

Contras aren't about to bring democracy

To the Editor:

My first reaction upon reading Jamie Glazov's opinion piece in Nicaragua was one of surprise, that a progressive paper such as the *Gazette* would publish such a piece. I decided it would be a waste of time to respond, since no one could possibly take this string of erroneous facts, insinuations and gaps in reasoning leading to an illogical conclusion seriously. I do believe in the right of an individual to express his or her opinion, on a issue. This, however, hardly constitutes an opinion.

I don't have access to Mr. Glazov's sources of "information". Nor do I think it productive to counter each of his statements, since the illogic of what he says must be obvious to any reader. Despite this, there are certain statements which can not pass unchallenged.

The points he seems to be making are that the contra have few "Somosista" or national guard connections, that the Sandinistas have "Somosista" connections, that the contra are fighting for democracy and that the Sandinistas are undemocratic and abusive. The implication of all this seems to be that we should therefore support the contras and condemn the Sandinistas.

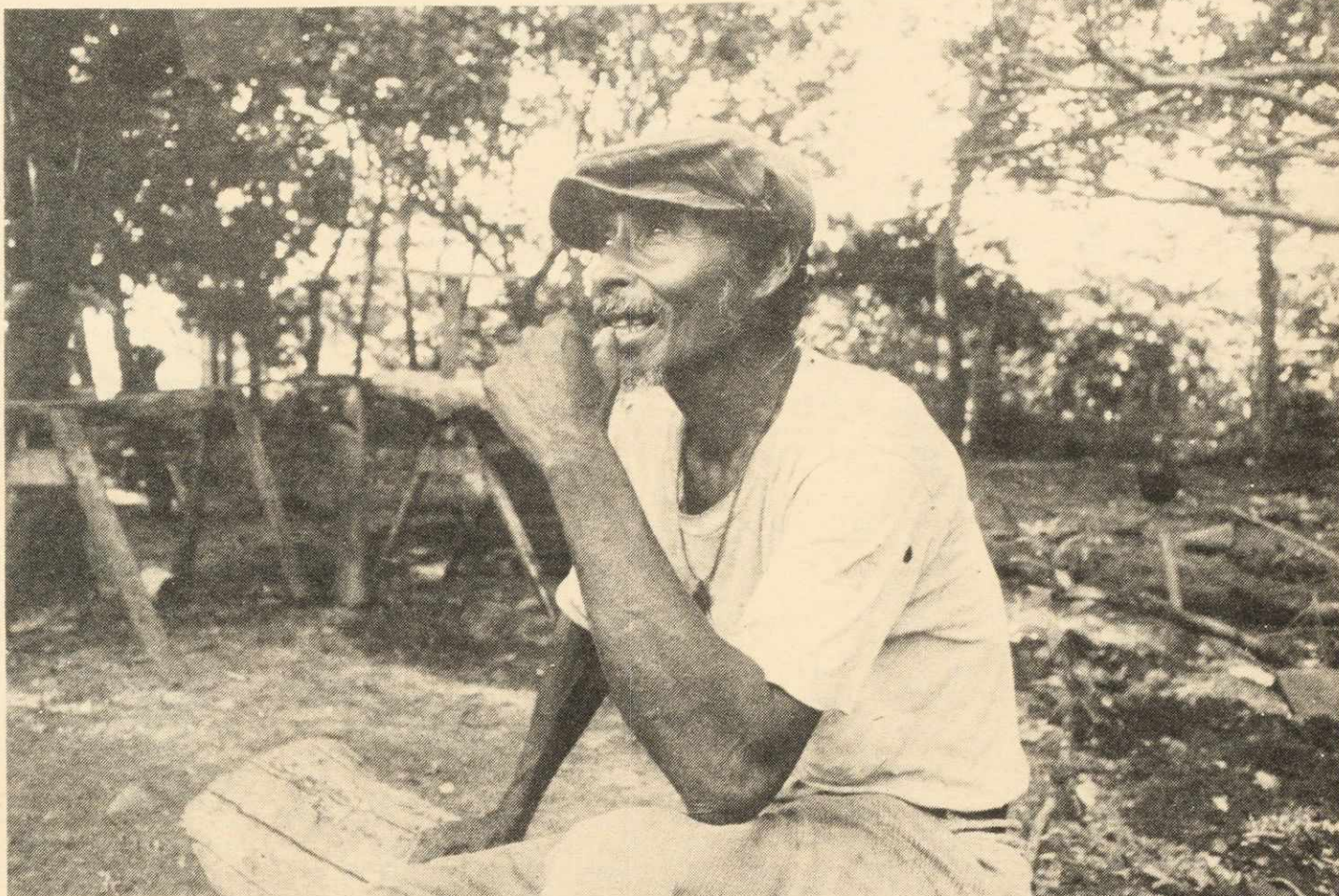
Few people will deny the Somosista connections to the contras. A 1985, U.S. congress caucus on arms control and foreign policy stated that 46 of the 48 top military contra leaders are former guardsmen. The actions and tactics of the contras demonstrate their real interests. Through terrorist tactics the contras attack and destroy the symbols of the Sandinista revolution; such as day care centres, hospitals and health posts, agricultural co-operatives and schools. Over 13,000 Nicaraguans, men, women and children, have been killed by the contras. The attacks mainly on civilian targets are brutal and the destruction and loss of production caused by the attacks, devastating to an already very poor country. Their aim seems to be to make life so difficult for the people who support the revolution, that they will eventually willingly turn to another way of life, hopefully the life of exploitation by a few ruling elite that existed before the 1979 revolution.

I had the opportunity to see the results of the contra's work myself, in a visit to Nicaragua this year. The images of a burnt and machine gunned passenger bus, the charred remains of a co-operative barn which had housed an entire year's crop, the medical student taking over duty in a rural district where her predecessor had been raped and killed by the contra, and the sixty year old peasants who wouldn't venture into the fields without the protection of their old beat-up rifles are but some that I recall as I read Mr. Glazov describe the contra as "a force which seeks to bring democracy to Nicaragua."

I also remember the incredible determination of people to withstand this constant onslaught by the contras and the U.S. destabilization policy. The co-operative organizers and the literacy workers who continued their work despite being prime targets for attack in their rural community; the entire communities that retired to underground shelters when the contras attacked at night, the peasant who emphatically stated that the contra or the Americans would have to kill each living Nicaraguan before they would give up what they had gained, and the communities of people who took turns being on guard duty day by day, while going about their business, because they didn't have enough arms or uniforms to go around remind me of the determination and support I witnessed throughout the country.

I would and I'm sure Mr. Glazov himself would find it more than difficult to live under the "democracy" that the contras seem determined to bring to Nicaragua.

Mr. Glazov neglects to mention, while talking about democracy, the recent elec-



This veteran revolutionary, Guillermo Acevedo Lopez, told Jonathan Leaning he government of Nicaragua let him down. "They won't let me fight the contras. They say I'm too old." Photo by Joathan Leaning.

tions in Nicaragua; the freest and most competitive (according to international observers) to take place in the history of that country (and in most of Central America for that matter). These were elections that involved eleven opposition parties, with two thirds of the votes going to the Sandinistas, taking place in a country that has been under attack for the past six years and that had never had a free and fair election before.

Mr. Glazov's tactic in presenting his argument reminds me of the Ronald Reagan approach. That is, to present so many distortions or outright lies, that the reader will no longer know what to believe and may begin to believe what you would like. There are many sources of information for people who would like to know just what is happening in Nicaragua. There are well over a hundred Atlantic Canadians from all walks of life who have been to Nicaragua over the past few years, who could talk about their experiences. As well, the Oxfam-DEVERIC resource centre at 1649 Barrington St. houses many A/V materials, books, periodicals as well as an up-to-date clipping service on Nicaragua and other local and international issues. I would encourage Mr. Glazov and any other interested readers to take advantage of the many resources available in Nicaragua.

Sincerely,

Carolyn van Gorp

Intellectual cowardice and hooliganism

To the Editor:

I would like to take the opportunity to comment upon the *Gazette* editorial of November 6, 1986. I would also like to state that I am not, nor have I ever been, a philosophy student. If I have erred in my logical analysis, I trust that any criticism will be

both constructive and illuminating. Sadly, I feel that neither of those elements were present in the editorial of November 6.

My understanding of Mr. Glazov's article of October 23, is based upon the following premises:

- 1) Mr. Glazov's thesis was that, if one's criterion for determining the "moral legitimacy" of the competing Nicaraguan political regimes were the number of Samozan personnel occupying key positions within the political unit, then the Sandinistan regime had no basis for moral superiority vis a vis the contras;
- 2) "Moral legitimacy" in this context is defined as fairness, justice, and democracy;
- 3) To support his thesis, Mr. Glazov introduced evidence of a number of Samozan personnel operating within both competing regimes.

The editorial of November 6 attacked Mr. Glazov's thesis as "sophistic reasoning". In particular, paragraph nine of the editorial attempted to stigmatize Mr. Glazov's thesis as a jumble of premises and "uncited facts" (with visual aid courtesy of the talented Mike Adams). My objection to this criticism is that it fails to define Mr. Glazov's analytical approach accurately; that it obfuscates the real issue raised by Mr. Glazov; and that it employs the very "sophistry" of which Mr. Glazov is accused to carry out an act bordering on intellectual cowardice and hooliganism.

This is not to say that Mr. Glazov's thesis is not open to challenge. I have identified four ways in which a vigorous and legitimate challenge could be undertaken:

- 1) One could challenge the validity of the original premise, i.e. that "moral legitimacy" is not interrelated with the presence or absence of Samozan personnel;
- 2) One could challenge the definition of "moral legitimacy" and/or its applicability to Nicaragua;
- 3) One could attack the accuracy of the data used to support the thesis;
- 4) One could state that one's own bias precludes recognition of the validity of the premise and/or the data.

I believe that the editorial has adopted none of these approaches. I also submit that the editorial suffers from a distressing lack of intellectual honesty. Clothed in the

legitimizing guise of logical criticism, the editorial proceeded to attack Mr. Glazov's thesis with rhetorical, illogical, emotional, and anti-intellectual vitriol.

Where are the "uncited facts"? One may take issue with Mr. Glazov's premise and documentation, but a phrases such as this shed no light upon the source of the editorial criticism. Moreover, I submit that the "logical fallacy" outlined in paragraph nine has no rational connection with Mr. Glazov's analysis. While I appreciate the *Gazette's* concern for disinformation and intellectual inconsistency, the only example of these which I can perceive is contained within the editorial itself.

If the editorial requires an example of "sophistry", I suggest that they examine the intriguing article by Mr. Jauregui of October 30, at page nine. In a valiant attempt to rebut Mr. Glazov's "logical fallacy", the author reaffirms the 'kitchen sink' concept of analysis. The author bombards the reader with a plethora of allusions, from Nazi genocide to the de riguer condemnation of the U.S. and the C.I.A. Unfortunately, he does not address the issue of Samozan elements within the Sandinistan regime as a criterion for determining moral legitimacy.

The reason for the failure is thus: having utilized the Samozan link to attack the moral and credibility of the contras, supporters of the Sandinistan regime now find their own weapon turned upon them. Naturally, they do not appreciate that. Nobody likes to be torpedoed by one's own argument. The supporters of the Sandinistan regime have an intellectual and moral duty to rebut Mr. Glazov's thesis. But to do so requires that they address the issue squarely. The rhetorical hyperbole of the editorial, it is submitted, does not satisfy that requirement.

In conclusion, I would suggest that the editorial had the opportunity to articulate a credible and meaningful response to Mr. Glazov, and that it failed to do so. This failure was not due to a lack of "intellectual thought" on the part of Mr. Glazov, but a lack of editorial guts on the part of Toby Sanger.

Jonathan Tarlton