

Nicaraguan Red Cross which often witnessed these atrocities. The Washington office on Latin America which had been monitoring human rights violations in its publication *Update: Latin America* wrote that "almost every single human rights violation reported from Nicaragua has been attributed to the National Guard".

Historically the Somozas had been quite successful in governing Nicaragua by operating under three facades: they claimed to be the allies of competitive organized labour; they pretended to be progressive and liberal; and they projected the image of themselves as statesmen who were devoted to the socio-economic independence of Nicaragua.

In actual fact, peasant and urban labour had progressed only marginally since the Somozas came to power in the early 1930s. Like most groups that tried to organize under the tight scrutiny of the regime, they acquired no political anchorage in the system. The ubiquitous presence of the Somozas in the businesses of Nicaragua made labour an important asset to the family. It has been estimated that over one-sixth of the Nicaraguan economy was directly controlled by family businesses; the national jet airline, shipping companies, two seaports, construction and cement companies, import franchises and important agricultural-export concerns. The awesome economic power of the Somozas went beyond the borders of Nicaragua with large holdings in the United States and Europe. But domestically, all roads led to a Somoza enterprise. It is not surprising then that the political system worked to discourage organized activities which may have threatened the regime, thus fostering ignorance and defencelessness.

When the Alliance for Progress was transferring funds to Latin American nations that took on the trappings of democracy, the Somozas paid lip service to peasant needs. However, the monies never funded peasant initiatives because the family blocked allocations and redirected them to their own interests. So in 1964 a non-governmental organization, the Institute for Human Promotion (IMPRHU) was started to raise the consciousness of the peasants by educational programs and occupational incentives. But the Somozas sabotaged its activities whenever they could and set up legal road blocks in its operations. In 1975 the Somozas, with the assistance of the United States, established the Institute of Peasant Welfare (INVIerno) to improve the lot of the rural poor. Many of the work projects undertaken by INVIerno were strategically placed in areas of major guerrilla activity and were designed to neutralize and dismantle guerrilla influence. The organization, however, proved ineffective.

Opposition

Nicaragua's urban labour force is barely distinguishable by advantage when compared with its rural

cousin. Ideologically, labour has tended to be internally fragmented by extreme right- and left-wing factionalism. The Somozas constantly monitored the 30,000-member workers' movement in order to detect any dangerous cohesions in its organization. But disunity was built into the organizations that comprised



AP Photo

Sandinista guerrillas raise their weapons in a victory salute on the Leon highway outside Managua after the fall of General Somoza.

