

tion of the death penalty, the literacy campaign, land reform. But I want to beg caution in placing unrealistic hopes in the Government of National Reconstruction, or any government. If the kingdom of God is any closer at hand in Nicaragua, we must more realistically look for the signs in the grass roots organizations where people are working together for the common good.

Pardon me, but my Anabaptism is showing. I cannot put much hope in governments or militia, even those who show extraordinary signs of concern for the people. The realism you call for in seeing U.S. imperialism for what it is must also be applied as a critical posture towards all holders of political power. Now, I would agree with you that there is a vast difference between a regime backed by the wealth and military prowess like that of the United States and that of a fledgling government such as the Nicaraguan Government of National Reconstruction, or a host of other governments in newly decolonized third world countries. (This is why I consider cooperation with the U.S. military unthinkable, while at the same time confessing my sympathies with the Sandinistas.) But I think we would be politically and spiritually naive to glorify the Sandinista victory as a victory of pure good over pure evil.

This caution nags me most relentlessly as I recall films I have seen about Nicaragua since Somoza was ousted. My stomach rebels as I see women chatting proudly about what kinds of guns they carried during the insurrection. The excitement I feel at all the positive signs of genuine change in Nicaragua stops short as I see film footage of preschool children play-acting combat scenes against the National Guard. I cannot help but wonder how the psyche of a people, and their reverence for all human life, is indelibly colored by their use of lethal violence to declare their freedom.

The Anabaptist in me also rises in resistance to how quickly liberation theologians equate Christianity with socialism, and move from that to proclaiming a just revolution approach to liberation struggles parallel to Augustine's just war theory. We must be careful that our rejection of the ancient link between Christianity and capitalism and all the other nasty-isms in the world doesn't lead us to a doctrinaire leftwing ideological position that invokes God's name to justify our own agenda and our own time frame. We must be careful if we presume to be acting on God's side, especially when that zeal leads us to support those who are deliberately killing people. Dan Berrigan's challenge to Ernesto Cardenal is appropriate here: Is not the death of a single human too heavy a price to pay for the vindication of any principle, however sacred? Of course, if I had the choice between actively supporting Somoza or an FSLN, I would choose the FSLN. But I would do so with fear and trembling, much like that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer when he chose to contemplate Hitler's murder. He knew full well that by choosing what he saw as a necessary evil he was contradicting a basic principle of his Christian faith. He chose sin for the sake of his people.

That attitude of humility—of penance, if you will—gets at the distinction I would make between not *condemning* armed revolutionary violence, but not *justifying* it either. If I had been in Nicaragua two years ago, would I have joined the Frente? I don't know, just like I don't know what I would do if someone was about to rape my grandmother! I hope—I pray—that if I felt compelled to take up arms that I would not do it arrogantly, as if a Zealot bringing in the Kingdom of God. I pray that I would not invoke Jesus' blessings to justify actions that clearly fall short of his way of responding to evil. (Jesus understood the Zealot appeal and refused it, in the face of