

imperative that the Nicaraguans seek credits or alternative trading arrangements wherever these may be found. Moreover, their incapacity to meet Nicaragua's energy needs on the private market, in part the result of the foreign exchange crisis, forced the Nicaraguans to seek access to alternative lines of supply.

In the military sphere, the United States has, not surprisingly, refused to provide the Nicaraguan regime with military assistance since the latter came to power. It has also attempted, with considerable success, to prevent Nicaragua from obtaining arms elsewhere in the Western world. The French, for example, three years ago cancelled an agreement to provide the Nicaraguan Armed Forces with trucks and helicopters owing to American pressure. This recalls US action in the face of Guatemalan and Cuban efforts to obtain weapons.

In the meantime, the Nicaraguan need for weaponry grew in the early 1980s as the Reagan Administration began backing efforts to destabilize, and ultimately overthrow, the Sandinista regime. The first official US involvement came in November 1981, when the Reagan Administration sought a \$20 million appropriation to support media and paramilitary campaigns against the Nicaraguan Government. Raids launched from Honduras in early 1982 brought the FSLN to declare a state of siege in February 1982. In July of that year, the *contras* launched the first of many large scale incursions into Nicaraguan territory. This campaign has grown gradually over the years, largely owing to US financial and material support, into an expanding sustained guerrilla war.⁵⁸

This process has only been partially impeded by congressional reluctance to fund insurrectionary activities against Nicaragua. It has been accompanied by acts of sabotage against economic targets — the mining of the Port of Corinto and the destruction of oil storage and refining facilities — widely attributed to the CIA.

⁵⁸ This is not to say that the sole source of armed opposition to the Nicaraguan Revolution is US policy. No doubt elements of Somoza's National Guard would have attempted to mount a guerrilla war whatever that policy was, and would have found considerable private financial support for such efforts in the United States and elsewhere. Moreover, the initial ineptitude of the Sandinista regime in its dealings with the Miskito Indians contributed substantially to the expansion of the insurgency problem. In their efforts to consolidate their power at the expense of allied and opposition groups in the country, the Sandinista leaders have pushed a number of erstwhile collaborators such as Eden Pastora into the guerrilla opposition. The point is that this problem would not have assumed the dimensions that it has if the *contras* had not benefited from the consistent support of the Reagan Administration.