

Month In Review

[Compiled from Nicaragua Network Hotlines from June 16 – July 14]

For news about the coup in Honduras, see separate article this issue.

Thirtieth anniversary celebrated

Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans filled the Plaza of the Revolution on the morning of July 19 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution which overthrew the 43 year Somoza family dictatorship in 1979. Representatives

from governments, political parties and social movements from more than 20 countries were also present.

First Lady Rosario Murillo told the crowd, “We celebrate this day not only thinking of what this revolution has been for all of us but, above all, committed to new victories for the Nicaraguan people.” She said that, in the two and one half years the government of President Daniel Ortega has achieved more in social services than in the 16 years of neo-liberal governments that preceded it. She said that the Sandinista Party now has a membership of 1.1 million Nicaraguans who are ready to defend those advances.

Nobel Laureate Rigoberta



Tens of thousands of Nicaraguans gathered near Lake Managua to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the 1979 revolution.

Menchú said, “It is difficult to achieve victory, but even harder is to sustain it.” She asked for solidarity with those who struggle to protect the “health of Mother Earth” against mining companies and lauded Nicaragua’s youth who participate in social and environmental programs when many young people around the world feel they have no ideals to defend. She said, “Long live the [Sandinista] Front and the women who have made possible the revolution and who struggle for social justice and to change structures of humiliation and racism.”

In his hour long speech, Ortega remembered the important Nicaraguan figures who have died in recent weeks, including champion boxer and Managua Mayor Alexis Argüello, song writer Camilo Zapata, and Conservative politician Rafael Cordoba Rivas. Ortega demanded the return of constitutional government in Honduras, but said “We don’t want blue helmets in our countries; it is the people who must restore their president.” He also called for amending the Nicaraguan constitution to allow for the re-election of the president and mayors.

The Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) gathered in a Managua hotel on July 18 to celebrate the day. Among those present were Henry Ruiz, Dora Maria Tellez, Victor Hugo Tinoco, Hugo Torres, Gioconda Belli, and Edmundo Jarquin. Ruiz said in reply to a reporter’s question, “The figures of Daniel and Rosario are portrayed as godlike.... You know what it is to manipulate consciousness; but honesty and ethics should impede it. The FSLN has no ethics. The workers and exploited continue to be their reference point but that is used to deceive.”

International Monetary Fund

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) postponed until September the next evaluation of Nicaragua in order to give time to the government to fulfill pending requirements, according to Jose Adan Aguerra, president of the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), who was part of a delegation of private sector and government officials that traveled to Washington for meetings with IMF Managing Director Dominique Strauss-Kahn. The delegation was led by Central Bank President Antenor Rosales.

The second and third disbursements of funds for Nicaragua were delayed by the IMF which demanded an end to tax exempt status for non-productive sectors including the communications media and reportedly even churches and non-

governmental organizations. Another requirement was the elimination of automatic annual increases in social security pension payments.

Economist Adolfo Acevedo said that the government should seek a “true national consensus” in order to continue in the IMF economic program while at the same time preserving the tax exempt status of non-profit groups and protecting the pensions of retired citizens. He said that these requirements by the IMF could mean “the return by the IMF to its much criticized mandates of the past.”

US-Nicaragua Relations

Nicaraguan Attorney General Hernan Estrada spent the week of July 12 in Washington, DC, in an effort to convince the US to grant the 16th consecutive waiver to the US law that requires cutting off US aid if a country confiscates the property of US citizens. In 1994 the Helms-Gonzalez amendment made that law apply to people who weren't US citizens at the time their property was confiscated but became naturalized citizens later, allowing former members of the Somoza dictatorship to demand the return of their ill-gotten properties in Nicaragua. The law provides that the president can grant a waiver if it is in the US interest. The US has demanded “progress” on resolving property claims as the condition to granting the annual July

28 waiver. This year, the Obama administration has not yet said that it will grant the waiver.

Estrada noted that up until July, the Ortega administration has resolved 44 cases, which is more than last year at 41 cases, and above the number resolved during the last year of the Bolaños administration, which was 34. “The cases that remain are more complex,” Estrada said, adding, “Of the 269 remaining claimants, only 17 were born in the United States; the rest are former members of the National Guard of the Somoza regime that not even previous governments have considered paying.”

Estrada said that he had found a “positive atmosphere” in his visits to the offices of members of the House of Representatives and of Senators,



Nicaraguan Attorney General Hernan Estrada (left) met with Nicanet Co-Coordinator Chuck Kaufman to talk about the property issue.

both Democratic and Republican. On Wednesday, he met with Dan Restrepo, President Barack Obama’s advisor on hemispheric security. Estrada also met with officials at the State Department and with civil society representatives including Chuck Kaufman of the Nicaragua Network. The Nicaragua Network issued an alert to call the State Department and vowed to launch a yearlong campaign to get Nicaragua out from under the waiver regimen.

Social Investment

An independent commission created by the UN Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) declared on June 22 that Nicaragua has achieved a nationwide illiteracy level of 4.73%, qualifying it as a country free of illiteracy and making it the fourth country in Latin America to achieve this distinction. Five per cent illiteracy is the global standard for full literacy. Juan Bautista Arrien, UNESCO representative, said that the commission was composed of members of the Ibero-American Education Organization, universities and other academic and research centers.

For the first time a poll shows the Ortega government with a majority support in rural areas of Nicaragua according to an announcement by the Institute for Development and Democracy (IPADE). The poll sampled 1,200 rural residents in 73 municipalities in all 15 departments and the two autonomous regions. It showed that 52% had a positive view of government programs. Free health and education were recognized by 30.8% as the most positive program. Zero Hunger was put at the top by 4.1%, highway construction by 2.3%, and the Councils of Citizen Power at 1.8%. The top negative for the government was the increase in the cost of the basic basket of goods, mentioned by 49.3% of those polled, followed by lack of jobs at 12.7%.

Corruption

The Sandinista Party was unable to achieve a quorum in the National Assembly on June 24 in order to hold a vote to lift the legislative immunity of Deputy Eduardo Montealegre and Central American Parliament Deputy Noel Ramirez so they could be prosecuted in the case of the Negotiable Investment Certificates (CENIs). Some political figures are demanding that

the indictments be broadened to include officers of the banks whose failures provoked the emission of the certificates in the first place.

Montealegre was Minister of the Treasury and later an officer of the Central Bank during that period and is accused of “reengineering” the CENIs, magnifying government losses to an estimated US\$600 million. Others among the indicted are former Superintendent of Banks Noel Sacasa, former general manager of the Central Bank Mario Flores, and former Treasury Minister Esteban Duquestrada, who is a fugitive living in Panama and inaccessible to the court.

Atlantic Coast Issues

Attorney General Hernán Estrada said that the government hopes that the Supreme Court will reverse the ruling of a Bluefields appeals court that ceded seven of the Pearl Cays to US citizen Peter Tsokos. He went on to say, “We expect that these little islands will become the property of the local communities, who are the historic owners of these cays and those who have historically benefitted from their use.”

He explained that the interest of the State in these islands is based on environmental and sovereignty issues. “We are talking about an act of sovereignty and a rights claim of the autonomous communities of the RAAS.” [South Atlantic Autonomous Region],” he said.



Alexis Argüello, former boxing champ and Mayor of Managua, committed suicide on July 1. Argüello suffered from depression.