



NICARAGUA NETWORK NICARAGUA MONITOR

July 2009 # 158 30 Years of Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People

Thirty Years of Revolution: **Immense Happiness, Immense Commitment**

[This statement was released in Managua by the Christian Base Communities of Nicaragua and sent to the Nicaragua Network on July 13 by Father Arnaldo Zenteno. Translation is by Katherine Hoyt.]

On Celebrating These Thirty Years, We Continue to Strengthen the Values of the Revolution

No one can say I won't get involved, I won't commit myself, Because one would be a bad Christian and a bad citizen.

Archbishop Oscar Romero

We celebrate these thirty years with emotion and strength based on the experiences we have lived intensely for and in union with our people. Who among us can remain cold or indifferent especially remembering the courage of our youth confronting the ten year war imposed by the United States government which cost more than 70,000 dead and the destruction of our economy? Who among us does not admire the strength and capacity of our people to support sixteen years of neo-liberal governments which brought benefits to the powerful and worked against the most fundamental rights of our people?

To celebrate with immense happiness these thirty years is not to celebrate just one day, the 19th of July, as the day of the triumph of the revolution. It is also to celebrate the struggle to overthrow the dictator; it is to celebrate so many months, so many days, so many hours intensely lived with their successes, their achievements, their failures and difficulties; so much blood and so many lives given on the battlefield and in the struggle of each day.

When we celebrate these thirty years we want to recognize the presence of God the Liberator who has been manifested to us since the Exodus. But also, distancing ourselves from false triumphalism, we

want to recognize and ask forgiveness for errors made and for detours from the right path.

To celebrate these thirty years is also to look forward with realism, thinking of the enormous tasks remaining, the present difficulties and those that will come, to take on the commitment implied in continuing to fight to achieve the dreams that feed and sustain the spirit of our beloved Revolution. It means to allow ourselves to live positively and throw

ourselves forward with renewed energy, with greater strength and with firm hope.

As Christians, as base communities, we cannot let this thirtieth anniversary pass without giving thanks to God for having allowed us to participate in this long process lived by our people in the cause of justice. This cause is a concrete realization of the preferential option for the poor. From among our intensely lived experiences we want to especially

See Commitment, p. 5.

Memories of the 1979 Final Offensive

On the Occasion of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution

By Katherine Hoyt

Right after Bayardo [Dr. Bayardo Gonzalez of Matagalpa, Nicaragua] and I were married in 1967, my father had told us, "When 'comes the revolution,' you send us the kids!" At that time, the Somoza family looked well-entrenched in power with no revolution in sight and we certainly had no kids. But, of course, the revolution did come and we did send the kids.

We kept their Pan American tickets ready and their passports with exit visas stamped in them. We listened to "Radio Sandino" every night at 11:00p.m. for the announcement of the "final general strike." We also received instructions on how to build air raid shelters and what supplies to have on hand.

By now the three FSLN tendencies, into which the Front had divided beginning in 1975, had reunited and, as Humberto Ortega later said, three other very important factors were present which made possible the victory:

- 1) The people were prepared and ready for a massive popular uprising;
- 2) The private sector was completely fed up with Somoza and was ready to support another general strike; and most importantly,
- 3) The FSLN, in a culmination of its

eighteen years of struggle, was politically and militarily ready to lead the offensive.

On Mother's Day, May 30, 1979, the announcement came: the final general strike would start June 4th. The next morning I called Pan American Airlines and made the earliest reservations that I could: June 4th. My father would fly down



The Sandinista fighters who were headquartered in Hoyt's house. Taken July 19, 1979. All photos by Hoyt.

to Los Angeles to pick up the children and fly with them to Seattle. Victoria was ten, and the twins were six. Victoria was a little mother to her brother and sister. Only years later did the children tell me how traumatic they found being separated from both of us and how they worried about

See Memories, p. 6.

In Defense of Participatory Democracy

By Midge Quandt

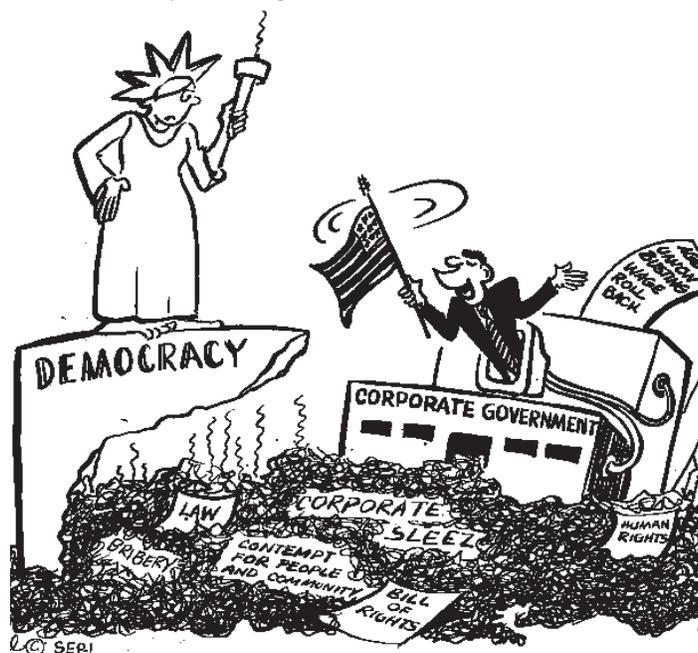
[This article is part of our continuing series on participatory democracy.

Quandt is an independent scholar and activist who lives in Princeton, NJ. She is a member of the Nicaragua Network Executive Committee and the Alliance for Global Justice board.]

Participatory democracy is a system of direct popular rule in all areas of public life. It does not mean that citizens must be consulted on every issue. But it does require mechanisms by which the vast majority, including the underprivileged and the marginalized, has regular, continuous input into decision making. Under this system, powerful economic interests (if they still existed) would have a diminished influence on government policies. In this way, participatory democracy transcends procedural matters and confronts the issues of class and social justice head-on.

In the North, our attitude toward participatory democracy in Latin America and elsewhere tends toward outright condemnation or at least suspicion. Distrust of direct participatory democracy with its connotation of unwieldiness is one aspect. More importantly, the specter of direct popular rule is unsettling if not frightening to the U. S. establishment. Political and economic elites feel threatened and rightly so. Add to this the fact that the procedural, electoral democracy with which we are familiar is uniformly regarded as the only legitimate kind by those invested in the process. And it is not surprising that participatory democracy has almost no place in our discourse.

The suspicion of direct democracy must be put in the context of repeated attacks on today's leftist governments in



Latin America — Bolivia, Ecuador, and especially Venezuela are favorite targets. Political writers and the media raise questions about the legitimacy of these governments. As a result, even some in the progressive community regard them with a jaundiced eye. This is particularly true of Venezuela. Most writers on Hugo Chavez, as political scientist Steve Ellner notes, focus on his personality and political style to the exclusion of everything else. Ignoring advances in social justice, political analysts make much of his supposedly single-minded pursuit of power. (Aversion to his rhetorical excesses is often a reflex of the middle class and the rich. Likewise, the Venezuelan opposition

vilifies his followers as the “chavista rabble.”)

Then there is the U. S. media. Abetted by the relentless demonizing of the left by public figures, the mainstream media accuses Chavez of demagoguery and worse. In Venezuela, the opposition engages in diatribes against “totalitarianism” and “Castro-communism.” (Some even compare him to Hitler.) Likewise, opponents of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua call him a dictator and liken him to Somoza.

Not unexpectedly, some in the solidarity movement are ambivalent about both Chavez and Ortega.

Extreme claims like those above can be advanced only because they contain a modicum of truth, however small. “The cult of personality” surrounding Chavez and Ortega, as even friendly observers like Venezuela scholar Greg Wilpert admit, increases executive power while discouraging debate. Whether this adds up to true authoritarian rule is another question.

Procedural Democracy vs. Participatory Democracy

What is the relevance of all this for participatory democracy? It turns out that those who condemn leaders like Chavez also reject the kind of popular participation embodied in direct democracy. This is no coincidence. According to the conventional wisdom, the only acceptable form of democracy is the procedural kind — regular elections, representative bodies based solely on geography, free speech. There is no place here for the popular will. Indeed, the term itself is suspect.

The will of the people, unmediated by elected (and “reliable”) representatives, is potentially destabilizing and — though this is rarely said today — hostile to

See Participatory, p. 8.

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National Office Staff: Katherine Hoyt and Chuck Kaufman
Nicaragua Network * 1247 “E” St., SE • Washington, DC 20003
Phone: (202) 544-9355 nicanet@afg.org
Web site: www.nicanet.org

A New Beginning on Trade?

By Katherine Hoyt

Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Rep. Michael Michaud (D-ME) have written a trade bill that, if passed, could begin the massive overhaul needed in our trade model. It was introduced on June 25 in the House of Representatives by Rep. Michaud. Many articles in the bill answer our concerns about the impact of DR-CAFTA on the poor majorities in Central America. There would still remain work to be done to tear down the current model and build a better one, but it's a serious beginning! The TRADE Act would apply to all future agreements but would also mandate a reopening of NAFTA, CAFTA and other trade agreements to put them into compliance with the act.

The Nicaragua Network recommends that you urge your Representative to support it!

Here's how the TRADE Act measures up to the Pledge for Trade Justice put out by the Stop CAFTA Coalition, of which the Nicaragua Network is a member:

The Pledge says: I will only support trade agreements that include:

1.) Democratic participation, accountability and transparency during trade negotiations;

Under the TRADE Act there would be no Fast Track procedures (up-down vote with no amendments) in the Congress.

The Congress would have to be consulted before and during the negotiations of an agreement. Any trade agreement would have to be approved by a majority in both Houses of Congress before the President signs it, rather than after as presently.

2.) Provisions that work to protect the dignified lives of small farmers, indigenous communities, women and otherwise vulnerable populations;

With relation to farmers, the new bill says that any trade agreement must "protect the right of each country that is a party to the trade agreement to prevent dumping of agricultural commodities at below the cost of production." This gives countries the power to counteract the unfair competition of U.S.-subsidized agricultural products. U.S. corn sold below cost of production in Mexico led to the loss of one million or more small farms in that country. Pig farmers in Nicaragua say cheap, subsidized U.S. pork

coming in under CAFTA is going to wipe them out.

The TRADE Act says that any agreement must "protect the right of each country ... to encourage conservation through the use of best practices with respect to the management and production of crops [and] ensure fair treatment of agricultural workers in each country." This means that countries would be

3.) Text in the body of the agreements guaranteeing that core labor and environmental standards are strengthened, as defined by international law;

The TRADE Act mandates that labor provisions be included in the core text of any trade agreement rather than in so-called "side agreements." Each country party to an agreement would



Trade justice activists led by the Stop CAFTA Coalition protest in front of the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC, during the final negotiating session of DR-CAFTA in December 2003.

able to make their own decisions about sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty and not be forced to accept the entry of U.S. agribusinesses with their genetically modified seeds that require excessive use of water, fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides.

With relation to indigenous communities and their concerns about expropriation of their traditional knowledge, the bill would require that "any provisions relating to the patenting of traditional knowledge be consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity, concluded at Rio de Janeiro June 5, 1992." This convention regulates access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge, including mandating prior informed consent of those holding the resources or knowledge before they can be used by others and mandating the sharing of benefits of any use of traditional knowledge or biodiversity resources.

have to adopt, maintain and enforce as part of its domestic law the core labor standards included in the conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO). This would mean that laws in most countries, including the U.S., would have to be strengthened in their protection of workers. Enforcement mechanisms for labor standards and penalties for violations of labor laws would have to be at least as effective as those that apply to the commercial provisions of the trade agreement.

Environmental provisions would also be required to be included in the core text of any trade agreement. Countries are prohibited from weakening or failing to enforce their domestic environmental protection measures to attract investment. The TRADE Act would allow each country to adopt and implement environmental measures to protect its

See Trade, p. 9.

Nicaragua Serves As Base for International Opposition to Coup

At a press conference in Managua the night of July 19, Honduran President Manuel Zelaya said that he was preparing for his return to Honduras. Zelaya, who was overthrown in a military coup d'état on June 28, made his announcement after coup President Roberto Micheletti refused the mediation terms put forward by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias. Zelaya said, "We are going to go back with intelligence, with strategy.... We are beginning to do all the internal organizing for my return to the country and we hope that all the members of the media who are here will accompany me."

Throughout the period following the coup, Nicaragua has been Zelaya's base and a base for international opposition to the overthrow of constitutional order in Honduras. On June 28 itself, at least 15 Latin American leaders gathered in Managua for meetings of the System of Central American Integration (SICA), the Bolivarian Alliance the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA) and the Rio Group, where they denounced the coup against Zelaya.

The SICA meeting was attended by the presidents of Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, President Zelaya of Honduras, and Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza of the Organization of American States (OAS). The SICA member states voted to suspend all cooperation with the coup government including political, financial, cultural, and tourism. The Central American countries which border Honduras—Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador—said that they would close those borders for 48 hours and, if the coup was not reversed, would impede trade between their countries and Honduras. [After closing for a number of hours on June 29, the borders between Central American countries and Honduras were reopened after a legal analysis concluded that a blockade of commerce was in violation of the Central American Integration Accord.] Loans from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration were to be put on hold. The final declaration was read by Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega as chair for this

period of the SICA.

The ALBA also met in special session in Managua late that night. The meeting was attended by Zelaya, Ortega, Cuban President Raul Castro, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Ecuadoran President Rafael Corea, Bolivian President

the military blockaded the runway with vehicles and the plane had to fly instead to Managua. There, Zelaya was met by President Daniel Ortega with whom he had a brief conversation while his plane refueled before taking off for San Salvador. Jose Miguel Insulza, Secretary



A group of Nicaraguan rural women express their support for the women of Honduras "in their struggle to restore democracy."

Evo Morales, among others, who strategized about how to return President Zelaya to office. The presidents said in a statement that they would maintain themselves in permanent session to evaluate joint actions that would enable them to "accompany the Honduran people in the re-establishment of legality and the restitution of President Manuel Zelaya." Castro said, "I believe in the sincerity of President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, but they have to demonstrate it with actions, not just words."

Zelaya tried unsuccessfully on July 5 to return to Honduras with his Foreign Minister Patricia Rodas and U.N. General Assembly President and former Nicaraguan foreign minister Fr. Miguel D'Escoto. They flew to Tegucigalpa, where tens of thousands of people awaited them, and attempted to land but

General of the Organization of American States (OAS), and the presidents of Argentina, Ecuador and El Salvador had flown there directly from an OAS meeting on the situation in Honduras in Washington, DC.

The Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH) released a statement which called on the Organization of American States (OAS) to again take up the efforts to find a non-violent solution to the crisis. CENIDH condemned the repression of Honduran citizens by that country's army saying that July 5 attacks on the airport protesters were carried out "with disproportionate violence causing the deaths of the two young people Isis Obed Murillo and Darwin Antonio Lagos and injuring dozens of demonstrators." The statement demanded that those responsible for the deaths and injuries be

See Honduras, p. 10.

From Commitment, p. 1.

remember the Prophetic Insurrection with its fasts and its 315 kilometer stations of the cross for peace and life and against U.S. government terrorism [in July of 1985]. We also want to remember the growth, in neo-liberal times, of our Social Projects for Life, which have been both service and a prophetic voice. And with humility and simplicity we want

to recognize our faults, especially when they have weakened our commitment or our prophetic voice.

In the past, we confronted war and neo-liberalism. Today we celebrate the thirty years in a different context; now there is a government with revolutionary principles and with

achievements that favor our people such as the Zero Hunger Program, the Zero Usury Program and the removal of fees in hospitals and public schools.

The situation continues to be very difficult and presents us with many challenges. For that reason our celebration of the thirtieth anniversary cannot be merely a triumphalist celebration. It is

not enough to say that we have survived and overcome the enormous difficulties and aggressions of these thirty years. This is true, but we also have to know how to fight against the passivity and indifference brought by these last 18 years of so much political infighting. We have to fight against the discouragement and hopelessness that are products of so many years of poverty and hunger. And we

We want to recognize and contribute actively to advance the successes and achievements of the government and different organizations of our society that are supporting justice. But also with wisdom and humility we must indicate errors and failures with a sincere prophetic voice.

have to do this with full consciousness that the road to overcoming poverty is very long and full of difficulties, not caused only by the IMF or the suspension of the Millennium Challenge funds, but also from our own internal failures.

As Christians celebrating these thirty years in

the present situation, beseeched by the Gospels and by our people, we have to advance further in our commitment.

In the first place we want, together with others, to revitalize or in certain cases, rescue the authentic values of the Revolution such as justice, generosity to the point of giving one's life, honesty, solidarity with the poorest and most excluded, and solidarity with sister

peoples who suffer violence. Now with all our energy we denounce the coup d'état that our sisters and brothers in Honduras suffered at the hands of an army trained and supported by the administrations of Reagan and Bush.

And secondly, with wisdom and joy we want to recognize and contribute actively to advance the successes and achievements of the government and different organizations of our society that are supporting justice. But also with wisdom and humility we must indicate errors and failures with a sincere prophetic voice. At the same time we must exercise the same self criticism with ourselves.

In the third place, our concrete commitment in the tasks of each day in our neighborhood, at our work and at school, and our participation as citizens, will be clear signals that our commitment to the cause of the poor and the cause of justice is authentic and not mere words.

We give thanks to God that on this path God has inspired us and continues to illuminate and strengthen us especially by the Exodus-Passover through our concrete history and by God's desire that our society be a reality of the dream of Jesus of the Kingdom of God: the Good News for the poor and liberation for the oppressed (Luke 4). And we continue to proclaim that between Christianity and revolution there is no contradiction when both are lived, as we live them, authentically.

Sign Petition asking Nicaragua to withdraw from the School of the Americas!

The US grassroots movement to close the Army School of the Americas (now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) is mobilizing for victory.

Last year the vote to close the SOA would have succeeded had we changed only six votes. Five Latin American countries have already announced their withdrawal from the SOA.

Please sign the petition, co-sponsored by the Nicaragua Network and SOA Watch, asking Nicaraguan President



Daniel Ortega to withdraw Nicaragua from the SOA. To sign, go to www.nicanet.org and scroll down. Click on the link to sign!

Boycott Flor de Caña!

Support former sugar workers in Nicaragua who suffer from Chronic Renal Insufficiency (CRI)!

The Flor de Caña Boycott Group in Nicaragua is targeting the Pellas companies and international distributors of Flor de Caña Rum. The Pellas Group owns the Ingenio San Antonio, the sugar plantation and mill which produce the raw material for Flor de Caña. Former workers, 3,000 of whom have died from CRI, have demanded a dialogue with the owners, but while Carlos Pellas has promised to build a hospital to treat kidney disease, he has not agreed to dialogue with the workers.

For sample letters to the producers and distributors of Flor de Caña Rum, visit www.nicanet.org and scroll down!



Memories, from p. 1.

being left orphans.

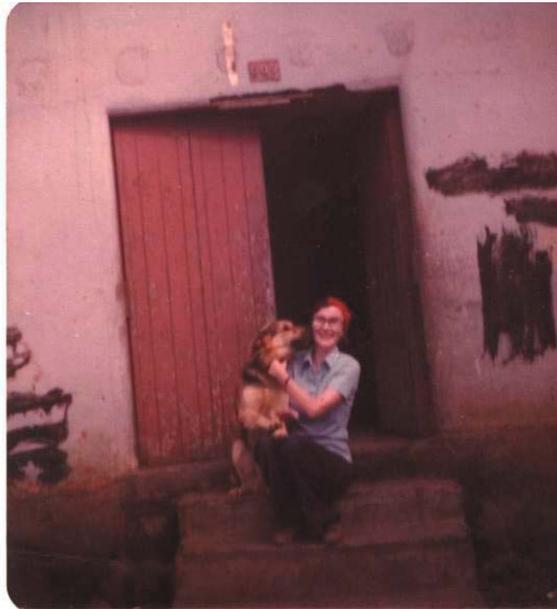
After we watched the children's plane take off, Bayardo and I put our emergency bags over our shoulders and walked out to the highway. We wanted to spend the final offensive in Matagalpa but with no public transportation operating, we knew we might have to stay in Managua. We were lucky: a private car stopped and gave us a ride all the way home. On that first day of the strike all stores, businesses and doctors' offices were closed, but it was quiet so we visited friends and relatives. On June 5, however, at 5:00 p.m., Sandinistas entered the city from the east and fighting began. Bayardo had gone out to visit friends. When he called, I said he should stay where he was and not try to get home. I have always believed that, if the children had still been with me, he would have tried to make it home and might have died on that first day.

Later that day I crossed the street to stay with Elbia Bravo who intended to remain in the city in her home behind her store. She had told us that we were welcome to stay with her and since I was alone, it seemed a good idea. We were four women: Doña Elbia, her mother Doña Licha, the young maid Angela, and I. By Thursday, we could hear what sounded like snipers on our roofs but didn't know what side they were on. For the first time a jet plane flew over the city strafing the houses. When it was far away, the noise was bum, bum, bum, bum, and then an echo bum, bum, bum, bum. But if it was right on top of you then it was simply BAM, BAM, BAM, BAM. At Elbia's house, as at our house, we were somewhat protected from strafing and rockets by the platform of the second story. People who lived in one story houses with tile or tin roofs either had already made some kind of air raid shelter or quickly made one in these first days of the fighting. We ate, read and slept.

On Friday afternoon June 8, Elbia's house received its first hit by a mortar shell against one of the back bedrooms. The room filled with glass shrapnel from the windows. We were all in the living room at the time and no one was hurt. The next day Elbia and I went up to one of the apartments that she rented on her second floor to see where another mortar had hit. It had made a substantial hole in the wall. (Luckily, the tenants had evacuated for farms outside the city.) It was then

that we heard the plane overhead and the explosion behind her house at what had to be the fire department. We listened in horror to the screams and then to the sirens as an ambulance took victims to the hospital. We found out later that eight civilians had died and many more were wounded in the attack.

On Sunday, June 10, I crossed the street over to our house to feed the animals. There was fighting on the rooftops and hot lead (literally hot lead) fell into the



Hoyt with the family dog in front of the little house in Guanuca barrio where she and her husband spent the last half of the final offensive.

kitchen. I crouched under the kitchen table until the fire fight ended. Later, Sandinista fighters told me that there were members of the National Guard on the roofs and that I had been putting my life in danger by crossing the street to feed our dog and cat. There were hard fought battles that week in Matagalpa to take San Jose Church in the south-central part of town and the old San Jose School building as well as the Social Club. We could tell that the fighting was intense but we couldn't tell where or, more importantly, who was winning.

The next day planes flew overhead, strafing and dropping bombs all morning and most of the afternoon. At one point in the afternoon, I had occasion to look across the street at our house. The door was open and our German Shepherd was standing in the doorway looking out. I went over quickly to put him back in, realizing that someone might kill him. Nicaraguans believed that dogs that ate dead human flesh would get rabies and therefore any dog that was running free

during battles when there were dead bodies lying out in the open was presumed to be rabid. I was quite certain that our dog had not bitten any dead bodies, but I wanted to get him inside before anybody else decided that he had and shot him. When I went into the house, I saw the reason why the door was open: there were 24 Molotov cocktails made from Flor de Caña rum bottles in two neat rows on the floor of the dining room and several red and black masks on the living room sofa. I said to myself, "They're here."

Compañero Maceo, who had taken his nom de guerre from the Cuban independence fighter Antonio Maceo, was the responsible, that is, the one in charge, of the Sandinista brigade. He and another compañero, or compa as they called themselves, had supper with us that evening. At one point, Maceo said to me, "We'll be using your house. You'll have to pardon the mess." Thus began our relationship with an outstanding group of young people who lived in our house for two months. They were Terceristas, members of the Third or Insurreccional Tendency that had been formed by Daniel and Humberto Ortega and others. The Terceristas believed that a broad multi-class coalition of

the Nicaraguan people could be brought together under the leadership of the FSLN and could overthrow the dictatorship. The three tendencies within the FSLN had reunited only a few weeks before the final offensive so each still retained a separate command structure for its troops. Our nephew Jose (about whose whereabouts I still knew nothing at this time) turned out to be the responsible of the fighters of the Prolonged Popular Warfare tendency. His command post was on the other side of the block. Our block was strategic for the Sandinistas as they moved house by house toward the command post of the National Guard on the park next to the Cathedral.

The short-wave radio was our life-line. It was how we learned what was going on in the rest of Nicaragua. Radio Netherlands had the best news, followed by Radio Exterior de España. We also listened to the BBC, Radio Moscow, Radio Havana and the Voice of America. We heard reports that the fighting

See Memories, p. 7.

Memories, from p. 6.

continued in Managua. Thousands were said to be dead from the bombing of residential neighborhoods. Fleeing North Americans could not get to the airport. The building of La Prensa newspaper was reported to be burning. Somoza was also bombing other opposition business and industrial sites on the North Highway out of Managua.

We were being shelled by mortars from a hill outside the city. Often the shelling came at night. On June 12, the storeroom next to where I was sleeping was hit. The



Dr. Gonzalez in front of some of the destruction in the center of Matagalpa.

noise was deafening. A ten inch hole was blown out of the wall, the brick turned into an enormous quantity of red dust which covered everything in that and nearby rooms. After that, I lay sleepless in bed next to an exposed outside wall for a long time listening to the whoosh of each mortar as it was launched and counting the seconds until each explosion. The time between launch and explosion averaged 19 seconds.

We began cooking for the compas with food that they brought for us and themselves. Often a young man would sit with us and help us sort the pebbles and twigs out of the beans before we cooked them. Cooking, washing and other tasks were divided equally among men and women fighters when they were in the mountains. It was only when they came among civilians that we civilian women began taking over the cooking. We had time to talk with the compas, also. Maceo had been one of the leaders in the battle of Jinotega and told us about that unsuccessful effort that had not been worth the loss of the great peasant

comandante German Pomares. "In Jinotega," Maceo said, "we couldn't get even a glass of water. In Matagalpa, we are stuffed with food!"

On their way down from Jinotega to Matagalpa, the compas passed through the tuberculosis sanitarium at Aranjuez. Maceo said that he spent two hours talking with an old man trying to convince him that he shouldn't try to accompany them in the taking of Matagalpa. He told the story in admiration of the old man's courage and valor. I heard the story thinking of a young man's respect and caring for the old and sick. Down the highway from Aranjuez, at the entrance to the Hacienda Selva Negra, that same group of Sandinistas set up an ambush for the National Guard. Many National Guard soldiers were killed and the Sandinistas obtained needed weapons. The tank they destroyed remains on that spot as a monument to the battle.

On the night of the 14th, we women all slept in Elbia's bedroom because it was a protected interior room. That night the compas broke through the double wall that separated Elbia's house from the Perla Theater next door that had been held by the National Guard.

The expected firefight did not materialize, however. The Guardia had abandoned the building.

I got news of Bayardo from the compas. He was working at a field hospital that the Sandinistas had set up at a Catholic orphanage and school. The first hospital that the doctors had tried to set up in a private clinic had been bombed and had to be abandoned. The orphanage was a better building. The doctors and the wounded would be safer there, I thought. But the Sandinistas monitored National Guard radio communications and heard orders being given to pilots to bomb the hospital. According to rumor, one pilot refused and deserted, taking his plane. Bayardo, a long-standing enemy of the National Guard, heard that orders to bomb our house had been picked up as well.

Short-wave radio news reports told us that on June 16, the FSLN took the National Guard post in Leon. The U.S. was urging no arms aid to either side in Nicaragua. On the 17th, we heard the news that the FSLN had called five people to form a provisional government. They

were Daniel Ortega, Sergio Ramirez, Violeta de Chamorro, Moises Hassan and Alfonso Robelo.

Occasionally Bayardo could get away from the hospital to spend an evening with me. One morning we were still eating breakfast when the bombing began. First the Perla Theater next door was hit. The compas came rushing into Elbia's house through the hole in the wall. Then, seconds later, we were hit. We all headed for the door. I was the first to cross the street to our house with our dog on his leash followed by the other women and then the men. As I crossed, I looked back and saw Elbia's second story and the supermarket next door on the south side totally engulfed in flames. The compas had been debating whether to distribute all the food in the supermarket or to leave it there for use as needed. Now it was gone. We could hear cans exploding from the heat inside the store. The bomb had been an incendiary device of some kind, possibly napalm.

It was on this day (June 20) that ABC newsman Bill Stewart was killed by the Guardia in Managua. One of his fellow journalists filmed his vicious murder and it was broadcast around the world, increasing awareness of the brutality of the Somoza dictatorship. We saw it on television later in Managua. Stewart was lying face down on the ground; the National Guard soldier shot him, kicked him in the head, and shot him again.

After her house was hit by the incendiary bomb, Elbia, her mother and Angela, the maid, went to stay at the house of Doña Tanita, around the corner. Doña Tanita had a large house full of refugees from the neighborhood. Cooking, cleaning and taking care of children were all perfectly organized in her house, as was each person's air raid shelter spot. Doña Tanita was one of two women I knew who performed admirably under the stress of the insurrection, organizing people and tasks, but who broke down afterwards. It is remarkable how the human spirit can hold firm as long as is necessary but then demands relief and rest when the crisis is over.

I went to stay in one of the basement modules of the still-unfinished Catalina Shopping Center behind our house (and connected to it by a hole in the wall).

**To read the rest of the story,
please go to www.nicanet.org.**

Participatory, from p. 2.

property rights. Hence the wishes of the majority are honored only occasionally, typically at election time. Between elections, they are filtered and refined through “responsible” representatives. (The U. S. constitution, reflecting the fear of what the 18th century called the mob, is a case in point. The bicameral system of representation which it created was meant to curb the excesses of the populace, most particularly, the people with limited property—those with no property could not vote at all).

Advocates of procedural, formal democracy (including defenders of U.S. democracy promotion in the Americas) tend to equate participatory democracy with a tropism toward autocratic government —often of the populist variety. The logic goes like this: even with elections and other constitutional safeguards, countries which, in addition, encourage direct democracy, like Venezuela, court one-man rule. The link between participatory democracy and authoritarianism, according to this interpretation, lies in the direct pipeline between a charismatic leader and the populace. (The term “masses” is avoided not only because it is dated but also because of its elitist connotations.) As the leader takes on the mantle of the people’s savior — shades of Juan Peron and Fidel Castro — checks on his power, if they exist at all, are weakened. One who embodies the will of the people, so the argument goes, cannot legitimately be challenged. Hence there exists a constant threat of authoritarianism under the guise of a democratic system of government.

In contrast, the left has historically had grave doubts about electoral democracy. Behind the system of representative institutions, it argues, lies the power of political and economic elites (in monitoring the electoral process, influencing political parties by financing political campaigns, and vetting the experts who now play a large role in government). Conversely, the left embraces participatory democracy precisely because it undercuts the domination of those elites. Unfettered by remote legislatures and courts, the voice of the grassroots can make itself heard. Vehicles for that voice include local assemblies, municipal and workplace councils and referenda. In Latin America today, experiments in participatory democracy which provide institutional

channels for participation are most evident in Venezuela and, to a lesser extent, in Nicaragua.

Before 1999, electoral (and neo-liberal) democracy in Venezuela gave power to the elite and consigned the poor majority to the sidelines. With the election of Chavez, avenues for popular participation were opened. His “socialism for the 21st century” is redistributive in the economic sphere and participatory in political terms. On various occasions Chavez has said that



A meeting of a Council of Citizens' Power in Venezuela.

the organs of direct democracy constitute the political arm of the new socialism. The institutions of representative democracy remain in place but are supplemented by referenda, cooperatives, planning councils and since 2006, communal councils.

Although many progressives are suspicious of the populist, “strong-man” tendencies within *chavismo*, it can be argued that real democracy has been extended by the (still incomplete) implementation of direct democracy. The grass roots organs are no doubt more responsive to the wishes and needs of ordinary Venezuelans than traditional government mechanisms have been. The communal councils, in particular, have given the poor a greater stake in their government. These local councils decide on and administer projects in such areas as health, housing and water and, importantly, these decisions are binding. In a few municipalities such as Corora, mayors have turned the entire municipal budget over to the communal councils to good effect.

While Chavez capitalized on popular mobilization to create the institutions

of direct democracy, the story of participatory democracy took a different turn in Nicaragua. In recent years, grass roots militancy has declined. As a result, Daniel Ortega’s creation of the Councils of Citizens’ Power was clearly not a response to popular momentum. Instead, in some accounts, it was an effort to *create* that momentum: to energize the base and to gather widespread support for the so-called “second phase” of the Sandinista revolution. Not surprisingly, that effort, though laudable in theory, has been less impressive in practice.

The communal councils in Venezuela have worked reasonably well. They exist on a small scale — 200 members on average — and are both manageable and

democratic. On the minus side, government funding of the councils brings with it the danger of top-down control. Currently, some of these councils are more autonomous than others.

The same can be said of Nicaragua. Some of the local councils are dominated by loyalists of the Sandinista Party. Others have broader membership. Also problematical is the sidelining of the Municipal Development Committees, which grassroots groups fought to develop and which to many constituted grass roots democracy. Activists in these Committees now feel marginalized and often do not support the Ortega Government. However, Nicaragua’s councils of citizen power do have specific local powers assigned to them. For example, they decide who among the poor families in rural communities will be beneficiaries of the Zero Hunger anti-poverty program.

In both Venezuela and Nicaragua, experiments in participatory democracy are offset by the concentration of decision making in the executive branch. Another

See Participatory, p. 9.

Trade, from p. 3.

environment and public health.

4.) Space for national governments to pursue development strategies that support sustainable, locally-determined economic, social and environmental priorities; and

5.) Provisions permitting debt cancellation and aid to be used in direct service to the poor to help close the gaps between and within rich and poor countries;

The TRADE Act would have each country establish a list of industry sectors, goods, or services that would come under government procurement provisions of a trade agreement. Only in those sectors would a country be required to give equal access to transnational corporations from the United States. The technical specifications or requirements for receiving a government contract could not undermine prevailing wage policies, sustainable harvest policies, renewable energy policies, human rights or labor rights.

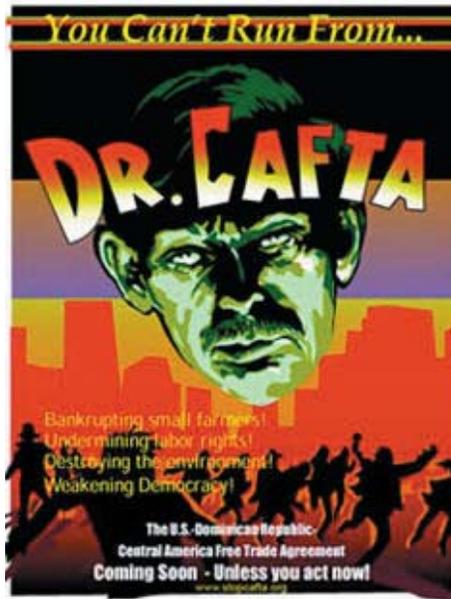
Any future trade agreement would have to ensure that access of the public to essential medicines and to technologies necessary to preventing climate change is not obstructed by any provision relating to the protection of intellectual property rights. Dispute resolutions will have to include the right to appeal, and procedures must be open to the public. Disputes related to environmental and labor rights, health and safety are required to be resolved in a timely manner.

A provision relating to health, safety, the environment, labor rights, worker or consumer health and safety, economic equity, or other issues would not be able to be challenged under the dispute resolution mechanism of a trade agreement “unless its primary purpose is to discriminate with respect to market access.” This provision restricts the ability of a corporation to sue a government when a law to protect, for example, the environment limits its access a nation’s natural resources.

6.) A framework that focuses finance and investment on productive, long-term development that ensures economic security and sustainable use of resources;

The TRADE Act states that any investment provisions in a trade agreement “must preserve the ability of each country ... to regulate foreign investment in a manner consistent with the needs and

priorities of the country.” It also allows each country to “restrict speculative capital to reduce global financial instability.” This means that countries would be able to regulate the entrance and withdrawal of foreign funds in order to preserve national stability. It also means that countries could determine what areas of their economy should be prioritized for possible development and investment



Poster created by Quest for Peace as part of the campaign against DR-CAFTA.

by foreign firms and which should be restricted to domestic investors.

The Act says that investment provisions should not be subject to investor-state dispute settlement provisions but rather government to government resolution. Under current trade agreements, individual corporations can sue governments when a permit is denied for mining based on environmental concerns, for example. Government to government dispute resolution would only allow governments to sue other governments on the behalf of corporations, thus drastically reducing the number of lawsuits. Governments would only be able to sue another when actions by that government destroys all value of a property, not when the value is merely diminished, as for example, by a new labor law. According to the TRADE Act, the term “investment” does not include the expectation of profit and therefore a company cannot sue because its expectations were not met, as is currently common.

The TRADE Act provides that if a trade agreement contains technical assistance provisions, those provisions should “be

designed to raise standards in developing countries by providing assistance that ensures respect for diversity of development paths.” All existing trade agreements have presumed that the only path to development is the neo-liberal path—privatizing public utilities, eliminating all trade barriers, prohibiting any measure that favors national production in agriculture or industry over foreign investment, etc.

The Act mandates that technical assistance measures “be designed to empower civil society and democratic governments to create sustainable, vibrant economies and respect basic rights.” While the Act does not say so in so many words, societies with empowered civil societies, democratic governments and vibrant, sustainable economies will be ones where transnational corporations are limited in their scope of action and local development solutions are put in place that

See Trade, p. 10.

Participatory, from p. 8.

drawback to participatory democracy in both countries is its limited reach: it has not yet operated beyond the local level in either country. In Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega has talked about changing the constitution to establish a chamber where the councils’ representatives would sit, but those changes are unlikely to happen anytime soon.

While the actual mechanisms of participatory democracy are still in the developmental stage in Latin America, the failure of procedural democracy to limit the power of elites provides impetus for further experimentation and expansion of our definition of what constitutes “democracy for the 21st century.” That definition, to my mind, should include the instruments of formal democracy: the freedoms of speech, press and assembly despite their historic association with elite rule. There are always conflicts of purpose in any complex society. Institutionalizing the popular will does not necessarily remove such conflicts. Nor should it. And if differing interests are legitimate, so is the dissent that accompanies them. In practice, the limits of dissent will be subject to debate. But the principle still stands. As does the principle of popular rule. If there is sometimes tension between these competing aspects of democracy, these need to be acknowledged and worked through.

Trade, from p. 9.

produce a good life for local people rather than profit for international stock holders.

7.) A guarantee that public services like health care, education and potable water will remain public and accessible to poor communities;

The TRADE Act preserves the right of governments to maintain essential public services and states that trade agreements cannot “require the privatization of public services in any country ... or the deregulation of a service” including social security, health, education, water, and others. It would require each country that is party to a trade agreement to establish a list of services sectors to which they will apply the agreement. In services not on the list, governments would be able to regulate as they wish with no danger of retaliation by corporations. The TRADE Act would also mandate that trade agreements not limit programs that control costs of medicines and medical devices.

8.) International trade and investment systems that emphasize fundamental human rights, in order to eclipse violence and oppression.

The act establishes that human rights provisions should be included in the core text of any trade agreement and that each country party to an agreement “recognize the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.”

Article 25 of the UN Declaration says: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services....”

Article 26 states: “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.”

In sum, the TRADE Act could result in significant changes to the current trade model, turning it away from a vehicle designed to benefit the elites in participating countries and toward a model that could, if governments negotiated in their citizens’ interests, bring wider benefits for whole societies.

Honduras, from p. 4.

brought to justice.

Meanwhile, all was quiet on Nicaragua’s northern border after Micheletti accused the Nicaraguans of massing troops on that country’s border with Honduras. “We have been notified that in Nicaragua they are moving troops toward the border,” Micheletti said in a radio and TV broadcast. Ortega responded by saying, “Nicaragua is not moving troops to Honduran territory. Nicaragua is keeping its troops in their normal positions



ALBA held an emergency meeting about the coup in Managua the night of June 28. Left to right, Presidents Zelaya, Ortega, Chavez and Correa.

where they have always been to guard the sovereignty of our country.”

Reporters for El Nuevo Diario said that under drizzling rain, three soldiers kept watch at the El Guasaule Bridge at the border. Notably, at the border station at Las Manos, communication had slowed between officers of the Nicaraguan and Honduran armies, who usually are in regular contact over issues of organized crime and drug trafficking. But no soldiers from the Second Army Battalion stationed in Ocotal had been seen moving toward the border.

In related news, Foreign Minister Samuel Santos said Nicaragua was making every effort to achieve the freedom of around 100 Nicaraguans who have been detained by the Honduran police for participating in the demonstrations supporting Zelaya. A spokesperson for the Honduran police said that there were 70 Nicaraguans who had been arrested in the Department of Choluteca and the rest had been arrested in other regions including ten in Tegucigalpa who the spokesperson said were encouraging

residents of poor neighborhoods to participate in the demonstrations.

On July 7, nine Nicaraguans were expelled from Honduras, accused by the coup government of working in support of the return of President Zelaya. They had been detained on July 3 without warrants and were interrogated by authorities. Several of the men had been working in Honduras for more than ten years. Others were travelling businessmen. They were told they could not return to Honduras.

Meanwhile, National Assembly

deputies of the Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC) on July 1 introduced in the Assembly a resolution that condemned Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez for his intervention in Central America “with the intention of installing totalitarian regimes that deny democratic freedoms and practices among our peoples.” The resolution denounced “the ambitions to continue in office that ‘Chavism’ promotes in his [Chavez] disciples who try to change the constitutions of the region in violation of democratic principles.” It did not appear that the resolution was going to garner wider support.

Zelaya had said in Managua on July 13 that if the new phase of mediation in San Jose, Costa Rica, made no progress in restoring constitutional order in his country, he would turn toward “other measures.” When reporters asked what those other measures might include, Zelaya read an article from the Constitution of Honduras which stated that no one owed obedience to a “usurper government” and that “the people have the

See Honduras, p. 11.

Honduras, from p. 10.

right to resort to insurrection in defense of constitutional order.”

Zelaya read an ultimatum in which he denounced the violence against the people carried out by the coup government of Micheletti and thanked President Arias for his mediation. He said the mediation is taking place on the premise that the coup government “must restore constitutional order and guarantee the immediate, safe and unconditional return of your servant the constitutional President of the Republic.” He said that he would not meet personally with Micheletti.

Travel between Nicaragua and El Salvador has been affected by the coup. Each bus that makes the trip must now pay US\$50 for an official of the Honduran authorities to accompany the vehicle, making sure that no one gets off inside Honduran territory. Control is particularly strict for Nicaraguan travelers who must have their pictures taken at the border as well as provide copies of their identification cards. Sixteen Nicaraguan construction workers who were working on an international bridge in El Salvador were detained by Honduran authorities. Money changers, pedicab drivers, and others who earn their livelihoods at the border all complained of a drastic slowdown in business.

On July 18, Adolfo Zepeda, spokesman for the Nicaraguan Army, denied rumors that 500 Venezuelan troops had landed at Managua’s international airport. Zepeda said that for foreign troops to enter the country, the National Assembly must first approve their arrival. He called the rumor part of a psychological game being played by the coup government.

The Alliance for Global Justice, which Nicaragua Network is part of, got to work on Sunday, July 28 to mobilize opposition to the coup in the U.S. We got out the first action alert to activists in the US that same day and have issued five alerts since then. Check our web page at www.nicanet.org for new alerts on the Honduran coup and other issues.



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

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.



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

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 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

See Month in Review, p. 12.

Month, from p. 11.

Aguerri, 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, 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



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

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 loses 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.”