job, there will be no need for any intervention from any country—the United States or any other. And of

course if we are not only cut off, but are further molested, then someone else will go in to do the job themselves.

Mr. Belli: I just want to comment that I think the risk of U.S. intervention might increase over time if the Sandinistas are allowed to consolidate their power. So there is a chance of U.S. intervention right now because there is a likelihood that there might be a big war between Nicaragua and Honduras. But the question is what are the chances in the long run if the Sandinistas remain. If they remain and they consolidate their power, the U.S. might mount a massive intervention in about three or four years, perhaps in Honduras, perhaps in Guatemala, or else risk losing the area completely.

Mr. Tom Palmer, free-lance writer: Perhaps one of the reasons that armed communist movements are often successful is that they have a philosophy and it claims to offer a better life and justice for the lowest elements of society and to champion the cause of the oppressed. We know that they do not fulfill their promise, but I wonder if the opposition elements in Nicaragua have presented a philosophy that defends liberal, democratic society and whether it is on the offensive ideologically in terms of defending those kinds of values? If so, are there institutions within the FDN or other opposition groups that attempt to propagate those values among the population?

Mr. Calero: Well, definitely we have found that the left has throughout the world—not only in Nicaragua—shown more dedication. Let us say, communism is more like a religion, an enslaving philosophy or ideology, while what we defend is the opposite. It is freedom, personal liberty, and values that are very different from the communist pitch. We offer the people of Nicaragua what we stand for, what we represent. We are committed to the defense of these national values, which in the poll Humberto Belli referred to, are religion, liberty, and private property as expressed by the poor classes where the survey was conducted. We have definitions of our principles for the consumption of our people and our troops. We have stated them, and the Nicaraguan people know them. Apparently the Nicaraguan people agree with them because they are cooperating with us. They are joining our forces in spite of the danger.

Mr. Falcoff: I thank all of our panelists for this extraordinary opportunity, especially as it was all done in English, in which you all came through brilliantly. I thank you very much.

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The Heritage Lectures

For many Nicaraguans, it was hard to imagine a regime worse than that of President Anastasio Somoza. Thus they embraced the Sandinista National Liberation Front's promises of change and supported the Front's successful 1979 revolution. As the Sandinistas consolidated their power, however, their true agenda became clear. Nicaragua now is a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship that tolerates no dissent, a client state of the Soviet Union, and a military threat to its neighbors. The Nicaraguans who had fought to bring reforms to their country had been betrayed.

Three distinguished victims of the Sandinista betrayal spoke to a packed auditorium at The Heritage Foundation on October 11, 1984. Their first-hand look at the revolution demonstrates that those who assert that Western Hemisphere Marxism somehow is different are wrong. Throughout Nicaragua the results of the Sandinistas' broken promises can be seen: the press is censored, the private sector repressed, human rights are violated, and the recent elections were a sham.

This transcript of their discussion is the first publication by The Heritage Foundation's newly formed Arthur Spitzer Institute for Hemispheric Development. The Institute will encourage studies to help U.S. policy makers and opinion makers focus on the U.S.' critically important relations with Latin America. It is the Institute's conviction that U.S. interests are best served by a vitally democratic and non-communist Latin America whose citizens reap the bounty produced by growing free market economies.



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