Sandinistas inside Nicaragua. The U.S. sponsored war has certainly taken its toll—thousands of Nicaraguan civilians have been killed and the government has been forced to divert close to half of Nicaragua's tiny national budget to military defense.

Still, it has been difficult for the CIA to establish a secure internal front inside Nicaragua from which it could destroy the revolution from within. There are a number of reasons for why this is so. First, the Sandinistas successfully dismantled the old military hierarchy and threw out the National Guard (now the backbone of the Contra forces) which had terrorized the country for the 40 years of Somoza family rule. Second, they held democratic elections in November of 1984 in which they received a popular mandate from the Nicaraguan people. Third, they have armed large sectors of the population so that they might defend themselves against a possible U.S. invasion. Finally, they have taken steps, such as the state of emergency, to prevent agents of the American government and its proxies (its spies, its agent provocateurs, its paramilitary Rambozos) from establishing a secure base of operations within Nicaraguan society.

Given the actual contra war of agression, the numerous overt acts of aggression by the American government such as the mining of Nicaragua's harbors, the distribution of a CIA manual which openly advocates the kidnapping and murdering of Nicaraguan civilians, the bombing of Nicaraguan villages by the U.S. sponsored Honduran air force, and the U.S. directed counter-insurgency war in El Salvador, it is not difficult to understand why the Sandinistas have declared a "state of emergency." Those progressives who criticize the Sandinistas, as though they exist in some purified vacuum, should remember what happened in Chile and reflect on A. S. Neil's aphorism that you cannot study the dog nature of an Irish setter if the dog is chained to a wall.

The whole "Contragate affair" in which arms were shipped via Israel to Iran in exchange for millions of dollars of illegal aid to the contras demonstrates the lengths to which the Reagan administration was willing to go to topple the Sandinistas. Its non-response to the World Court's ruling that its support of the Contra war was in violation of international law is understandable given the fact that it was even willing to violate the laws of the American Congress. Although Contragate has cracked some of the Teflon in the administration's public relations frying pan, it would be premature to conclude that the time of danger is past for the Nicaraguan people.

We must not forget that Machiavelli advised leaders to undertake preventative wars whenever the difficulties and conflicts within the State became too great. The recent statement by Elliot Abrams, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, that the marines may have to be used if the contras fail to defeat the Sandinistas is only one indication that the worse may not be over. Another statement by Secretary of State George Shultz on NBC's Meet the Press (January 18, 1987) indicated that the U.S. might have to use the marines to prevent the Nicaraguan government from exporting its revolution northwards toward Mexico and the United States. This is a classic example of the pathic projection of aggression onto the victims of violence. A more appropriate question might ask who will prevent the Reagan administration from exporting its reactionary war on the poor into Central America. Hopefully, it will be the American people allied in solidarity with the people of Central America.

Nukemares

A civilization which cannot promise its children a future commits a monstrous crime against childhood. We live in such a civiliation. The world we live in barely holds its own against imminent collapse and catastrophe. It is no longer possible to be an optimist without being remarkably out of touch with reality.

Those wonderful institutions of capitalism and the militarized nation state, having already marched off tens of millions singing into the two bloodiest conflicts in history, are now in the process of preparing us for a third and possibly final conflict. The stage has been set. The machinery of destruction is in place. Anyone who merely seeks to preserve the world as it is guarantees its non-existence in the future. Denial of the threat makes the threat more dangerous.

In 1983 the hands on the symbolic "doomsday clock" on the cover of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* were moved from 4 to 3 minutes before midnight, suggesting that the world was nearer to a nuclear war than it had been in the previous thirty years. The reasons given for the ominous change were increased militarism, a failure to cutback or control the production of new nuclear weapons, and increased tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. The scientists were also reacting to the deployment of new Pershing and cruise missiles in Western Europe. In spite of numerous protests, the stockpiles grow.

In 1987 the threat of nuclear war seems even more real, more probable. We have been given numerous warning signs. On top of Three Mile Island we have witnessed the Chernobyl disaster, the explosion of space shuttle Challenger, the "plutonium blues" at the Hanford nuclear power plant—each one a separate testimony on the fallibility of our technological creations. Other indications are the failure at Reykjavik, the open U.S. violation of the Salt II pact, the operationalization of ten more M.X. missiles, the continued nuclear testing, the test launching of the Trident, progress on Star Wars, and the recent revelations that the Israelis have built a stockpile of 200 nukes while the world turns its eyes.

While imprisoning the forces of nature we have imprisoned ourselves. We have become captives of our mass produced machines adoring them as "savages" adore their idols. We have built ourselves a gold-plated cage and locked ourselves inside. Occasionally a few aberrant individuals shake and rattle the bars, but they are easily dismissed as mad cranks.

Progress indeed! A society which is incapable of offering anything but the degradation and destruction of humanity is bankrupt. Bankrupt too are the military and economic elites thriving and growing fat on the massacres in other countries (Iran and Iraq), and the numerous war merchants seeking ways of making such conflicts last. Universally bankrupt too is the society which devours itself while devouring others. One wonders no longer whether the next carnage will come, but when and where. ■

Solidarity—continued

were trying to score some points for Reagan by mining the road to Quilalí and shooting up civilian trucks. After listening to U.S. supplied mortar shells for a few nights, Hampshire decided against bringing a group of people, some who had never lived in Third World conditions, into the area.

With the help of ANDEN, the Nicaraguan teachers union, and an Los Angeles man working for the Nicaraguan government, Hampshire made plans to build in San Martín, which is in a region the Sandinistas are trying to upgrade to relieve crowding in the capital. The town had a half-built elementary school too small for its hundreds of children. Most San Martín residents work in the fields, the new Cuban-built sugar cane factory or a nearby machine shop that was being retooled by a team of West German unionists.

Back home, a Los Angeles teachers group joined in, donating supplies, money and tools. By the time the first brigades left in June, the group had boxes of tools, a wheelbarrow and $4000. Everything was packed into donated suitcases, except the wheelbarrow which was bounced through airport customs along with a duffel bag of balls donated by students at Santana High School.

Throughout the summer, groups of San Diego and L.A. *brigadistas*, who had paid for and set up their own travel arrangements, arrived in Nicaragua. Everyone lived with families in town, most of the time eating rice and beans and drinking fruit drinks made from smashed pitayas, bananas, pineapples, green oranges, limes and guayabas, and making cola runs to the two "stores," the only places in town with refrigeration.

Most of the construction work was directed by a Nicaraguan architect the teacher's committee had hired. Women in dresses and men from San Martín came out everyday to help dig trenches, lift bricks and make columns to pour cement into. Kids came out before school, at recess and after school; and they always crowded around wanting to help build their school.

There was more than enough help so the soccer balls were put to good use. When it was too hot or we were too tired, we'd walk or hitch 2 kilometers down a shadeless dirt road to Tipitapa, a bigger farm town, then catch a crowded bus to a government-run swimming resort that cost about two cents for admission. There was beer sold in palapa cafes and lots of shade and deep water.

Brigadistas also toured Nicaragua's beautiful beaches, met with families of Contra victims and worked on wiring schools in other parts of the country. And every week the groups read about Contra fatalities never written up in the U.S. press. Volunteer workers from Belgium, France and West Germany were killed in Contra attacks on civilian trucks in the border areas. A West German who had been sent to Nicaragua by the Black Forest town of Frieburg was riding in a civilian truck that hit a land mine on the road to Quilalí, the group's first choice for a school site.

At home, the teachers group and Friends of Nicaraguan Culture have had to deal with a media which doesn't call such Contra attacks against civilians "terrorism." To counter this, Friends of Nicaraguan Culture and the teachers group have been doing their own publicity blitz.

FNC, which sponsors a least one major educational event a month, has been setting up in-home slide shows on Nicaragua. The group has also set up an ambitious schedule of events for the next six months, including concerts by Nicaraguan bands, a speaking tour by American nun Mary Hartman who is the head of the Nicaraguan human rights commission, and some education celebrations. The teachers group publicized their work by printing over 5,000 informational flyers and is now having many in-home slide shows.

The teachers group is also planning to go back to Nicaragua to build another school. At a *brigadistas* reunion on a recent Saturday afternoon, their vision soared to the $60,000 level, enough for three ambitious projects and a pick up truck to make the work go smoother.

Who's going to give that much, some *brigadistas* wondered. After all, there are only so many progressives in the movement, and they also have to give to El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama and a lot of causes in San Diego and the United States.

But the big dreamers wouldn't be stopped. They don't want to limit the donors to San Diego's progressive community. They want different groups in San Diego to get involved. But who's going to give that much? San Diego solidarity groups are doubled and tripled up with work now.

The big dreamers have the answer. A year ago only about 100 San Diego progressives had been to Nicaragua. Now almost 300 have been there. The teacher's committee has captured the imagination of hundreds who hadn't thought about Nicaragua before.

"Last year some guy I didn't even know put on the biggest fundraiser of the spring," Hampshire said. "And we got $1,000 in one night."

And once people start thinking about Nicaragua, it's almost impossible not to compare Nicaragua to El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Chile and to think about problems there. Unfortunately, Nicaraguan solidarity groups have an advantage over other Latin American solidarity groups because the Nicaraguan groups can say "Hey, we built a school, we hand-delivered medical supplies and clothes. . . ." Helping Salvadorean victims of U.S.-sponsored policies is not so easy, and war-weary activists in CISPES can testify to that.

But it's inevitable that as the Nicaraguan solidarity movement grows, the other solidarity movements will too. In the past year Chilean solidarity groups have been more active than ever through the year-old Chilean Information Center. Group members have worked hard to compare the struggle in Chile to the struggle in the rest of Latin America. COSPA, a new Argentinian solidarity group has worked hard to set up cultural and educational events this year and is getting a good response, though the group hasn't been overtly "political." Even the Interfaith Task Force has been more active than ever organizing educational events at churches throughout the county.

Perhaps in the coming year all these groups will better coordinate their activities in order to better facilitate the growing awareness and concern about the struggle in all of Latin America. The teachers group has demonstrated that more and more people want to find some way to get involved. Then, with enough people-pressure, not even the media will be able to ignore the movement. ■