

In latest election, Nicaraguans decisively reject attempted U.S. subversion

written by Scott Scheffer
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Sandinista supporters awaiting election results in Leon, Nicaragua, Nov. 7.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) won big in Nicaragua's municipal elections on Nov. 6. The party won every mayoral race nationwide with 73% of voters turning out. The high turnout was in spite of a call by right-wing opposition parties calling for a boycott.

In 1979, the Sandinista guerrillas finally drove out the last dictator of the 42-year-old Somoza dynasty. The reign of the Somozas began with the first of them executing Nicaragua's greatest hero - Augusto Sandino.

During their decades of control, the Somozas amassed incredible riches. It was only their close relationship with and protection offered by the U.S. and the sheer brutality inflicted on peoples' resistance that kept them in power.

But the years of repression, and the invasion and occupation by U.S. Marines in the early 20th century on behalf of U.S. agribusiness - Dole in particular - were etched in the consciousness of 3 million Nicaraguan people and formed the basis of support for the revolutionary Sandinistas.

After Somoza's thugs assassinated a liberal newspaper editor in January 1979, a general strike shut down 80% of all businesses. Protests became more frequent. In the weeks preceding the Sandinista's revolutionary overthrow of Somoza, the streets were already filled with tens of thousands of people thirsting for liberation.

The Somozas' National Guard had killed some 30,000 people over the years and impoverished most of the population. The Sandinistas inherited a country with 500,000 people homeless, and with the exception of Managua and a handful of smaller cities, a largely agricultural and desperately poor population.

Upon victory, President Daniel Ortega and the FSLN enacted important reforms that deepened their support. They nationalized banks and insurance companies, placed import and export of food under government control, and attempted to improve the

lives of poor people with a series of programs.

Under Somoza, some 70% of land was farmed by a handful of rich landowners who primarily exported food to the U.S. The Sandinistas distributed unused land to impoverished agricultural workers and formed agricultural cooperatives and state-owned farms to begin the eradication of rural poverty.

The Sandinista government provided medical care to tens of thousands who had never seen a doctor in their lives. They successfully ended polio and other diseases. They launched a literacy program modeled after Cuba's that reduced illiteracy by nearly 40% and earned the UNESCO Literacy Award.

U.S. launches Contra War

Those reforms also earned them the wrath of the White House. The Reagan administration opened up a brutal campaign to recapture Nicaragua and halt the momentum for liberation that was spreading in Central America. Reagan imposed sanctions that prohibited all trade between the U.S. and Nicaragua, and armed and funded the so-called Contra War.

President Jimmy Carter had already authorized CIA funding of the anti-Sandinista opposition, paving the way for Reagan's escalation. Reagan's White House organized Somoza's former National Guard members that had been roused by the Sandinistas, as well as other right-wing forces from the region, in an illegal and bloody war.

The Contras murdered tens of thousands of Nicaraguans. The Contra War was illegal according to the Boland Amendment, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1984, and Reagan's regime claimed that it was being wound down.

But in 1985, the Sandinistas shot down a plane piloted by Eugene Hasenfus, who was flying arms shipments to the Contras for the CIA. Facing a 30-year prison sentence, Hasenfus opted to sing like a canary to earn leniency. Ortega's

government released Hasenfus after revealing the depth of the CIA's continued war against them.

The terrible war and the sanctions, the global setbacks to the socialist camp, and perhaps yet-to-be-revealed election sabotage, led to the election of neoliberal Violetta Chamorro as president in 1990. Even after taking back the presidential palace, the U.S. and its proxies did not attempt to take back all of the progressive measures put in place during the first wave of Sandinista power, out of fear of reigniting the liberation struggle.

In the 2006 elections, the FSLN retook the presidency, and since then, each municipal election has given them a higher vote than the previous one. In spite of all manner of U.S. sabotage, the uplifting of the poor, the spread of medical care, the provision of housing to the homeless and continued efforts to end illiteracy by the Sandinista government, has built unshakable support.

In 2018, an attempted coup against the FSLN failed. The U.S. State Department narrative claims that this was due to severe repression, and that all electoral opposition figures were jailed, which paved the way for the FSLN victory this month. The reality is that the forces behind the months of violence were well-funded by the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy and were only the latest iteration of the desires of U.S. imperialism to turn back the clock.

Taking funds from an enemy country is a high crime all over the world. Nicaraguans have now expressed their overwhelming rejection of the aims of the 2018 "uprising" and their continued hunger for sovereignty and economic justice.

Solidarity with Nicaragua! Long live the spirit of Augusto Sandino!

