

# Nicaragua people want Sandinista leaders

**Editor:** The article about aid to the "Contras" by Fran Curran on September 8 reviews a number of significant issues with a healthy skepticism about the Reagan administration's policies and actions. Nevertheless, Curran accepts the administration's position on the Nicaraguan elections of 1984 uncritically, asserting that there were no significant opposition groups to the Sandinistas (FSLN) party and that the ballot boxes were stuffed.

These assumptions were documented to be absolutely false by an impartial commission of American scholars sponsored by the Latin American Studies Association. The commission, of which I was a member, studied the election process firsthand and observed the elections. Not one case of ballot box stuffing was either observed by us, or in fact, reported by even the most virulent critics of the FSLN. With regards to the opposition parties in the 1984 elections, there were six parties registered: three to the right and three to the left of the FSLN.

In the elections, which were very inadequately and incompletely reported in the U.S. press, 75 percent of the registered voters voted (voting is voluntary in Nicaragua), and the Sandinista FSLN party received 67 percent of the votes cast. Its margin of victory was slightly better than that of Ronald Reagan in his election two days later. Opposition candidates under the proportional representation election system, copied from Scandinavian models, won more than one-third of the seats in the Assembly. The Swedish Electoral College served as expert consultant to the Nicaraguan Elec-

*Paul Doughty*

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toral Commission throughout the process. Substantial funds and materials for the Nicaraguan election came from Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

The candidate favored by the U.S. State Department, Arturo Cruz, was never a registered candidate in the election nor was he associated with any established political party. According to U.S. Embassy representatives in Nicaragua, Cruz did not wish to run because he would lose and thus give more "legitimacy" to the FSLN victory. This opinion was confirmed to our commission by Cruz's erstwhile vice-presidential candidate.

In sum, like it or not, the Sandinista FSLN party won an open, fair and successful election in November 1984. Since the Reagan administration is unable to accept the results of the democratic process in Nicaragua, it is now openly fostering open warfare on the winners in violation of numerous international accords, laws and treaties. It is sheer folly.

*Paul L. Doughty is a professor of Anthropology and Latin American Studies and past president of the Latin American Studies Association. He was also an observer of the 1984 Nicaraguan elections.*

**Editor:** I found Professor Doughty's Sept. 11 column on the elections in Nicaragua both interesting and illuminating. However, his assertions were somewhat misleading. More importantly, in the context of Reagan's actions towards the Sandinista government, the subject is moot.

Professor Doughty claims the election was completely fair and that 75 percent of the registered voters did so, resulting in a victory for the Sandinista FSLN party that "was slightly greater than President Reagan's landslide victory, which occurred two days later."

The implication is that the Nicaraguan election is comparable to the 1984 U.S. presidential election: A contented, happy population joyfully and democratically elected an overwhelmingly popular party into office, and why is the rest of the world making such a fuss when voters exercise their free will?

Anyone who has spoken to people who have left (some might say "escaped") Nicaragua or even anyone who watched the evening news can see this is patently fallacious.

Professor Doughty is also misleading when he says, "Since the Reagan administration is unable to accept the results of the democratic process in Nicaragua, it is now openly fostering open warfare on the winner . . ." Though the United States is understandably concerned about the controversy surrounding the elections, it is engaging in retaliatory measures against the Sandinistas purely because they are actively and maliciously exporting their revolution to other countries.

Even if every registered voter in Libya came to me and stated they willingly supported Col. Khadafy, I would still expect my government to keep him from spreading violence throughout the free world. The same holds true for Nicaragua.

Professor Doughty believes the Sandinistas have as much popular support from their people as Khadafy does. I think it far more likely the Sandinista government is about as popular as the Polish government. But, our differing opinions in this matter should not keep us from agreeing that the Sandinistas have no right to export terror and that the U.S. cannot and will not allow them to do so.

**Michael Giltz**  
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