

# NICARAGUA STANDS ALONE

When the United States originally issues the Monroe doctrine, it was more a reflection of American insecurity than American strength. Washington's desire to restrain foreign incursions into the Western hemisphere eventually translated into a commitment to maintain American hegemony over Latin America. The Monroe doctrine's impact on Latin America grew in proportion to the exponential growth of American power in the 20th century. The doctrine became a symbolic expression of American domination over Latin America.

Further, America's commitment to containing the left placed Washington on a collision course with the various emerging nationalist movements in Latin America. Most of Latin America, particularly Central America, suffered from development paths that excluded the majority of their population from the fruits of modernization. Various leftist movements and insurrections have reflected the frustrations of the common man in Latin America. Washington, seeking to maintain its hold on Latin America, has intervened with regularity into Latin politics, to deprive the left of power. Examples include Guatemala in 1954, the Dominican Republic in 1965, and Chile in 1973. The Nicaraguan revolution, by virtue of its successful propulsion of a leftist movement into power, is an exception that defies American hegemony. Indeed, many observers feel the Sandinista movement represents the beginning of the erosion of the Monroe doctrine. In an interview with *Excalibur's* Brent Patterson, the Nicaraguan Consul-General and York Professor **Pastor Valle-Garay** discusses the evolution of Central American-American relations.

**EXCALIBUR:** Keeping in mind that Canada has not opened an embassy in Managua, has not increased economic aid, has not taken punitive actions against Canadian arms manufacturers who supply weapons to the contras, and has not even taken a strong stand against Reagan's declared policy—do you consider Canada complicit in the US war against Nicaragua?

**PASTOR VALLE-GARAY:** No, we understand that Canada has a very close relationship with the United States. We don't feel that there is any complicity in this. Unfortunately for Nicaragua, and for the rest of the world, selling weapons to Contras, or to other terrorist groups, is a business just like selling MacDonald's and other types of commodities. And people make money, unfortunately, in the sale of weapons out of the misery, the death, and the destruction of other human beings. We don't particularly like that, but we realize that is in the nature of selling weapons in the business world.

We are also aware that there is a close relationship and a tremendous amount of loyalty between Canada and the United States. We feel, nevertheless, that Canada could, in fact, use what influence it has on the Reagan Administration in an attempt to stop what is essentially a very criminal and a very terrorist action by the Reagan Administration against the people of Nicaragua. I believe that this is one of the instances where good friendship, good relations, can be of vital importance to the Central American people.

**EXCALIBUR:** Do you see Canada playing another role other than using its influence?

**PASTOR VALLE-GARAY:** What we have requested, and where we believe that we can benefit from Canada's experience as a peace broker in the Middle East and in other areas, is in the formation of a group that would supervise and oversee the implementation of the peace treaty in Central America, (the Arias Peace Plan) together with such nations as Norway and Sweden that have already received similar requests and that have acted promptly to say that we could count on them.

**EXCALIBUR:** Do you think that the Arias Peace Plan can succeed despite certain American factions who oppose the plan?

**PASTOR VALLE-GARAY:** Well, I think that, without being facetious, the mere fact that Nicaragua exists today, that Central America exists today as five independent nations, albeit with all sorts of political ideological differences, attests to the fact that we can indeed be ourselves without US interference. The United States has attempted for the last 130 years to dominate, to control, to order Central America around as a whole isthmus, or as individual nations. We will have to continue to tell the United States that 'yes' we want to be friendly with them, but 'no' we are not prepared to be dictated to or told how to live our lives politically, culturally, economically or otherwise.

It is important and we recognize the need to maintain good relations with the United States. We have been unfortunate with this Administration more than with others, but it is just a matter of degree that we have such terrible relations with Mr. Reagan. American presidents have been terribly unkind, unfair, and in this case, absolutely brutal, when it comes to their view of Central America as their own little private fiefdom, as their own little private background. We refuse to be Americanized in that sense and that is the reason that, as Central American nations, regardless of our political ideologies and differences, and there are many, we are making every possible effort and we will succeed. We will succeed, just as we have succeeded before in bringing about a peace that answers to the needs of Central America and not to the sometimes childish and stupid demands that Washington attempts to make out of us.

If the plan collapses, it will only be because of the United States interference again. But that is not to say that Central America will collapse. We will continue to look for every possible avenue in which we can solve our problems, and there are internal problems, without interference from any major power, particularly from the only major power that has constantly interfered in Central America and that is the United States.

**EXCALIBUR:** Do you fear that the FSLN have made too many concessions to achieve this peace and that if it in fact does collapse, that the security of Nicaragua will have been weakened?

**PASTOR VALLE-GARAY:** No, I don't think the security of Nicaragua will be weakened. I think that . . . the Government of Nicaragua has agreed to the letter and spirit of the Central American Peace Plan and I don't think that we have made any concessions that

National Assembly and we're not about to have another election to please Mr. Reagan, the Contras or anyone else . . . We cannot accept, and we will not accept, the military leadership of the Contras to join in with us . . .

We cannot roll back the Nicaraguan Constitution. The Constitution is an absolutely marvellous document that was discussed with every single major opposition party, with the labour unions, with the religious groups . . . with the women's organizations. And we have come up with an absolutely magnificent Constitution that we are not about to throw out the window only because this is again one of the demands, one of the things, which the Contras and the Reagan Administration have insisted upon . . .

**EXCALIBUR:** Why do you think that countries like Honduras and El Salvador, who are so independent on American aid, would sign such a peace treaty?



would be detrimental to the political system or to the life of Nicaragua.

We have nothing to talk to the Contras about essentially because the demands the Contras have been making have been demands that we are not prepared to meet now or anytime in the future . . . President Arias signed the Central American Peace Plan and he knows darn well that the Plan does not contemplate either talking to the Contras or granting a general amnesty. These two points were agreed upon by the five Central American Presidents when they signed the Central American peace treaty. To go back on that is to literally declare the treaty null and void.

And the question is not so much whether we want to talk to the Contras, but what are we going to talk to the Contras about? What they want, or what they have suggested in the past is that we share power with them. Well we are not about to share power with anyone. We won the elections in Nicaragua by a vast majority and they were elections in which 86% of the Nicaraguan population registered to vote and went to vote. That is more than people ever have done either in Canada or in the United States, or in both countries put together. So we had a democratic election, with a democratically elected President and Vice-President and

**PASTOR VALLE-GARAY:** Well, perhaps because they might have some decency left in themselves and they no longer wish to be considered as being an appendage of the United States. The United States certainly has been able to rule both of these countries to the point where there were three elections held in El Salvador until President Duarte won. In the previous election the winner was Mayor D'Aubisson and the Americans didn't like to have that man in power and now he is being accused of having assassinated or being involved in the assassination of Arch-Bishop Romero. But the question is not whether D'Aubisson or Duarte won, the fact of the matter is that here is a foreign nation, the United States, not only implementing elections but changing elections to suit their own interest.

In Honduras, for far too long, the country has been literally occupied militarily by American forces that have built thus far at least eight military airfields in a country that doesn't even have a single railway line. Perhaps they are beginning to acquire a

conscience, perhaps they are also aware of the tremendous economic damage that they are suffering as a result of this war and of both the political and diplomatic damage they suffer abroad where people now see the

governments of Honduras and El Salvador as mere puppets of the Government of the United States. It might be that they are just simply maturing politically and they do not wish to be held to the ridicule and the contempt not only of the nations of Central America/Latin America but anywhere else in the world.

**EXCALIBUR:** What do you see as the future for Nicaragua?

**PASTOR VALLE-GARAY:** Nicaragua is a very wealthy country . . . both in human resources and natural resources. We have a population that by world standards is small. It's only three million people in a country that is relatively very large. We can produce, particularly in the agricultural area, a great number of goods that we sell. And, in fact, we do sell a lot to Canada, for example, among other countries in this hemisphere and also in Europe. Over 50% of our population is under the age of 18. About 60% of our population is female . . . There is no reason that we should not be a developing nation as opposed to being an underdeveloped nation. If we are left, not alone, but if we are left to manage our own affairs in the best way that we see fit by the Government of the United States, because there is no involvement of any other Government, then I believe that the future of Nicaragua is excellent.

We have demonstrated that before. Immediately, two years after the triumph of the revolution, when we inherited a nation that was bankrupt and destroyed by war, Nicaragua became self-sufficient in all of its basic needs. There were no line-ups, there were no shortages, there was no need for any of this nonsense that is going on right now. And this nonsense has been essentially jammed down our throats by the Reagan policy of either subduing us into submission or destroying us by sending armies of assassins and terrorists against our people and against our factories and against our agricultural cooperatives.

But perhaps the fear that the Reagan Administration has is that other countries might follow suit. That they also might want to be economically independent. And there are countries that are much larger than Nicaragua and perhaps ten times more dependent on the American economy. I'm talking about countries like Brazil and Mexico, etc., that perhaps would have a certain influence on the American economy and this is what the United States is trying to do. By punishing us, it is sending a message to other countries that if anyone dares in Latin America particularly to take or follow a policy of economic independence, the United States is no longer only going to use such clout as the International Monetary Fund or the Inter-American Development Bank, but also that it can and will, as in the case of Nicaragua and Grenada and other countries before, use its military might to destroy us as human beings. And that is the sadness of the Reagan policy.

**EXCALIBUR:** If entrenched American interests do not want Nicaragua to succeed, in order to make an example of it, then do you really see that American policy will ever really change towards your country?

**PASTOR VALLE-GARAY:** I think that American policy will have to change. Not only in the case of Nicaragua but anywhere else. I believe that people in the world are reacting, sometimes violently, to this American policy of sticking its nose in everybody else's business and trying to run everybody else's lives. And what we are seeing, and what we have been seeing for a number of years, and it has particularly gotten worse in the Reagan Administration, is a tremendous backlash where people do not want to deal with the United States in any way shape or form. The United States and particularly President Reagan has become more and progressively more isolated in the economic world, in the business world and in the political and diplomatic world.

You cannot change, or pretend to change nations, or nations' political ideologies, economic ideologies, by dropping bombs on its people; that only creates resentment, and resentment on a continuous basis creates hatred. We don't want to hate, we don't want to have resentment, against the United States . . . You may destroy the nation, and it has happened in many occasions where the United States has been involved, but you're not going to destroy the spirit of the people, and you're not going to make them change their minds. You're certainly not going to get these people to have any respect, fear perhaps, but not respect for any nation, whether it is the United States or any other power in the world.