

Nicaragua & Reagan's Big Lie

Fifth Estate Collective

1985

“Nicaragua’s continued efforts to subvert its neighbors, its rapid and destabilizing military build-up, its close military and security ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union and its imposition of Communist internal rule.”

Such were Ronald Reagan’s reasons, as he left for his visit to honor the Waffen SS at Bitberg, for placing a U.S. economic and travel embargo on Nicaragua. It little mattered to President Bonzo that all of what he said was either a fabrication or a result of American interventionist policy in Central America. Nor did he seem to appreciate the irony of placing trade restrictions on a country at the same moment he was scheduled to embark on a journey which would also include a conference where the concept of free trade between nations would be affirmed.

What mattered was that the Big Lie was in operation.

The Big Lie—the technique developed by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels and perfected by his epigones in nation states throughout the world ever since—utilizes the modern means of communication to repeat official lies enough times so that their falsity overcomes direct experience, knowledge or common sense. Combating the Big Lie, whether it deals with society in general or one of its particular horrors, is always difficult since the Big Liars—those in power—have the weight of the society’s political and cultural assumptions on their side. Power automatically defines the discourse on its terms.

Thus, Big Liar Reagan can squawk endlessly that it is the U.S., not Nicaragua, that is under attack, and it all falls neatly into place when enshrined in concrete by a compliant media. The truth or falsity of a statement begins to lose relevance; it is true because it is said by Power. And, it is repeated first by the media, and then by sections of the populace, not as a recognition of veracity, but as a sign of loyalty to the Empire and its rulers. It’s a topsy-turvy world in which truth is stood on its head—where the exterminators parade as victims and “the liar lies to himself.”

Act Under the Big Lie

It doesn’t matter that Big Liar Reagan is contradicted in his assertions by other sections of the government war machine itself. The trick is just to keep repeating the Big Lie until everyone is forced to act under its assumptions, even those against whom it is aimed. In the latter regard, Reagan calls Nicaragua a “Soviet base” and a “cruel dictatorship” and then proceeds to fund a force of fascist mercenaries who cause \$130 million a year in damage to a poverty-stricken nation, forces it to exist on a permanent war footing, and does what he can to sabotage Nicaragua’s economy by having it denied loans and then announces that its president, Daniel Ortega’s request for aid from the Soviets is proof of the Big Lie. (By the way, Ortega certainly needs some advice on public relations; couldn’t he have made a phone call to Gorbachev?)

But quickly, to Reagan’s Big Lies about Nicaragua:

The Big Lie: Reagan has stated that Nicaragua has built a war machine that “dwarfs the forces of all their neighbors combined.” Truth: El Salvador’s army totals 48,000 and Guatemala’s forces stand at 40,000, obviously a greater

number than Nicaragua's 40,000 regular forces and 20,000 civilian militia, all of which are involved in fighting the Reagan backed contras.

The Big Lie: According to Reagan, Nicaragua has "fighter planes, bombers and so forth." Truth: One can only guess at what His Dimness means by "and so forth," but according to the U.S. Defense Department, Nicaragua has no modern combat aircraft of any sort and their air force is one of the "smallest and least capable in the region."

The Big Lie: The Nicaraguans are shipping arms to the Salvadoran rebels. Truth: This is such a blatant lie that even Reagan has stopped using it. Given that there is no common border between Nicaragua and El Salvador, documenting the flow of arms became at best problematic for the Big Liars at the State Department who had previously issued "White Papers" "proving" that the arms were arriving from the Sandanistas in dug-out canoes. Actually, the Sandanistas should be giving support to the Salvadoran guerrillas, but instead offered to sponsor a joint Nicaraguan-Honduran border commission to assure no weapons were flowing to the FDR-FMLN forces. However, the U.S. client state turned down Managua's proposal.

The Big Lie: The Nicaraguan military build-up is part of a plan to attack other Central American nations. Truth: The build-up is obviously necessitated by the state of war foisted upon Nicaragua by the U.S. contra mercenaries and it is ludicrous to think that the Nicaraguans don't realize that an attack, even a legitimate one on the contra bases, say, in Honduras, would bring about immediate intervention from the U.S. In other words, why would Managua give Reagan the exact pretext he will probably be forced to fabricate?

The Big Lies are endless. This newspaper is anti-statist and hence defends no nation state or government, but to call Nicaragua "totalitarian" in light of what pluralistic forms do exist there is inconsistent with reality. The point has been made endlessly that the "freedoms" which exist in Nicaragua are only dreamed about in U.S. client states such as Chile, South Korea or South Africa.

In passing it seems obvious that anti-statists and anti-authoritarians should recognize that the nature of the Nicaraguan government stands as a separate question from that of the U.S.'s aggressive interventionist policy. It is distressing to see so many libertarians surrender their criticality when confronted with a government that defines itself as "revolutionary" (an impossibility to those who believe all nation states strangle authentic revolution). The Nicaraguan leadership's policy of centralization and bureaucracy has been well documented enough to suggest that one's political stance should be that of only opposing U.S. aggression and leave the Christians and leftists to slavishly fawn over the Sandanista politicians. For an excellent analysis of Nicaragua and one that combats the Big Lie of the Left, see *No Middle Ground* No. 3/4 available from our bookservice. The need for a clear perspective on Nicaragua is obvious given the Left's dismal record of uncritically supporting socialist police states such as the Soviet Union, Cuba, North Vietnam and China.

However, it seems that all of this must be kept within its proper perspective. The main danger at this point is of a U.S. invasion and the embargo further sets the stage for it. Reagan knows full well that embargoes are ineffective in trying to alter the policies of countries with which the U.S. has disagreements as evidenced by the two-decade old restrictions against Cuba or the Soviet grain embargo which Reagan himself reversed.

What it does do is relegate Nicaragua to outlaw status and perhaps, most dangerously, the embargo on travel could set the stage for emptying the country of the 4,000 or so Americans who are in Nicaragua at any given moment. They are there mostly as revolutionary tourists, but the total includes almost 1,000 business personnel as well. Reagan realizes that he is on thin ice in general with his Central American policy and the prospects of direct military intervention are not well-received either in Congress or among the American people. If and when he does manufacture his Tonkin Bay incident or medical school pretext for an invasion, he could ill afford to have U.S. Marines chewing up thousands of American citizens along with the Nicaraguans.

Those of us on the *Fifth Estate* feel that direct confrontation with the U.S. government over Nicaragua is at the most crucial stage. At the end of George Bradford's article on Vietnam elsewhere in this issue, he asks whether he did enough to impede the slaughter by the U.S. in that country. Let's hope that we can function effectively enough at this moment so as to never have to ask ourselves that question about Central America.

~ ~ ~

This article also is appearing in the just published *Daily Barbarian* available for postage from P.O. Box 02455, Detroit, MI 48202 or from our book service. [See insert in FE #319, Winter, 1985.]

As we mentioned in our last issue, an organized response to an anticipated invasion of Nicaragua, issued as a Pledge of Resistance by *Sojourners* magazine, is continuing to gather participants. Already over 65,000 Americans have signed the Pledge, making it the largest nonviolent civil disobedience plan in U.S. history. The week President Reagan invoked the embargo against Nicaragua, many pledge groups across the country considered their commitment in effect and over a thousand people were arrested in sit-in protests.

Promising to stand with the people of Central America, both through sit-ins and “legal” protest, a growing number of Americans are attempting to affect the decision making about U.S. foreign policy in Central America. In the Detroit area the Pledge is being coordinated by the Michigan Interfaith Committee on Central American Human Rights (MICAH) which has devised contingency plans to be implemented on the first day of any U.S. attack on Nicaragua. (See last issue for details.) Those of us at the *Fifth Estate* have signed the pledge as a group.

MICAH may be reached at 4835 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI (313) 894-0840, and nationally, *Sojourners* magazine may be contacted for the Pledge of Resistance at 1321 Otis St. NE, Washington, DC 20017 (202) 636-3637.

fifth Estate

Fifth Estate Collective
Nicaragua & Reagan's Big Lie
1985

<https://www.fiftheastate.org/archive/320-spring-1985/nicaragua-reagans-big-lie>
Fifth Estate #320, Spring, 1985

[fiftheastate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheastate.org)