

# Moscow and Managua

The Pentagon and the CIA understand, even if many in the Nicaraguan “solidarity” milieu do not, that there is an intimate connection between the continued survival of the property relations established by the Bolshevik Revolution and the struggle against imperialist rule in Latin America. The Sandinistas are heavily dependent on Moscow to withstand Washington’s economic, political, and surrogate military attacks. But this does not mean that the bureaucrats in the Kremlin have suddenly been transformed into agents of world revolution, as the Reaganites imagine. Soviet foreign policy in Central America, as everywhere else, is ultimately determined by the exigencies of the Stalinists’ program of “socialism in one country” and the futile quest for permanent “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism.

The fact that the imperialists are not prepared to “coexist” with the degenerated product of a social revolution which removed one-sixth of the globe from their control gives Soviet foreign policy a sometimes contradictory character. Nicaragua is a case in point. The FSLN’s bourgeois “friends” from Stockholm to Mexico City share a common interest in maintaining Latin America as a field for capitalist exploitation. The Soviets, however, have no economic reason to oppose the extension of nationalized property forms in the region. This is a significant distinction.

While refusing repeated Nicaraguan requests for the jet fighters necessary to interdict the CIA’s contra supply runs, the USSR has doled out enough aid to keep the Nicaraguan regime afloat. The Soviet bloc provides most of Nicaragua’s foreign credits; 95 percent of its oil and practically all of its military supplies. In all, Soviet bloc aid is estimated to constitute “around one-third of Nicaragua’s gross annual income” (*Manchester Guardian Weekly* 31 July). This is not out of internationalist principles; Moscow calculates that an easy win for the White House in Nicaragua would only whet the imperialists’ appetite for further “rollbacks” and damage Soviet credibility internationally.

Many of the FSLN’s leftist sympathizers hope that the comandantes in Managua will eventually follow in the footsteps of the Cuban Fidelistas who, after 18 months of trying to reach a *modus vivendi* with imperialism, moved decisively against the bourgeoisie in the fall of 1960. The Sandinistas are not yet prepared to roll over and play dead, but the FSLN is in a very different position today than the

July 26 movement was at the time it began the wholesale expropriation of the Cuban capitalists.

In the first place, the FSLN directorate has undermined the initial revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses with its “strategy” of squeezing the workers and poor peasants in order to subsidize the domestic bourgeoisie’s destruction of Nicaragua’s national economy. The resulting economic collapse has vastly strengthened the counterrevolution. Secondly, the comandantes are caught between the intransigence of the U.S., and the refusal of the Soviets to permanently underwrite another Latin American dependency. As Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega put it in a speech he delivered on 14 June: “For geopolitical reasons, we have not taken profound steps like those taken in Cuba, where private property has been abolished.... We cannot think of abolishing private property.” Whereas Khrushchev backed Castro at every step against Eisenhower and Dulles, Gorbachev and his predecessors have pressured the FSLN to avoid acting as a “destabilizing” factor in the region and to make peace with U.S. imperialism.

At the December 1987 summit with Reagan in Washington, Gorbachev proposed to include Nicaragua on the list of regional conflicts to be “resolved.” Thus the Soviet leader signalled the Kremlin’s willingness to bury the Nicaraguan revolution in pursuit of the chimera of global “detente.” But like his predecessors, Gorbachev has thus far been unwilling to trade the Sandinistas for nothing—which is all the Reaganites have offered.