CHAPTER – VIII

THE U.S. POLICY THRUSTS IN NICARAGUA AFTER THE FALL OF

SOMOZA’S DYNASTIC RULE

Nicaragua is the largest of the Central American nations with an area of 57,143 square miles. It is stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific and adjoins El Salvador. Nicaragua is bordered to the north by Honduras and to the South by Costa Rica.

It is well known that war and revolution are nothing new to Central America. On July 19, 1979, the Sandinista movement after 19 month old civil war in Nicaragua overthrew the entrenched 46-year reign of the Somoza dictatorship and established a 'socialist-oriented' revolutionary government in Nicaragua.1 Obviously, the U.S. immediately recognised new regime as a left-wing dictatorship.

1. During civil war, Nicaragua was a country in agony. Thousands died in the fierce fighting between Somoza and the Sandinistas. The fighting had involved virtually every city and town in the country. More than 3,00,000 people fled from the fighting. Some escaped into the countryside. In course of civil war, out of the total population of 2.3 million over 40,000 were killed, 80,000 were crippled and 40,000 children under 10 were made orphans. Nicaragua last a third of its gross product. See, S.I. Semyonor, Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Theory and Tactics of Revolutionary Parties, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965, p. 301.
Somoza fled to the U.S. into exile.² It was as if "a giant weight had been lifted of Nicaragua's back."³ The Somoza family had dominated and exploited Nicaragua to promote own family interests.

SOMOZA'S LEGACY OF GREED:

Somoza and his men looted $500 million from the country's banks, leaving Nicaragua with only $3.5 million in reserves and more than $600 million in foreign debt to be paid by the end of the year 1979.⁴

Tacho Somoza fled Nicaragua for his $1 million home-in-exile in Miami Beach.⁵ He had managed $20 million out of his $100 million fortune to stash outside the country. Most valuations of the dynasty's holdings were between $500 million and $1 billion, they included Nicaragua's national airline, Lanica, its major shipping company, the Mamenic Line, perhaps 25 percent

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² The U.S. has often supported right-wing dictatorships. In the same year right wing dictator and a friend of U.S., Shah Mohammed Raza Pahlavi of Iran was swept into exile by largely home grown revolution.

³ Time, July 30, 1979, p. 20.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ However, later he went to Bahamas but after some time expelled from there. Then he turned up in Paraguay. In the past, Paraguay has provided hospitality to such celebrated exiles as Argentina's late dictator, Juan peron and Nazi death Doct°Josef Mengele.
Somoza empire grew from a modest beginning. When he seized power in 1973, Tacho's father Anastasio Somoza Garcia, had only a near bankrupt coffee farm to his name. Little by little, he added to his holdings. By the time of his assassination in 1956, Somoza Garcia was worth about $150 million.7

Thus, since General Anastasio Somoza, who set up a dictatorship in Nicaragua just three years after the evaluation of the United States marines in 1933, the family had gradually accumulated vast commercial and agricultural holdings and consequently made the somozas one of the wealthiest families in the Americas.8

THE HISTORY OF THE SANDINISTA MOVEMENT:

The Sandinista movement gradually emerged from the social and economic injustice in Nicaraguan society. Nicaragua's underprivileged workers and peasants were organised in 1926

6. Time, August 6, 1979, p. 41.
7. Ibid.
8. There was striking parallels between the revolution in Cuba and in Nicaragua. The FSLN's slogan, FREE THE FATHERLAND OR DIE, was the battle cry of Nicaragua's legendary rebel leader of the 1930's Augusto Sandino. It had inspired the Castroite catch phrase, FATHERLAND OR DEATH. See, Time, July 30, 1979, p. 20.
under Augusto Cesar Sandino, a legendary nationalist guerrilla. Under his assassination in 1934 on the order of Somoza's father, Sandino led a great struggle fighting in the mountains and occupying several parts of the state, but Sandino's movement virtually disappeared after his death. The struggle was lifted up again in 1962 by Carlos Fonseca Amador, a Cuban trained guerrilla, who formed the Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN), with the main object of overthrowing the Somoza government. This was attained after a protracted guerrilla war lasting 18 years. However Nicaragua's embattled President General Anastasio Somoza Debayle tried hard to get US. support but couldn't sustain it.

9. He was stain by Somoza's troops in 1977.

10. Within the FSLN, three main factions emerged from the infighting. Of these, two make no apology for being unbashedly Marxist. But the third and largest group, known as the "Terceristas" (Insurrectionists), is composed of socialist, Roman Catholic liberals, trade unionist and even a few businessman.

Financed by socialists in Europe and South America, the "Terceristas" staged the most spectacular Sandinista operations including brief take over of the National Palace in Managua in 1978. The best known 'Tercerista' is Eden Pastora, the Commandante Cero (Zero) who led that raid. More influential are the Ortega brothers, Humberto and Daniel, who represented the 'Terceristas' on the nine-man sandinista National Directorate. Daniel Ortega later became the President of Nicaragua. For further details, see, "Who Are the Sandinistas," Time, July 2, 1979, p. 23.

11. Since 1934, the Sandinista's ranks had swelled in 1979 to 3,000 or so battle hardened fighters armed with an assortment of modern weapons.
SOMOZA LOST US. SUPPORT:

General Somoza, fighting the last battle with the Sandinistas, made appeal for the US to 'pay back the help we gave in the cold war," referring to the launching areas that Nicaragua provided for the illfated Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Instead, Secretary of state, Cyrus Vance urged the OAS to bring about 'the replacement of the present government with a transitional government of national reconciliation that would be a clear break with the past." He further proposed in his six point plan that the OAS dispatch a peace keeping force, which might include some US troops, to restore order to the divided country. Vance's plan also included a cessation of all arms shipments to both somoza forces and the rebels, and a major international relief and reconstruction efforts. 12

Mr. Vance's plan was aimed in part at preventing the creation of a Cuban-style communist government in Nicaragua. Mr. Vance even declared,"There is mounting evidence of involvement by Cuba and others in the internal problems of Nicaragua." In response, Cuba accused the US of "pressuring several Latin American diplomatic representatives to come to an agreement in the OAS that would facilitate a military

12. Time, July 2, 1979, p. 28.
The US plan was attacked by other OAS members. Some feared that this might create a precedent for future intervention in their own affairs.14

Thus, there was a growing recognition in Washington that the civil war in Nicaragua could not be stopped as long as Somoza would reign.

THE SOMOZA REGIME EXPERIENCED GRADUAL DIPLOMATIC ISOLATION:

Somoza's gradual diplomatic isolation as well as his deteriorating military position led his regime to complete collapse. The first setback came when the Andean Group – Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and Venezuela – abandoned its efforts in July to negotiate a truce in the pre-revolution civil war. The five countries declared that a state of beligerency existed in Nicaragua and that they considered the Sandinistas to be "a legitimate army". Significantly, the declaration

13. Ibid.
14. Nicaraguan past two is the history of US interventions. The US Administration consistently regarded its legitimate right to intervene in Latin America as and when it so desired. Since 1909, the United States has tried hard to install a loyal government in Nicaragua. For this purpose, the US intervened in 1909 to establish a government of conservative oligarchs in the country, following a secret note it sent to the Nicaraguan government informing it of the invocation of American right to intervene these as and when they so desired. In 1914, the US secretary of state Brian imposed the Chomorrow – Brian Treaty which virtually mortgaged Nicaraguan sovereignty to the United States. Notably, Nicaragua was used by the US to intervene in Costa Rica in 1948. In 1954, the US mercenaries used Nicaraguan territory to bring down the government of Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala. Again in 1965, Nicaragua was used as a base to train counter-revolutionaries to destabilize Castro regime in Cuba.
was designed to allow the group to supply arms to the rebels without violating international laws against intervention in the internal affairs of another country. It also brought them one step closer toward outright recognition of the five-member" temporary government' of Sandinistas and moderate anti-Somoza leaders named by the rebels in June 1979.15

At first, Somoza stalled apparently hoping that his powerfully armed 12,000 member national guard might still sever the tide of battle... He even rejected U.S. attempts to persuade him to make modest reforms. But in mid-July, 'he realised that further resistance was futile. He agreed, after complicated negotiations between his decaying regime, the US and the five men anti-Somoza junta, to the rebel junta's plan for turning over power to the new regime. Thus, ended, ingloriously, the 46-year reign of the Somoza dynasty.16

SOMOZA'S OFFICERS PLANNED THEIR GATEWAYS:

Significantly, Somoza placed all his high ranking "Guardia" officers with 30 years or more service on the retirement list, particularly anticipating his certain downfall. That step allowed them to immediately abandon their commands and seek refuge in the U.S. or Elsewhere in Latin America. Finally, they were called into a post-

midnight session. They unanimously accepted Somoza's resignation and conferred the former Health Minister Francisco Urcuyo Maliano, symbolic of the presidency.17

MALIANO'S SHORTLIVED POWER PLAY AND THE US RESPONSE:

In Managua, Urcuyo started friend and foe alike by delivering a belligerent speech in which he vowed to complete the remaining two years of Somoza's term. In his instructions, newly appointed "Guardia" Commander Frederico Mejia Gonzales ordered his troops to "redouble your efforts in the current fight".18

Urcuyo's unexpected power play set off tremors in Washington, State Department officials feared that the tenuous relations they had established with the junta would be destroyed if the transition did not take place on schedule. Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher warned that if Urcuyo could not be persuaded to step down immediately, Somoza would no longer be welcome in the US. Somoza telephoned Urcuyo and ordered him to go along with the transition plan. Urcuyo realized that his scheme had been a big mistake. Soon, he flew to Guatemala and asked for asylum. By the time, the rebel government arrived in Managua,

resistance had evaporated.

US DILEMMA AND THE RIGHT WING DICTATORSHIP:

The sudden and ignominious Collapse of the Somoza dynasty along with Pahlavi's in Iran came as a shock to Americans. The spectacles in Nicaragua did not fit the pattern that Americans have grown used to in watching the rise and fall of client dictators. Far from propping up the Somoza as the US had so often been accused of doing, the Carter Administration seemed to be helping topple them or at least undermining them with criticism of their human rights abuses.

KISSINGER CRITICISED THE ADMINISTRATION:

Henry Kissinger viewed that the Administration's campaign of proselytizing for democracy in Nicaragua aggravated

19. The experience for Americans in Iran and Nicaragua raised troubling questions. How can the US determine which dictatorships are relatively stable and which are unstable or transitory, and how should the U.S. deal with them? Few Americans have ever felt entirely comfortable with their government's support for clearly and often cruelly undemocratic regime. When an old Fascist like Spain's Francisco Franco died in 1975 or when the junta of Greek colonels self-destructed in 1974 by instigating an abortive coup in Cyprus, the US reacted with general relief. Still the world is full of dictatorships, the US has to deal with most of them, and simply condemning them on moral grounds is not a policy.

Since the height of cold war, the US policymakers have been saying of one right wing despot or another, as Franklin Roosevelt is supposed to have said of Somoza's dictatorial father "Tacho" in the late 1930s. He may be a son of a bitch, but he is our son of a bitch." See, Time, September 24, 1979, p. 14.

the crises in the country. In an interview with TIME, he told, "I'm convinced that trying to bludgeon societies into behaviour analogous to our own either will lead to a deadlock and American irrelevance, or it will lead to the collapse of existing authority without a substitute compatible with our values and, therefore, the emergence of a radical outcome, as in Iran and Nicaragua. When we begin overthrowing a government, as indirectly we did in Nicaragua, we should either have an idea of what we are going to put in its place, or we should think through the foreign policy consequences if the radical alternative takes over. If there is no moderate alternative and our choice is between the status-quo and the radicals, it is a serious question whether the radicals are more in our long-term interest than the status-quo." 21

THE ADMINISTRATION DENIED THE ALLEGATIONS:

However, Carter Administration officials vehemently reject Kissinger's complaint that they overthrew Somoza. They claimed that the Sandinistas did that themselves. All the US did was to administer coup-de-grace in order to end the civil war. To preserve the status-quo in Nicaragua would probably have required direct military intervention. 22 Nevertheless, it can be safely concluded that the Sandinista revolutionaries left American prestige and strategic interests far more badly damaged.

21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
In spite of new regime's anti-US rhetoric both the countries were conscious enough in formulating their foreign policy in order to deal the new era inaugurated by Nicaragua in the region.

MUTUAL PRESUMPTIONS:

Initially, Nicaragua's new revolutionary government - the Government of National Reconstruction - believed that a cordial relationship with the U.S. might greatly aid the rebuilding of his country. Though it frequently indulged in anti-American rhetoric, the junta proved flexible enough to allay most of Washington's fears. On the other, Washington did hope that the new government's need for assistance in rebuilding its shattered society will keep the junta on a moderate course.  

The Nicaraguan junta appointed a 15-member cabinet dominated by moderates, which satisfied American insistence that the new regime should represent all shades of Nicaraguan political opinion. The junta also promised elections, and an economy based on a mixture of private and government enterprise. However, the new regime's programme which included the confiscation of Somoza's property and independent foreign policy, has also raised American hackles.


24. Ibid.
NEW REGIME'S FOREIGN POLICY MOVES:

The junta's foreign policy moves were also worrisome for Washington. In the first official visit by members of the junta to another country, Alfonso Robles collejas and Moises Hassan led a delegation of 23 guerrillas to Cuba. Fidel Castro was celebrating the 26th anniversary of his assault on Havana's Moncado barracks. Repaying the Palestine Liberation Organisation for the arms and other support it provided during the Sandinistas' final offensive, the new Nicaraguan government announced that it would seek a 'close relationship' with Arab countries. It would also cancel the country's $5.1 million debt to Israel and Argentina for arms purchased by Somoza.25

NEW JUNTA'S INTERNAL AND NATIONALISATION POLICY:

In addition, the junta decreed that Somoza's name would be effaced from public buildings and that a legal campaign to extradite him from the US would begin. The government also nationalised 51 companies owned by the mustachioed ex-dictator or makers of his family. The junta also nationalised Nicaragua's banks and placed limits on the operation of foreign banks.26 The junta also established the peasant-owned agricultural collectives on the more than 1 million acres, roughly two-thirds of the country's best farm land that have been expropriated

Nicaragua's new regime lifted censorship and permitted long-silenced newspapers like the stridently anti-Somoza "La Prensa". A 52-article provisional constitution was also announced in the last week of August 1979, containing guarantees of equal justice under law, the abolition of torture and capital punishment, and the right to free expression.

Significantly, the Nicaraguan junta also agreed to provide "safe conduct" for any Somoza henchmen who wished to leave Nicaragua, only those charged with "grave crimes" or "genocide" would not be covered by that promise. To back up that guarantee, the new regime also agreed to a proposal originated by Washington's especial envoy, William Bowdler, that the organisation of American States would be invited to monitor the protection of human rights. Satisfied with the junta's promises, the Carter Administration pledged to support the new regime. Significantly, President Carter, at his Washington press conference, stated that it was a mistake for Americans to assume that every abrupt change in the hemisphere is somehow the outcome of "secret massive Cuban intervention". As for the future, he said, "We will use our efforts in a proper fashion without interventionism to let the Nicaraguans let

their voice be head in shaping their own affairs. The Administration also assured to give full and thorough consideration to the Nicaraguan request for acquisition of modern US weapons to replace the outmoded arms the sandinistes used to topple Somoza's regime.

Thus, the Carter Administration began to apply a new foreign policy toward Nicaragua, hoping it could prevent another Cuba by accommodating and moderating the new regime.

OBJECTIVE OF THE CARTER POLICY OF CO-OPERATION AND TOLERANCE:

The Carter Administration believed that the US could afford to be flexible and patient with Nicaragua, given its continued predominance in the region, the moderating influence of the regional powers and Western European countries, and the inevitable Nicaraguan interest in economic relations with the US. It decided to aid and abet private enterprise and moderate political sectors, and to avoid acting in a manner which would strengthen the position of the more radical and anti-American elements.  

The US Administration presumed that the US economic aid to Nicaragua would encourage the regime not to turn to Cuba and the Soviet Bloc, and help to avoid any apparent or politically presented need for an explicit choice to be made.

29. Time, August 6, 1979, p.40.
made between East and West. At the same time, the Administration also pointed out that it would be understanding of the Sandinistas revolutionary and anti-imperialistic rhetoric, however irritating, and give them both time and incentives to settle down. The Administration believed that if successful such a policy would have not only preventive but positive benefits for the US.\textsuperscript{31} Significantly the US Administration agreed, "If Nicaragua can make it along democratic lines, other lands needing change from right wing tyranny will see that the alternative need not be left-wing tyranny.' Any failure to provide the promised US assistance would create danger of being 'lost' Nicaragua and 'concede the game to the Soviets, the Cubans and their surrogates.'\textsuperscript{32}

Thus, the US and Nicaragua endeavoured to overcome suspicious. The US gave $ 62.6 million loans, food aid and grants to Nicaragua during the new Government's first year. A further shipment of 75 million aid package cleared through congress in February 1980.\textsuperscript{33} But, gradually, the US Administration tried to utilise the aid package in order to gain diplomatic support from Nicaragua in international affairs.

U.S. CONDITIONAL AID AND NICARAGUA'S RESPONSE:

The US administration signalled that the prospects of aid would be improved if Nicaraguan voted to censure the

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{33} Edward Best, op. cit., p. 20.
Soviet Union over Afghanistan. This naturally provoked an angry Nicaraguan response.

It was the time when the Nicaraguan regime was seeking new sources so that it could neutralise its dependence on the US. In March 1980, Nicaraguan delegation, for instance, went to the Soviet Bloc in search of economic aid. In May 1980, the FSLN acknowledged the presence of a small group of Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua.

CARTER CERTIFICATION ON NICARAGUA:

The Carter Administration, even then, certified in September 1980 that Nicaragua was not exporting revolution to her neighbours. By January 1981, Nicaragua had received some $118 million in US aid. However, it was believed that the aid's effect was somewhat spoilt by its delay and conditionality. The US aid, of course, was clearly intended to prevent increased Cuban and the Soviet influence. For most Sandinistas, however, relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union were seen ideally less as an alternative than as an addition to relations with the US, and the West in general.

NICARAGUA'S THRUST FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIVERSIFICATION:

Significantly, the March 1980 visit of Nicaraguan delegation to Moscow was not only motivated for economic need, and a desire to obtain less conditional aid, but positive interest in economic and political diversification. Moreover,

34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid., p. 21.
given the US long support for Somoza, its final interventionist efforts, and the strong opposition in the US to Carter's policy, the FSLN never entirely overcome suspicions of the US, nor fears that relations would turn sour, aid be suspended or their regime eventually be attacked.  

Finally, the Nicaraguan refusal to condemn the Soviet 'invasion' of Afghanistan upset the US Administration. Significantly, many advisers to the FSLN urged Nicaragua to vote condemning the soviet presence in Afghanistan in the United Nations otherwise it would unnecessarily provoke the US at this difficult juncture. Some FSLN leaders, however, in any case irked by US suggestions as to how they should vote, seem to have preferred to vote against condemnation, on the grounds that they needed to be sure of soviet support in order to defend the revolution against any eventual onslaught of American imperialism. The result was Nicaraguan abstention in UN. The FSLN claims to have adopted a 'non-aligned' position.  

Here it is important to note that the US attitude toward Cuban-style non-alignment was hardened by the discovery of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba immediately before the Non-Aligned meeting in Havana in September 1979. In the same  

37. Ibid.  

38. Of the 112 votes in the 34 the Session of the General Assembly in which Nicaragua participated, it voted against the USSR on 25 occasions, but against Cuba on only 4. Notably, Cuba was then leader of the Non Aligned Movement. See, Edward Best, ... op. cit., p. 21.
meeting, the leader of the Nicaraguan Junta Daniel Ortega, made a speech vehemently denouncing US 'expansionist' policy. 39

ALARMING REPUBLICAN'S POSTURE:

In this course, the coming months added antagonism in the relations between Nicaragua and United States. The Nicaraguans were alarmed by the statements issued at July 1980 Republican Party platform. 40 Nicaragua was equally alarmed by the conservative suggestions to the coming Reagan Administration that the remnants of Somoza's National Guard in Honduras could be made into a genuine fighting force against the Nicaragua's new revolutionary regime as the only viable alternative to achieve US goal in Nicaragua. 41

In fact, Republican's rhetoric convinced most Sandinistas that the Reagan Administration would be committed to their downfall. While the Americans claimed that Nicaragua's own anti-US rhetoric, together with various military and diplomatic moves, towards the Left, served to provoke and strengthen the conviction of the Americas. Almost all the elements for a serious escalation of suspicious and tensions were in place before Reagan's inauguration. 42 Sandinistas fears and suspicious

39. Edward Best, .... op. cit, p. 22.
40. Ibid., p. 51.
42. Edward Best, ....op. cit, p. 51.
reached a new level with the election in November 1980 of Ronald Reagan, where ideological hostility was unmistakable. He had the belief that the policy of cooperation and tolerance couldn't be followed. 43

THE CAUSES OF NICARAGUAN DRIFT TOWARDS SOVIET BLOC:

The increasing distrust towards the US policy was exposed by the Defense Minister of Nicaragua Humberto Ortega, when according to him, the FSLN faced after its victory in 1979 the probability that they would be surrounded by neighbours who were opposed to their political philosophy.... and.... a concern over internal security to protect their revolution. The Nicaraguans turned to the Soviet Bloc and Cuba 'chiefly because of ideological agreement and low cost weaponry' but also because of distrust of the US. Defense was seen to require expansion of regular forces to between 20,000 and 40,000, with a much larger popular militia, and also given the relative strengthen of the Hondwan Air Force, the establishment of air defences. 44

Nicaragua, factually, feels threatened by Honduras. The group responsible for much of the military action was the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (F.D.N.) led by Jose Francisco Cordenal Telleria, a civil engineer, which claimed to have 2,000 armed men who make regular incursions into Nicaragua.

43. Ibid., p. 22.
44. Edward L. King, Analysis of Military Situation in Nicaragua Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Boston, April 1985, pp 5-6; quoted in Edward Best,..... op. cit., p. 51.
from their sanctuaries in Honduras.\footnote{Time, August 2, 1982, p. 14.}

MILITARY STRENGTH OF REGIONAL STATES:

Honduras, in early 1981, had regular forces of 11200 and paramilitary forces of 300, with about 17 Scorpion reconnaissance vehicles equipped with 76 mm guns, and 27 fighter planes. Guatemala had total armed forces of some 18000 while El Salvador some 17000. Nicaragua's regular army was estimated at 6700, with 8000 paramilitary troops. Nicaragua was believed to have three PT-26 light Soviet tanks.\footnote{The Military Balance 1981-82, llSS, London, 1981.}

Obviously, Nicaragua's military strength couldn't be regarded as a threat to neighbouring states. The military ties, therefore, being established with Cuba and the Soviet Bloc was largely conceived as a defensive precaution.\footnote{Edward Best, \ldots\ldotsop. cit., p. 52.} While, the US government believed that Nicaragua was serving as a conduit for arms to Salvador insurgents. The US claim was also meant to remind the sandinista's past relations with the Salvador guerrillas who provided major support to the former when they were fighting Somozas.

NICARAGUAN LINKS WITH SALVADOREAN REBELS:

The US Administration charged that Nicaraguan government provided active assistance to pre-emptive final offensive of the FDR-FMLN in El Salvador. However, the Sandinista leaders
held the opinion that Reagan Administration was engaged in seeking subversion in Nicaragua, therefore, El Salvador issue would not be in fact determinant in the bilateral development of relations with the United States.

Significantly, the El Salvador regime did not then enjoy much internal and international legitimacy, while the left in El Salvador expected and desired the same broad support as the anti-Somoza forces had in Nicaragua. The US Administration could'nt be convinced by Sandinista's assurances that they were not providing material support to Salvadorean rebels. The Americans regarded it a breach of promise. For Reagan Administration, it was confirmation of the new regime's"unacceptable behaviour", and for some, of its" unacceptable nature." 48

SALVADOREAN CONFLICT - MILITARILY AN UNWINNABLE WAR :

The US government remained firm on the issue of support for the FMLN by Nicaragua. Moreover, the continuing failure of the Salvadorean rebel's offensive and the hostile attitude of the Reagan Administration had led to serious concern among the Sandinistas, to the realisation that the Salvadorean conflict could'nt be won militarily, and to the desire to prevent that conflict from jeopardising their own survival. 49

Obviously, Nicaragua has been aware of the US interest in the

48. Ibid., p. 53.
49. Ibid.
region and seemed prepared to accept legitimate American interests in Central America.

STATE DEPARTMENT CONFIRMED NICARAGUAN RESPONSE TO US CONCERNS:

The State Department declared that the Nicaraguan regime responded to US demands with positive assertions that 'they understood US concerns about El Salvador, would not "risk the revolution for an uncertain victory in El Salvador", and had taken a firm decision not to permit Nicaraguan territory to be used for transiting arms to El Salvador'. The State Department further claimed that intelligence reports showed that arms shipment "through established routes, particularly by air, from Nicaragua to El Salvador had slowed if not stopped, but that other routes were being sought ...... the FSLN was engaged in continuing supply efforts as well as accumulating in Nicaraguan arms for the FMLN.\(^{50}\)

REMAINING CARTER'S AID PACKAGE SUSPENDED:

The Reagan Administration, in fact, gradually felt that it could no longer certify that Nicaragua was not engaged in support for insurrection in the other states\(^{51}\); disbursement of the remaining $ 15 million of Carter's aid package was formally suspended on April 1, 1981.\(^{52}\)

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51. Ibid.

52. Edward Best, .......op. cit., p. 53.
FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE U.S. AND NICARAGUAN POLICY WITH REGARD TO EL SALVADOR:

The policy of the United States and Nicaragua had fundamental difference with regard to rightist regime and its counterpart in El Salvador. The US wanted nothing less than the surrender of the guerrillas. The Sandinistas also had judged their incapability to win an outright victory, but they saw their access to power in El Salvador, through a negotiated settlement as being in Nicaragua's interests.  

An direct defeat of Salvadorean rebels was seen in Managua as a positive setback and a potential threat to Nicaraguan borders in future. The Nicaraguans were equally certain about the US response if they cut their ties with the Salvadorean left. Whereas Nicaraguan assistance for Salvadorean insurgents was for the US a simple wrong which should ideally be stopped. While, the sandinistas regarded their support to the rebels, fighting against a repressive regime in El Salvador, as an act of moral rectitude which should be compromised only in exchange for some concession by the US. U.S. economic aid moreover, did not seem to them so much an act of exceptional generosity and political goodwill as the duty of a rich nation to a poor one, and a particular moral obligation on the part of the country which had given them decades of dictatorship.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.
It would also have been politically difficult for the Sandinistas fully and openly to divorce themselves from the FDR-FMLN in El Salvador in the hope of continuing to receive US aid, and thus appear to bow to 'imperialist' demands. Even if they had done that, however, it was/is not certain that alone would have led to a continuation of aid, or prevented, subsequent tensions. 55

Although, the Salvadorean issue was more than a pretext for hostility, it was certainly not the only issue on which the Administration wanted change before it could live with Nicaragua in peace and confidence. To have reached what would have constituted a positive agreement with the Sandinistas based only on cassation of support for the Salvadorean guerrillas would have been to surrender US leverage on other issues such as military force levels and ties to Cuba and the Soviet Bloc. 56

Moreover, the Reagan Administration had come into office on a platform of opposition to aid to Nicaragua and to the Nicaraguan regime itself armed criticism that it was formulating a policy of unreasoning confrontation. Nevertheless, few crucial opportunities to avoid confrontation was certainly missed, thus increasing mutual distrust, and leaving both sides with the feeling that the other side had failed to respond and was not interested in serious negotiation. 57

55. Ibid. p. 54.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
ATTEMPTS FOR NEGOTIATIONS:

The US Assistant Secretary of State, Thomas Enders paid a visit to Managua in August 1981, specifically at the request of outgoing Ambassador Pezzullo, and discussed with the Sandinistas on a compromise. The following concept was agreed in general terms:

- Managua would stop the flow of arms to El Salvador and limit its military build-up;

- While Washington would not permit training of anti-Sandinistas in the U.S. and would give assurances that it would not attempt to overthrow the Nicaraguan regime\textsuperscript{58}. Pezzullo himself stated "They said they could see our interests. We could see their concern about security."\textsuperscript{59}

OBSTACLES IN MANAGUA TALKS:

However, during Managua talks, two sorts of persistent obstacles to negotiation were evident—first, the Sandinistas

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.

made clear that internal politics were not negotiable. Second, Ender's demand for a complete end to Nicaraguan support for the Salvadorean rebels was perceived as a precondition for sincere dialogue. In US perceptions, a unilateral end to sud unjustified act did not necessarily seem unreasonable. But, the Sandinistas wanted it to be a part of a broader bilateral agreement. Moreover, those things which the US would agree not to do on its own part i.e. particularly to overthrow them and to some extent to deprive them of economic aid, could seem to the Sandinistas to warrant unilateral ends, as unjustified acts, as much as anything they were doing 60.

DRAFT DECLARATIONS BY THE U.S.:

The US Administration sent a draft declaration on 8 September, 1981, unilaterally promising vigorous enforcement of US neutrality laws concerning Nicaraguan exiles. 61 Enders also sent a draft, on 16 September 1981, of a proposed joint declaration of non-intervention in Central America. The content of the proposal on security issues was communicated to the Nicaraguan Ambassador. In addition, it asked that Nicaragua should freeze acquisition of heavy weapons, return to the country of origin arms systems not possessed by other countries, 60. Edward Best, .... op. cit, p. 55.
61. Ibid.
limit its army to between 15000 and 17000 men and eventually reduce it to less than 10000 and put then under international supervision. 

The Nicaraguan attitude itself was also not encouraging regarding a negotiated settlement. The regime sharply reacted to a US-Honduran naval exercise designed in early October 1981. The Nicaragua also raised demands to close down the Florida training camps. Consequently, the negotiations were over by the end of October 1981.

"TOTALITARIAN TREND" IN NICARAGUA ? :

The Reagan Administration paid direct attention to Sandinista's material support for Salvadorean rebels, the military build-up in Nicaragua itself increasing the number of regular army strength upto 50000, the preparation and expansion of Existing air fields to receive Soviet MIG aircarfts, the training of Nicaraguan pilots in Bulgaria to fly MIG planes, the presence of Cuban military advisers estimated by the US to number over 1000, and growing political and economic ties with the Soviet Bloc. 

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63. Edward Best, ... op. cit., p. 56.
heading toward one party, totalitarian rule at home.

US Secretary of state Haig deploring totalitarian trend in Nicaraguan internal affairs, warned that the time was running short to prevent 'another Cuba' in Central America. Significantly he refused to rule out the possibility of US intervention to overthrow the Sandinistas. He indicated such action under the Rio Treaty, to the OAS in December 1981. He also reportedly asked the Pentagon to study military options in order to safeguard US interests in Nicaragua. "Haig also exposed that the Reagan Administration was placing the renewed attention on its Central American policy which was designed to put the current state of play into sharper focus."  

US CAUTIOUS PRESSURE ON NICARAGUAN REGIME:

The US policy was aimed at to pressurise Nicaraguan regime but On the other did not seem to be intended to

64. However, adverse domestic and international opinion, and an element of fear as to its possible encouragement of direct Soviet action in Poland, rendered almost impossible and direct US military Action against the Sandinistas.


provoke great domestic and international opposition. For, it could endanger support for policy in El Salvador, on which its attention was primarily focussed. A complete economic embargo, or anything stronger, would have been hard to justify and undeniably have pushed Nicaragua even closer to the Soviet Bloc. Instead the US began to work against Nicaraguan access to loans from international financial bodies.\footnote{67} Significantly, the US did not break diplomatic relations, but Ambassador Pezzullo was not replaced for seven months.\footnote{68}

C.I.A. PLANNED COVERT ACTION:

In addition, the CIA clandestine operation was chalked out to destabilise Nicaragua's popular revolutionary government. Though, it is not unusual for the CIA to launch covert operations and make attempts to throw out government that it does not like. Notably, the CIA had been pressing for covert activity to be stopped up to include support for armed anti-sandinista groups being trained by Argentines in Honduras;\footnote{69} a country which is next door to Nicaragua. It was already started organising lands of mercenaries and guiding them into Nicaragua. They were trained in Honduras. At an NSC meeting on November 16, 1981, President Reagan authorised a $19 million dollar CIA programme to build a popular opposition front to the Sandinistas, and to train a force, initially of 500-men, to

\footnote{67} The same policy, the US adopted against Allende in Chile.  
\footnote{68} Edward Best,\ldots\ldots. \textit{op. cit}, p. 56.  
\footnote{69} Ibid.
carry out political and paramilitary operations against the 'Cuban presence and Cuban-Sandinista support infrastructure in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America.'

PRESIDENTIAL FINDINGS ABOUT CIA PLAN:

Notably, President Reagan signed his own 'findings' on Dec. 1, 1981, a move considered in the national interest, authorising the CIA to contact dissidents in Nicaragua. A document known as a "scope paper" outlined permissible operations and their estimated cost. About the more in the House and the Senate Committees, varied concern were expressed about the possible risks.

It was believed that the main objective of these moves was aimed at the interdiction of the arms flow to El Salvador, combined with pressure on the Sandinistas to look inward rather than continue to 'export revolution' and then, to put pressure on them to negotiate seriously on the issues of concern to the US and Nicaragua's neighbours.

THE US AND THE ORIGIN OF ANTI-SANDINISTA FORCES:

However, the U.S. policy alone was not responsible for creating anti-Sandinista forces in Nicaragua. The somoza's

70. Ibid,
73. Edward Best,..... op. cit., p. 57.
National Guard had been active since 1979. Notably, they were to constitute the core of the military leadership of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FON) formed with a number of civilian opposition figures in 1982. Most of the Miskito Indians on the Atlantic Coast who joined armed anti-Government groups did so because of grievances with the Sandinistas.

MISKITO INDIANS TURNED AGAINST SANDINISTAS:

The tensions between the Miskitos, peaceful independent Indians who only recently were among the Sandinista's friends, and the Sandinistas has been growing in the past. After the Sandinista came to power in 1979, they initiated ambitious reform programmes to improve conditions of health care and literacy among the Miskitos, Sandinista volunteers and Cuban cares made some headway, but the Indians soon bridled at the accompanying ideology and the fact that literacy classes were initially held only in Spanish. Disgruntled Miskito leaders quickly became a nuisance for the Sandinistas. Suspecting growing separatist sentiments among them, Sandinista forces began an offensive against them. The offensive was the regime's concerted military effort to neutralise the Miskito minority which makes up some 4 percent of Nicaragua's population of 2.7 million and occupies most of the country's vulnerable northeast region. The Sandinista has fear that the porous Honduras border, and the 336 mile Caribbean Coastline, might eventually be used as a staging area for an invasion led by anti-Sandinista
units. The Miskitos were in open revolt, and many battles took place in July 1982 with the Nicaraguan armed forces.

CIA—AN INSTRUMENT IN US POLICY:

However the fact that the US did not entirely create, or control the anti-Sandinista forces, the forces it came to support did not alter the doubtful internal legitimacy of those associated with the Somoza regime, which tended to be further weakened by CIA support. Moreover, it did not make these forces any more appropriate as an instrument in US policy. Mr. Stanfield Turner, former CIA Director, warned that 'the people the CIA enlists to do the covert work will not always have the same purpose as the United States.... own purposes change from those originally set.... the CIA people operating them can get carried away with their dedication to getting the job done.'

By 1983, President Reagan's argument that the US policy was simply intended to prohibit the Nicaraguan action in El Salvador was wearing very thin. The anti-Sandinista forces, notably could not interdict supply of arms to Salvador.

guerrillas. In addition, Enrique Bermúdez, military attache to Washington under Somoza and later military head of the FDN, had openly, stated in December 1982 that they would never accept the role of American mercenary. It is not acceptable to us to carry out missions to interdict Cuban and Russian supply lines to El Salvador. We are Nicaraguans and our objective is to overthrow the Communists and install a democratic government in our country."  

Notably, the anti-Sandinista rebels which was originally supposed to be only 500, grew rapidly according to CIA figures, to 1000 by February, 1982, to 4,000 by December 1982, 5500 by February 1983, 7000 by May 1983 and 8000 by June 1983. There was a danger, therefore, that the covert action against Sandinista regime might get out of control with risks of escalation and direct confrontation.

IN RESPONSE TO US THREAT, NICARAGUA DECLARED STATE OF EMERGENCY:

The Sandinista regime declared a 30-day state of emergency in March 1982, in response to what it called US threats of "aggression" and "covert plans" to undermine the government. The decree suspended most basic civil rights

79. Edward Best,...... op. cit., p. 58.
including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and the right to a judicial hearing before detention. The Sandinista government has put the press under strict censorship and restricted travel abroad for government officials, military personnel and political figures. In addition, a special new patriotic defense contribution will be levied to help defray defense costs.**80**

**EMERGENCY DECLARATION FOLLOWED BY REBEL'S ATTACKS:**

The Sandinista regime's drastic action followed the destruction of two bridges near the Honduran border, which the Sandinistas blamed on US-backed "counterrevolutionaries". The US Administration denied the charge. However, a senior state Department official privately said that he couldn't rule out the possibility that some US based exile group might have been responsible.**81**

According to a Human Rights Organisation, 300 people had been arrested till August 1982, for counterrevolutionary activities, and some 300 people had been detained and interrogated about their political activities. The Sandinistas also increased pressure on members of independent labour unions, the Roman Catholic Church and opposition political parties.**82**

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81. Ibid.
Mr. Daniel Ortega Saavedra, a member of the all powerful nine-man Sandinista Directorate, speaking at the celebration of the third anniversary of Nicaragua's Sandinista revolution at Masaya, a provincial town 18 miles southeast of the capital city of Managua, declared, "Nicaragua is undergoing a silent, yet bloody invasion. Ortega charged that the US Central Intelligence Agency and the Honduran armed forces were supporting more than 2,000 rebels who have been operating along the border with Honduras. 83

THE SANDINISTA'S PREOCCUPATION WITH THE CONTRAS:

The Sandinistas, in fact, have every reason to be preoccupied with counterevolutionaries, or Contras, the rebels seeking to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. For the first time since the end of the civil war that toppled right wing Dictator Anastasio Somoza Debayle in 1979, the Sandinista are being seriously challenged by armed gropps of Nicaragua who originally supported the revolution but who have become disillusioned with the regime's strident Marxism, it disregard for individual rights and its increasing dependence on Cuba and the Soviet Union. The Contras say, they are fighting to fulfill the revolution's original goals -

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83. Ibid.
political pluralism, individual liberties and a mixed economy. 84

CONTRA'S RAID:

The US aided Contras have consistently raided villages and committed murders. They have done heavy economic damage by bombing and mining ports. The Reagan Administration defends all this as realism in a hard world necessary measures to weaken a leftist government that makes trouble in Central America. 85

The Administration always defended US aid to Contras. It insisted that the US support for the government of El Salvador and support for the "Contras" were aimed at bringing about democratic rule. President Reagan has said that the Nicaraguan "Contras" are the "moral equal of our Founding Fathers. They are "our brother". They are "freedom fighters struggling for liberty and democracy". The Reagan Administration has urged the Congress, to authorise more aid to the Contras so that they can make the Sandinistas cry "uncle". While the Contras seemed incapable of overthrowing the government in the foreseeable future. 86

84. Ibid.
PASTORA THREAT TO THE SANDINISTAS:

However, the biggest threat to the Sandinistas came from Eden Pastora Gomaz, a flamboyant and popular former guerilla leader known as Commander Zero. A hero of the Sandinista revolution, Pastora fled Nicaragua in 1981 and eventually surfaced on Costa Rica in April 1982. He passionately denounced his former Comrades-in-arms as "traitors and murderers" and has called on the Nicaraguan people to expel them from power. Pastora's strategy was to hope that his re-emergence will lead to the defection of other unhappy Sandinista supporters, and eventually divide the army so that he could come to power. 87

Significantly to combat the threat posed by Pastora and the other contras, the Sandinista government has increased military build-up that has given Nicaragua the largest army in Central America. 88 Besides, the 'Contras' could not enjoy much public support of the issue of American aid to them. 89

NICARAGUA'S MILITARY BUILD-UP:

In the case of Nicaragua's military build-up, the US Administration believed that the Sandinistas certainly took some unnecessarily provocative steps. However, the Administration's vehement rhetoric and moves which helped to increase

88. Ibid.
both internal insecurity and tensions with Honduras, such as support for armed attacks from across the border, could only encourage the Sandinistas to maintain their military build up. Any political incentive to cease the military build-up, as suggested even by the friendly Mexican government, was outweighed by perceived demands of security. By mid-1982, the process of military organisation and equipment had taken place at a rate undeniably faster than that of the other Central American countries.  

NICARAGUA'S FORCES INCREASED:  

With the aid of some 1500 Cuban advisers, and supplied with Soviet bloc equipment, Nicaragua has expanded its regular army, which numbered some 8,000 troops in Somoza's day, to between 22,000 and 33,000. It dwarfs the armies of Honduras (12,000), Guatemala (14,000) and El Salvador (15,000). Nicaragua also has a well-trained "ready reserve" of some 28,000 to 50,000. The country eventually intends to increase the size of its regular army to 50,000. The inventory had also expanded.

90. Edward Best, op. cit., p. 58.
SOVIET ARMS TO NICARAGUA:

However, the military build-up could be justified as giving an appropriate defensive capability. But, the US believed that in comparison with the equipment of its neighbours, the Nicaraguan arsenal was formidable. The Soviet SAMs and anti-aircraft guns, and even the desired interceptor aircraft, caused an alarm that was related much more to the strategic implications of their origin and the political character of their recipients than to any local military threat.

In addition, Nicaragua has nearly hundred 122 mm and 152 mm howitzers, dozens of Soviet BTR-60 armoured personnel carriers, and 1,000 East German and Soviet military transport trucks. Nicaragua was to receive not only more armoured personnel carriers, but main battle tanks, which were not possessed by any of its neighbours, not least because of their inappropriateness to local conditions. Some 30 T-54 and T-55 battle tanks had already been received, and more were on the way. Besides, Nicaragua already has shoulderfired SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles and four barreled ZPU-4 and 37 mm anti-aircraft guns. The US military analysts expected

93. Edward Best, op. cit., p. 59
94. Ibid.
96. The same types that are used in Warsaw Pact countries, See, Ibid.
that heavier Soviet anti-aircraft missiles will soon appear in Nicaragua.

In addition, the Americans were more concerned to the fact that the runways of at least three Nicaraguan airports were being extended to a length that could accommodate advanced Soviet MIG-21 and MIG-23 fighter aircraft. About 80 Nicaraguans had been sent to Bulgaria for pilot training, including the handling of MIGs. The MIGs would outperform, the US military analysts believed, the most powerful air fleet in the region, Honduras' 24 venerable F-86s, A-37s and more sophisticated French-made Super Mysteres.99

Washington presumed that the consequences of any such aerial arms build-up could extend beyond the Central America isthmus. So far as some anxious US military officials were concerned, access to the new airfields would conceivably allow leftist air forces to strike virtually anywhere in the Caribbean region, including at the Panama canal. Besides, possession of such superior weaponry would give the Nicaraguans a power of intimidation unique in the region. Major General William Masterson, the Southern Command's deputy Commander-in-Chief, said, "A high performance airplane flying over the skies of Nicaragua would make a far greater impact psychologically than a tank or armoured vehicles or heavy artillery.100

99. Ibid. p.7.
100. Ibid.
Although Nicaragua's military splurge was financed largely by the Soviets and their allies, the effort was diverting resources from the task of rebuilding the country after the devastating struggle against Somoza.

The Socialist government of French President François Mitterrand had quietly agreed to sell $17.5 million worth of "non-offensive" military equipment two patrol boats, two Alouette III helicopters and 15 trucks to the Marxist-dominate Sandinista government of Nicaragua. France also contracted to train a dozen Nicaraguan pilots and an equal number of sailors in the use of the equipment.101

There was growing sense of alarm in Washington over the arms build-up in Nicaragua. Washington believed that the arsenal was reaching unprecedented proportions for Central America, and has already turned Nicaragua into the predominant military power of the region. Lieut General Wallace Nutting, head of the Panama-based US southern Command said, "All of a military base of substantive potential. It is a whole new universe."102

US RESPONSE TO NICARAGUA'S ARMS BUILD-UP:

Secretary of State Alexander Haig and other top White House officials, in a series of increasingly bellicose

101. Ibid. p. 6.
102. Ibid.
statements, have decried the "drift toward totalitarianism" of the Nicaraguan regime and have pointedly refused to rule out any US action short of outright military invasion if Nicaragua does not mend its ways.103

REAGAN APPROVED A SECRET PLAN:

President Reagan secretly approved a plan calling for a substantial increase in US military involvement in Central America in the coming years and preparations for a possible limited military blockade of Nicaragua. The military operation in Central America and the Caribbean were designed to lay the groundwork for the expanded US presence and the possible quarantine.104 The exercises were specifically designed in part of test and refine planes for imposing a military quarantine around Nicaragua and would give Mr. Reagan the option of ordering a quarantine into effect in 1983 or in early 1984 if he decides to step up action against Nicaragua.105

The Reagan Administration believed that the show of US forces would be enough to persuade Nicaragua to stop the shipment of arms that Washington has repeatedly said moves

103. Ibid.
104. A quarantine which involves the use of naval force to isolate a nation, falls short of formal blockade, which is considered tantamount to an act of war. In a quarantine, there is selective interdiction of ships, in contrast to a blockade, in which all shipping is stopped.

To recall, the Kennedy Administration described its act against Soviet ships in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 as a quarantine imposed under the terms of the Rio Inter-American Pact of 1947, a mutual assistance treaty among Western Hemisphere nations.

from Cuba, through Nicaragua to guerrillas in El Salvador. The Reagan Administration declared that the United States determination to end Soviet and Cuban interference with Central American region and, if necessary, to force the Nicaraguan Communist government to live in peace with its neighbours. A senior National Security Official said, "We have developed a programme for a significant and long-lasting increase in the US military presence in Central America." 106

The officials of the Reagan Administration stated that the defense department planned to draw on a number of Pentagon accounts, including money allocated to the Joint Chief of Staff for military exercises, to limit the number and amount of additional financing requests to Congress. 107

Thus, the policy review emphasized military options and signalled that the US efforts over the short run would concentrate on a building up of military presence in Central America.

Moreover, the US believed that Nicaragua was willing to use its force. The US policy makers became suspicious during a skirmish in January 1982, in the remote swamp lands of eastern Honduras. Some 75 makers of the revolutionary army of Nicaragua collided with roughly equal number of Miskito Indians. The Honduran government was enraged at a clear

106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
violation of its borders by the Sandinista forces. The ill-equipped Handuran army went on full alert. There was, however, no immediate danger of a war between the two countries, but the flare-up was yet another sign of the tense atmosphere in the region.\textsuperscript{108}

**US STRENGTHENED HONDURA'S MILITARY CAPABILITY:**

The US Administration argued that the military build-up by Nicaragua brought a substantial increase in the number of Cuban and Soviet Bloc military personnel in Nicaragua\textsuperscript{109}, which only strengthened strategic and political suspicious in the region.

It was generally accepted in the US that if there was war between Nicaragua and Honduras, the well-trained Marxist forces of Nicaragua would have an easy walk over and once Honduras falls to the Marxist, it will be impossible to the pro-US rightist government of neighbouring El Salvador to hold ground. American analysts, therefore, saw in the CIA covert operations the beginning of a slide towards a super-power confrontation in Central America.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Time}, January 18, 1982, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{109} In March 1982, there were about 6,000 Cubans in Nicaragua, including teachers, doctors, technicians and military advisers, see, \textit{Time}, March 22, 1982, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{110} The fiasco of Bay of Pigs Comes in mind. The Bay of Pigs operation was not only a failure, it had for the Americans the contrary effect of consolidating the communist regime of Dr. Fidel Castro in Cuba.
In response, the US began in 1982 to further strengthen Honduras' military capability, and to increase its military presence in Honduras. In May 1982, an agreement was negotiated with the Honduran government and $21 million military construction programme approved by Congress. The US decided to improve the Palmerola and Goloson airbases in return for US access for various contingency uses including transit, search and rescue, and reconnaissance.\footnote{111} In addition, the Reagan Administration's plan aimed at positioning of large stocks of military equipment in Honduras and the initial phase of construction of a planned $150 million air and naval base on the Atlantic coast of Honduras.\footnote{112}

The Sandinista regime insisted that their new armed forces were strictly defensive in nature. The Nicaraguans charge Honduras with tolerating the presence of as many as 2000 supporters of former dictator Somoza, who regularly launch guerrilla attacks on Nicaragua. In January 1982, Nicaraguan Minister of the Interior, Tonas Borge Martinez said that more than 100 Nicaraguan soldiers have been killed in clashes with the Somozistas, and he expects the rebels campaign to intensify. Nicaraguans claimed that the US was trying to undermine their government and cite the fact


\footnote{112. Philip Taubman,...... op. cit.}
that ex-Somoza supporters have been getting military training in Florida. 113

According to a Honduran who was directly involved in planning US covert activities in Nicaragua, the United states has been giving intelligence assistance and military advice to forces based in Honduras fighting the Sandinista government. The covert US activities included (a) keeping the insurgents well informed about the movement of Nicaraguan government soldiers and the location of tanks and artillery; (b) training and arming the paramilitary forces including the shipment of plane - loads of arms and amunition in August 1982 to the Miskito Indian community in eastern Honduras. More than 50 US military advisers, most of whom were of Hispanic background and didn't wear uniforms trained paramilitary units in 1982; (c) providing underwater equipment and explosives to Argentine-trained sabotage teams that were infiltrated into Nicaragua and blew up port installations in Puerto Cobezas in Nicaragua. 114

Now, Honduras and Nicaragua have two of the largest and best equipped armed forces in the central America isthmus, and both have been moving towards closer identification with

States hostile to each other Honduras with the US, and Nicaragua with Cuba. Honduran armed forces have become involved in fighting the opposition movement in El Salvador, and have conducted joint military manoeuvres with the Salvadoran armed forces and with the US. \textsuperscript{115} Such Honduras involvement have raised tensions with Nicaragua.

Honduras, however, has initiated talks with Nicaragua concerning border incidents but these initiatives have been jeopardised by Honduras itself allowing its territory to be used for US military bases and facilities, receiving an increasing number of US military advisers, and becoming the second largest receiver of US military aid in the Western Hemisphere after El Salvador. \textsuperscript{116}

To sum, in the eyes of the Reagan Administration, the size of Nicaragua's military build-up didn't square with protestations that it was meant to be defensive. The Americans assumed that Nicaraguans would like to have an armed forces sufficiently strong that they could with impunity participate in the subversion of neighbouring states. They were, by their own definition, Marxist-Leninst, and it would seem fundamental that they would prefer to see their

\textsuperscript{116} See, figure
neighbours in the same bloc.

**LEGACY OF US POLICY:** US pressures could not determine the fundamental structure of the internal system in Nicaragua, although it can be argued that the legacy of past US policy in Central America was partly responsible for the widespread Sandinista association of US interests and demands with domination and social injustice. This strengthened the belief in the need for political control against predictable counter-revolutionary moves, and the tendency to subordinate traditional forms of electoral democracy to structures protecting the pursuit of social justice. The Administration's accusations of brutal totalitarianism were exaggerated. Despite some abuses and bad handling of the ethnic minorities, Nicaragua's record on physical human rights abuses remained incomparably better than that of El Salvador. In Nicaragua, many officials responsible for abuses were judicially punished. The Sandinistas had not done away with political pluralism and the mixed economy. Some 55 percent of GNP was still generated by the private sector, and the 1981 agrarian reform law envisaged considerably less land distribution than the 1980 Salvadorean law.\(^{117}\) In addition, the literacy rate in 1982 had risen from 50 percent to 80 percent.\(^{118}\)

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CRIPPLED NICARAGUAN ECONOMY:

Even then, the Nicaraguan economy was crippled. Since July 1979, the country's foreign debt had more than doubled in 1982, from $1.5 billion to $3.5 billion, while per-capita income had dropped from about $800 a year in 1978 to estimated $650 in 1981. The inflation was high 30 percent. Food shortages by the floods, in addition, in August 1982 have aggravated the situation. An acute shortage of foreign exchange for the private sector has crippled, industrial production and driven up unemployment. It is here important to remember here that the new regime in Nicaragua had the most difficult task in 1979 of reviving the country's economy. The factories and businesses had been destroyed in Somoza's fierce counter-attack. Vital crops of cotton had not been sowed, and coffee, on which the country depends for 25 percent of its foreign earning, had not been harvested. In a final act of pillage in the country that his family looted for 46 years, Somoza and his cronies had made off with all but $3.5 million of the country's foreign reserves, which stood as high as $150 million in 1977.

Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel d' Escoto, an American born Maryknoll missionary, asserted in an interview

121. Time, August 6, 1979, p. 41.
with TIME that we wanted to alter a system of privileges to a small minority which looked upon our country as their property. And these few got richer while the masses grew poorer. We had a high infant mortality rate. Three hundred thousand of our 500,000 families were living in hovels beneath the dignity of human beings. We had the highest illiteracy rate in the Southern Hemisphere. So, the people decided to fight. In 1980, the first year after the revolution, Nicaragua showed the highest rate of GNP growth in Latin America. We have the smallest rate of inflation in central America. Nicaragua was the only one of Central America's countries which was considered worthy by the world Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Central American Bank.122

REAGAN PLAN AGAINST CUBA, NICARAGUA AND MEXICO:

The US Administration neglected internal situation in Nicaragua, and decided to pressurise Nicaragua and Cuba. It also gave green signal to the plans to keep Mexico isolated from the Central American issues.123 In April 1982, President Reagan approved several secret and public operations to hinder the establishment of popular government in Central America. The Reagan Administration drawn plans against Cuba,


123. A policy document titled, "United States policy in Central America and Cuba through fiscal year 1984," see, Annexure II.
Nicaragua, and Mexico as well as an operation against Guatemala, all conceived to promote the US goals in the region. The Administration also approved a policy with the goal to avoid "a proliferation of states with Cuban model." 124

MEXICO'S ROLE FOR NEGOTIATIONS:

Mexico has played an important role for the prospect for negotiations between Washington and the left-wing Sandinista regime of Nicaragua. Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo recommended such talks as a way to reduce the tensions arising out of the US contention that Nicaragua was directing the subversion of El Salvador. However, many questions were emerging regarding the negotiations, i.e. the question of Soviet and Cuban participation in Central American negotiations. Haig asserted that the El Salvador struggle was part of the global problem of Soviet adventurism, and should be treated as such through talks with all parties involved. But, Haig clarified, "Salvador is at once a global, a regional and a local problem. That does not mean, nor did it even mean, that the Soviets, or the Cubans for that matter, must be invited to the negotiating table." 125

Mexico, thus, has been concerned over the increasingly tense relations between the US and both Nicaragua and Cuba.

Mexican President Lopez Portillo speaking before a mass rally of Sandinistas supporters in Managua's Plaza de la Revolución, on February 21, 1982, asserted that US hostility toward Nicaragua was dangerous, undignified, and unnecessary. He appealed to Reagan to avoid armed intervention in Central America and offered his service as a "bridge" between the US on the one hand and Cuba, Nicaragua, and the El Salvador guerrillas on the other." 126

The Mexican President also called for the disarming of bands of anti-Sandinista guerrillas who were launching attacks into Nicaragua from neighbouring Honduras. At the same time, he suggested that the Nicaraguans cease the alarming military build-up that they have carried on since their revolutionary victory in 1979.

PEACE PROPOSAL BY MEXICO:

The Mexican President, in short, presented at Managua mainly a three point strategy - (a) the US should renounce any threat or use of force against Nicaragua, (b) the anti-Sandinista forces training in Honduras and Florida with tacit or direct US support should be disbanded and the government of Nicaragua should simultaneously renounce the purchase of

weapons and aircraft and reduce the size of its armed forces, finally, (c) Nicaragua should conclude a series of non-aggression pacts with its immediate neighbours and the US. The Mexican proposals were subsequently approved by the Permanent Conference of Latin American Political Parties (COPPPAL), which demanded as its first condition a lessening of tension, and the starting of dialogue and negotiations based on strict respect for the principle of non-intervention, free self-determination, and a peaceful solution to conflicts in the region.

NICARAGUAN PROPOSAL IN RESPONSE:

Following the Mexican proposal, a member of Nicaragua's Sandinista directorate Daniel Ortega Saavedra offered Nicaragua's five-point plan for better relations with the US and its Central American neighbours, including regional non-aggression pacts, joint patrols by the Hondurans.

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127. COPPPAL was set up in October 1979 in O exaca, Mexico, during a meeting of Latin American political parties representing 22 political organisations from 14 nations, Convened by Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party. It's Constitution was formalised with the purpose of contributing to a greater understanding of the serious problems of the region. For more details on it, see United Nation document S/PV.2335, pp. 28-31; and Washington Post, February 24, 1982.

and Nicaraguans of their border, and a commitment to free elections and political pluralism in Nicaragua. Washington responded politely but non-committally to the proposals of Lopez Portillo, who later called the economic aspects of Reagan's Caribbean Plan "a first serious reaction" to the problems of developing countries. 129

A series of proposals have been promoted by the Central American countries appealing to Cuba and the United States to improve their relations. These initiatives aimed at favouring a negotiated political solution to the salvadorean conflict, that between the United States and Nicaragua, and Nicaragua and its neighbours by demanding that the government of the United States rule out any threat or use of force against Nicaragua. The feasibility and desirability of the creation of a system of mutual non-aggression pacts between Nicaragua and the United States, on the one hand, and between Nicaragua and its neighbours, on the other, has also been considered. 130

NICARAGUAN COMPLAINT IN THE UN:

It is here important of note that the UN Security Council considered a complaint by Nicaragua against the government of the United States, where the Nicaraguan

131. UN Document, S/14913.
representative referred to an imminent invasion of his country and warned of the danger that this constituted for peace in the region and in the world.\textsuperscript{131}

PANAMA'S RESOLUTION:

In this regard, Panama presented a draft resolution to the Security Council co-sponsored by Guyana regarding the deterioration of the situation in Central America and the Caribbean. The Panama resolution enjoins, by means of various specific measures, respect for the territorial borders between the countries and their respective sovereignties, and avoidance in any way of the destabilisation of the region or the internal system of any of its components. Permission should not be given for the use of territory for launching destabilising actions against other countries, for arms trafficking nor the training or transit of combatants. The draft resolution appeals to all members states to refrain from direct, indirect, overt or covert use of force against any country of Central America and the Caribbean, and to the parties concerned to have recourse to dialogue and negotiations which would lead to the search for a peaceful solution to the problem of Central America and the Caribbean. The resolution however, was not adopted because of the US veto in the Security Council. Nicaragua called the veto a serious threat.

\textsuperscript{131} UN Document, S/14913.
to Central America, implicitly confirming its apprehension about US intentions regarding military aggression.\textsuperscript{132}

**US RESPONSE TO MEXICAN PROPOSAL:**

The United States responded to the Mexican peace proposal with the eight point plan presented to the Nicaraguan government on April 8, 1982, which calls for the following:

(a) an end to Nicaraguan support for insurgencies in neighbouring countries;

(b) a political declaration by the United States, whereby it would enforce the Neutrality Act, which makes it a crime to plan or launch invasions of other countries from US territory;

(c) a joint US-Nicaragua statement pledging not to interfere in each other's affairs, nor in the affairs of other in the region;

(d) a limit to the size of military forces in the region, a ban on the import of heavy offensive weapons into the region; and a reduction in the number of foreign military advisers;

(e) an international verification process to monitor compliance with these provisions, conducted by outside observer from the OAS or the United Nations;

(f) a resumption of US aid to Nicaragua, including Nicaragua in the Administration Caribbean Basin development Plan (CBI);

(g) a series of confidence building measures including cultural and other exchanges; and

(h) reaffirmation of Nicaragua's prior commitment to a system of political pluralism, a diversified economy and non-alliance.\(^{13}\)

NICARAGUAN RESPONSE TO US PLAN:

Nicaragua expressed willingness to discuss the US eight-point plan proposal but insisted on the participation of Mexico as a mediator. In a letter to the UN Secretary General Mr. Vavier Parez de Cueller, Daniel Ortega, Nicaraguan President, charged that the Reagan Administration was trying to revive "gunboat diplomacy" in the Central American region. He strongly criticised the Reagan Administration's interventionist policy in El Salvador and Nicaragua. The letter said that it was a public matter that the Reagan Administration provided the CIA with $19.9 million "to finance subversive activities in Nicaragua aimed at destabilising and overthrowing the present government 'by force'. The letter charged that the "unusual display" of naval and air force in Caribbean by the United States was intended to "intimidate" the country of the region.\(^{134}\)

133. Ibid, p. 57.

The Nicaraguan counterproposal to the US plan contained several restatements of points made public at the United Nation's security Council in March 1982 by the Nicaraguan Head of State, Daniel Ortega, including the following principles: (a) Nicaragua is ready to improve the climate of relations with the United States through negotiations; (b) Nicaragua can not accept that it or any other country in the region should be considered the geopolitical preserve of the United States or as a part of its so-called strategic frontier, a concept that restricts the exercise of sovereignty and independence of the states in the region; (c) Nicaragua can, therefore, in no way represent a threat to the security of the United States; (d) Nicaragua is ready to subscribe to non-aggression pacts with all neighbouring countries of the Central American area in order to ensure peace and the internal stability of the zone; (e) the USA should put a halt to measures and covert plans which have been denounced but which have never been officially denied, such as secret destabilisation plans and the organisation or financing of paramilitary forces, advised and trained by US military personnel in Honduras and by active and retired military personnel from Argentina and other South American countries. In addition, the USA should refrain from using Honduran territory as a base for armed aggression and terrorist operations against Nicaragua; (f) the presence of US warships in the waters of Central America and off the coast of
Nicaragua should be stopped, as should the US over-flights by spy-aircraft violating the air space of Nicaragua; and (g) the United states must explicitly promise not to attack Nicaragua, and must renounce any plans for an economic, financial or commercial boycott.\textsuperscript{135}

There was scepticism about the real intentions of the US in opening up talks with Nicaragua and both parties question the willingness of the other to negotiate seriously. Since the two packages of proposal were put forth, Nicaragua has pushed, the United states to set a date for talks. The Nicaraguan government holds that the eight-point US plan was merely a political device aimed at internal public opinion in the US and at improving its intentional image. Moreover, the Nicaraguan government has indications that the US administration has moved further, with the reported acceptance by President Reagan of the National Security Council budget of $19.9 million, to promote destabilizing and covert actions against Nicaragua that entail economic sabotage, attacks, training and arms shipments to anti-Nicaraguan forces, and stepped-up presence of US warships in surrounding waters and US reconnaissance airplanes overhead.\textsuperscript{136} In a turnabout, the US demand that Nicaragua halt alleged arms deliveries to the Salvador opposition and the use of Nicaraguan territory as a base for subversive operations\textsuperscript{137}.

The United States argued that it would restore aid and friendly relations with Nicaragua if that country scaled down its military build-up and ended arms shipments to the Salvadorean rebels. While, true to their Marxist Leninist orientation the Sandinista leaders make no secret of their "moral support" for the Salvadorean "leftists" still, they adamantly deny charges that they are channeling arms into El Salvador although most objective observers are convinced that at least some weaponry is coming through Nicaragua.

While, the Sandinistas blame many of their problems on the US Government, which discontinued most economic aid early in 1981 because it was convinced that Nicaragua was abetting the leftist insurgency in El Salvador. Washington has pressurised international lenders not to loan Nicaragua money. The US Administration says its wants to improve relations with the Sandinistas, but talks have repeatedly foundered over the question of aid to the Salvadorean guerrillas. Though State Department officials have denied that they are stalling, the US doubts that negotiations with the Sandinista would achieve anything. The US might also be waiting to see what the 'Contras', who might be receiving some of the $19 million in secret funds the Reagan Administration had earmarked for anti-Sandinista activities, could achieve.138

Thus, the Reagan Administration viewed the Marxist dominated Sandinista regime as the Central American equivalent of Fidel Castro's Cuban regime.

CONCLUSION:

After 46 years, Latin America's most durable dynasty-Somoza dynasty-collapsed in 1979. The new regime needed to help to recover from the suffering inflicted by the corrupt Somoza regime. To most Nicaraguans the most pressing concern was the need to sweep away the last vestiges of Somoza's pro-US despotic regime and get on with rebuilding the country. The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), a broadly based collection of Marxist and non-Marxist leftists held together mainly by hatred for Tado Somoza's regime. Nicaragua was the worsening state of the economy which has never recovered from the war's devastation.

Nicaraguan bloody revolution troubled the military rulers of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Their leaders

139. Guatemala experienced a CIA-assisted coup in 1954 that ousted the leftist government of President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman. Between 1966 and 1979 at least 40,000 people had been murdered in clashes between the government and its critics. See, Time, August 13, 1979, p. 7.

A succession of dictators has been ruling in Guatemala, a country of rich oil deposits, since 1954 coup. The coup, which costed the United states less than $10 million was originated by expropriation conflict of 178,000 acres owned by the United Fruit Company. The coup marked the return of "the big-stick policy" toward Latin America.

Guatemala who borders on four countries - Belize, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico-also became a model for

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feared that a domino effect might engulf them in a wave of leftist insurgency inspired by the success of Nicaragua's revolt. Though, the new five member junta in Nicaragua has denied any plans to "export our revolution," Defense Depart­ment and intelligence officials are urging that the US resume arms shipments to the three nations, which have been cut off since the Carter Administration began its human rights campaign.

The Carter Administration tried to strengthened the tenuous relationship with the new government that developed during the long negotiations that led to Somoza's abdication. New Nicaraguan regime saw the U.S. as the biggest source of aid. Washington, which had already provided $7 million, seemed ready to come up with more, hoping that by generously assisting Nicaragua, it could not only prevent the new regime from falling into the embrace of Fidel Castro, but also foster a new partnership with democratic regimes throughout the region. But, the US alleged that the junta was courting Castro.

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US response to revolutionary change in Latin America. Being the most militarised country of Central America with the largest (about 8 million) population in the region, it is now being bolstered as a bastion of anti-communism in the region declared to be "a sphere of vital interests" for the USA. The latest coup in Guatemala occurred on March 23, 1982, when the anti-communist National Liberation Movement (MLN) seized power and overthrew General Guemara who had been elected two weeks before. He was replaced by General Efrain Rios Montt. Guatemala, experienced continuing massacre in 1980-81. The political killings were estimated 70-100 a month in 1980, 250-300 a month in 1981. Notably, the 30,000 political murders have take place in Guatemala since 1954. See, The US State Department Report, February 7, 1982, H. M.L. Beri, op. cit., p. 135.
In fact, Nicaragua recognises US interests in the region. It has consistently sought US help but been denied it. In addition, the sabotage operations of the CIA posed grave threat to the existence of Sandinista regime and have been primarily responsible to push Nicaragua into the Soviet Camp.

The United States covert involvement in Nicaragua began even before Somoza fled the country. In 1978, with the Somoza dynasty nearing collapse, Jimmy Carter authorised under cover CIA support "for democratic elements" in Nicaraguan society. American financial support for Nicaragua's opposition forces has continued, and it remains on of the many items on the CIA's yearly "classified schedule of authorisation."

The Reagan Administration claims that the Sandinista government ultimately threatens aggressive, Moscow-backed communism throughout central America, it has failed to yet to convince Americans that Nicaragua is more than a troublesome godfly.

The US Administration believes that a communist central America would vastly increase the potential for Soviet naval and land operations on the US doorstep. Communist take over in Central America would increase the threat to Caribbean sealanes appeared inconvincing, which for 20 years have been allegedly vulnerable because of Cuba that provide ports to Soviet submarines.
The US Administration, however stressed that the United States could not accept Soviet military engagement in Central America and the Caribbean beyond what it reluctantly tolerates in Cuba. The US government has said that it feels threatened because Nicaragua is arming itself and because of the presence of Cuban and Soviet weapons and advisers. While Mr. Ortega said that for our part, we feel that the United States threatens our security with its bases in Honduras and its growing military presence in Central America. The US Administration failed to deny the allegations that it was financing if not co-ordinating, military and paramilitary actions against Nicaragua from Honduran territory and seeking to destabilise the Nicaraguan government by covert actions. If the US imposes an economic embargo, it will push, the Nicaragua into greater dependence on the USSR and the eastern bloc which then would serve as a pretext for Americans to further tighten the screws.

In so far as the US is seen to supporting rightist and repressive regimes in other Central American countries then such a claim to "restoring" democracy in Nicaragua is unconvincing. This is why the victory of the Duarte regime over the extreme right forces of Major D'Aubussion in El Salvador was so helpful in terms of polishing up to American image. A civilian white washing of the military dictatorships in Guatemala and Honduras is similarly underway.
The US can not be threatened by Nicaragua, a country of fewer than three million people, desperately poor after years of dictatorships and war. It is threatened in its deepest nature, by a policy that allies the United States with terrorism.

In fact, the intrusion of military considerations in the affairs of Latin American Countries tends to limit and distort possible solutions to conflicts that are initiated through diplomatic routes or negotiation. These solutions tend to be replaced by those relying on force or are otherwise obstructed by considerations of a military nature.

There have been increase in military spending and rising arms imports. This military modernisation effort has put special emphasis on a supposed Cuban threat in Central America and the Caribbean by favouring armed opposition to revolutionary activity in the area in association with the United States.

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