

Central American Awareness Week

Consul-General to Canada Pastor Valle-Garay

by George Koch

Pastor Valle-Garay, Consul-General to Canada of the Sandinista regime, spoke last Thursday in SUB, on the present state of Nicaragua and its relations with the rest of the world, especially the United States.

Valle-Garay opened with a brief history of his country, one marked by "exploitation", first by the Spanish Empire, later by the "American Imperialist Forces." His bitterness over past American excesses — economic domination, political subversion, and direct military intervention was apparent.

After addressing the fact that

50,000 were killed in the eight, bloody, final weeks of fighting that toppled the corrupt dictator Somoza, Valle-Garay proudly declared: "We stood up to the Americans — that is the major 'sin' that Nicaragua has committed."

"Nicaraguans don't want to be measured by American standards, or have American ideas imposed on them."

He denied that Nicaragua is receiving any substantial aid from the Soviet Union or Cuba, or that Nicaragua is sending arms to the rebels in El Salvador. Most of the present foreign help comes from Western Europe.

Valle-Garay also lauded

Canadian humanitarian efforts, claiming, "There are more Canadians in Nicaragua right now than Cubans."

"Nicaraguans wish only to exist in a friendly atmosphere with their neighbours, free of any foreign domination."

"The problems of Central America are not problems of the Soviet Union vis-a-vis the United States. They are essentially problems of social injustice in Central America," said Valle-Garay.

Valle-Garay condemned the present American manoeuvres in Honduras and off the coast of Nicaragua, claiming the 16,000 troops stationed there present a threat to peace in the region.

Convinced that the U.S. is preparing to invade Nicaragua, he accused the American of being "gangsters of paranoia".

He also lambasted the C.I.A.-trained Contras, condemning their crimes against innocent Nicaraguans. The Contras, according to Valle-Garay, consist solely of ex-National Guard "mercenaries."

Valle-Garay said "every possible effort was being made to get President Reagan to stop this nonsense, because a military solution is not possible in Central America."

He feels the main purpose of the new regime is to rebuild Nicaragua; very important is to "channel the fighting energies of the people into constructive purposes."

Valle-Garay cited the stupendous decrease in illiteracy, from as high as 94 per cent in some areas to a national average of only 12 per cent, as a prime example of the government's concern for the

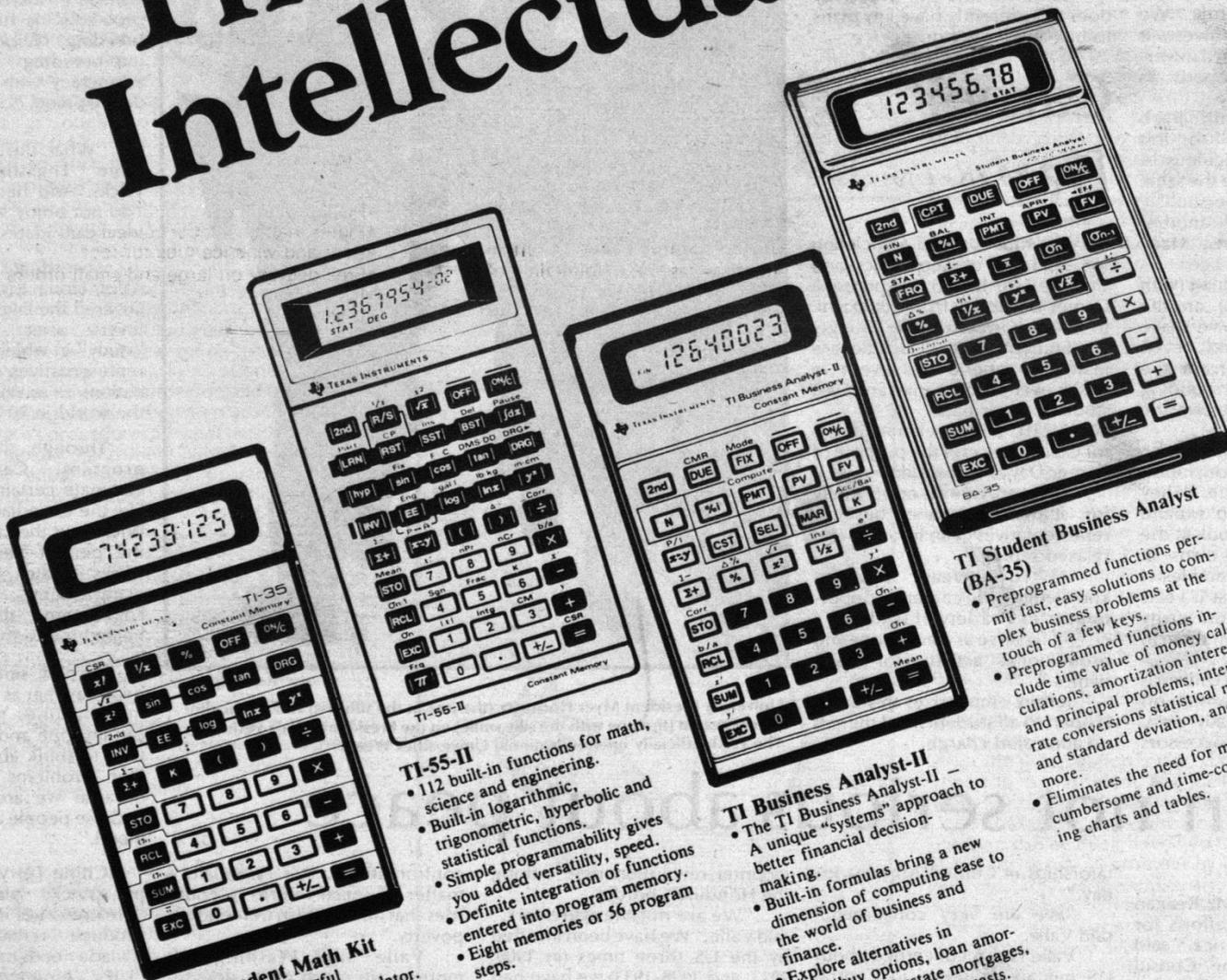
welfare of its citizens. Improved health care and speedy response to medical emergencies has been another important social program.

When asked about programs aimed at improving the lot of the nation's women, he replied, "The women of Nicaragua have no problems with feminism — nor do the men."

Specific programs are not needed as women already occupy many top positions in the government and army; jobs are assigned on the basis of merit, not sex. Furthermore, Nicaragua has "absolutely no problems regarding political rights."

...more Central American stuff on next page.

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