

WHO ARE NICARAGUA'S OPPOSITION GROUPS AND WHAT DO THEY REPRESENT?



In June this year, in an apparent show of unity, seven of Nicaragua's right-wing opposition groups came together as a National Coalition. This briefing examines in some detail who these groups are, what they represent and the extent of their financial backing from a United States administration determined to oust Nicaragua's democratically elected government and install a puppet government more to its liking.

The result of the constant financing of and support for Nicaragua's right-wing opposition has served to create an echo chamber that is amplified by commentators in the international media, most of whom have no presence in the country and rely on information gleaned from the opposition groups and their posts on social media. Yet while Nicaragua is facing a fierce international smear campaign, with lie upon lie told in international media, a completely different situation is experienced within the country.

NSCAG will continue to campaign to defend the sovereignty of Nicaragua against US aggression and interference. It is vitally important that we succeed – the alternative will be the installation of yet another US puppet government in the region, spelling years of despair and misery for Nicaragua's population, as happened during the horrors of the 16 years of neoliberal governments following the FSLN defeat in 1990.

Introduction

From 1981 to 1990, the US administration under President Ronald Reagan waged a vicious military, economic, political and psychological war against Nicaragua. The war cost some 30,000 lives. Although it failed to achieve the US's aim to violently oust the revolutionary Sandinista government, it did dislocate the country's society and economy sufficiently to bring about the FSLN electoral defeat in February 1990.

In June 1986, the International Court of Justice found the US guilty of acts of terrorism, including arming and training an illegal paramilitary organisation (the Contras), mining Nicaragua's harbours and imposing a trade embargo. The US refused to accept the verdict of the Court or the Court's subsequent order to pay USD\$17 billion reparations.

In 1989, with elections looming, the US poured funding of USD\$2 million into a coalition of 15 opposition parties (the United National Opposition, UNO) to oppose Daniel Ortega and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in the 1990 election. At the same time, the US Congress approved a package of USD\$49.75 million in 'non-lethal' aid to the Contras, the mercenary army trained and financed by the US to wage war against Nicaragua – aid which was largely used to campaign on behalf of the UNO coalition.

Held together only by their opposition to the Sandinistas and crucially by millions of US dollars, the groups making up the UNO coalition were riven by personal rivalries and factionalism. Animosity and distrust among the leaders of each of the groups stemmed

from the degree of cooperation and confrontation each had taken toward the Sandinista government.

Exhausted by the consequences of war and economic collapse, many Nicaraguans were effectively coerced by the US into reluctantly accepting that the Contra war and US embargo would continue if they voted for the FSLN to remain in power. In fact, the US administration declared that it would only send aid to Nicaragua if the UNO coalition were elected. At the same time, some neighbourhoods reported threats of murder if they voted for the FSLN in the elections. In short, if Nicaraguans insisted on voting for the FSLN, the US proxy Contra war would intensify at all levels.

The consequence was that Nicaraguan people went to the 1990 elections with a gun to their heads. On 25 February 1990, the UNO coalition under Violeta Chamorro won the election with 55% of the vote, with 41% for Daniel Ortega and the FSLN.

The UNO coalition disbanded in the mid-1990s after a precarious conflict-ridden administration during which little progress was made. Whilst the coalition's victory saw the end of the Contra war and the lifting of the US embargo, it ushered in 16 years of neo-liberal government, which plunged Nicaragua's people into abandonment and despair. Health and education were privatised, the public services were decimated and by 1996, illiteracy rates had nearly tripled from 12% to 34% of the population, while half a million children and teenagers were outside the school system. A period of 'structural adjustment' slashed social spending and placed the market economy and private initiative at the forefront of the government's priorities. This series of reforms led the country to a position where international aid and remittances from Nicaraguan citizens living abroad became the pillars of the economy.

What is deliberately omitted in journalistic, academic and historic accounts is the respect showed by the FSLN to the 1990 vote: They recognised the electoral results and were instrumental in ensuring a peaceful handover of government to their sworn enemies. They also respected the 1996 and 2001 election results where they came second. The FSLN acted responsibly and democratically. They reorganised and regrouped in a complex 16-year period during which not only Nicaragua, but the whole of Latin America was subjected to the worst features of neoliberal policies.

History repeats itself

Elections in 2006 saw the FSLN under President Daniel Ortega return to power and the beginning of a radical transformation in Nicaraguan society. The privatisation of health and education were immediately reversed, and the Government began to implement social and economic policies designed to benefit the most impoverished and vulnerable in society. The FSLN has retained widespread popular support since that time. In the most recent elections held in 2016, the FSLN received 72% of the popular vote.

Throughout this period, the US administration has become increasingly hostile toward Nicaragua. Yet an attempted coup in 2018, multimillion-dollar financial support for right-wing opposition groups and the imposition of vicious sanctions have all failed to oust Nicaragua's democratically elected government. With a divided and fractious opposition, which has minimal support inside the country, and with [independent opinion polls](#) pointing to

an FSLN victory in elections scheduled for November 2021, the US has turned toward the same tactics employed in 1989 by funding and encouraging the formation of a National Coalition to 'fight for justice, democracy and against the dictatorship'—that is, violent regime change.

Right-wing fundamentalist Evangelical Saturnino Cerrato, leader of the Democratic Restoration party, stated at a press conference in January 2020 (when the idea of a coalition was first mooted) that the demand for opposition unity was coming from 'powerful foreign actors' as well as from the groups themselves. "In these days — the day before yesterday and today — we met with political advisers from the US embassy and the European Union," he said. And the US Embassy and the EU told opposition leaders, 'We are ready to support a large movement that is formed in Nicaragua'.

US funding for Nicaragua's opposition

Since coming to power, the Trump administration has intensified interventionist policies against Nicaragua. Between 2014 and 2017 over 50 grants totalling USD\$4.2 million were given to organisations in Nicaragua by the US National Endowment for Democracy as part of a U.S. government-funded campaign to provide a coordinated strategy and media voice for opposition groups in Nicaragua. Though the language of the NED is of support for 'civil society' and 'pro-democracy' groups, the focus on funding is specifically to build opposition to the government.

On 18 July 2018, in a move timed to coincide with the celebration of the 39th anniversary of the Sandinista revolution on 19 July, US Senators led by Marco Rubio, Bob Menendez and Ted Cruz—that is, the political establishment's extreme right—introduced bipartisan legislation proposing fiercer sanctions and further US extraterritorial interference in the internal affairs of Nicaragua. Just one day later, Mark Green, administrator of USAID, announced an additional USD\$1.5 million in assistance "to continue to support freedom and democracy in Nicaragua". The funding was to be directed towards "civil society organisations, human rights defenders, emerging leaders and independent media...."

An investigation by Managua's Radio La Primerísima's William Grigsby revealed that just in 2017-2018, USAID alone invested over USD\$15 million in the opposition aligned organisations that carried out or directly supported the failed coup attempt in 2018. They paid over USD\$3.2 million to Nicaragua's three most well-known anti-government human rights organizations and another USD\$3 million to Carlos Fernando Chamorro's CINCO anti-government media NGO conglomerate. They paid another USD\$9 million to other organisations that also supported the violent coup attempt, including the Anti-Canal Movement and NGOs run by leading opposition figures such as Felix Maradiaga and Juan Sebastian Chamorro.

In October 2019, a social media war broke out among opposition groups fighting over US funds. One opposition member, Victor Cuadras, revealed that opposition groups had received USD\$7.37 million of an alleged USD\$15 million from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) "and other Washington-based agencies". He wrote, "the biggest recipients of this money are the Civic Alliance, UNAB (Blue and White National Unity) and the people that make up these groups." Felix Maradiaga, a member of UNAB's

political council, said on television that the opposition had received USD\$15 million since 2015 from USAID but claimed that it was all above board and used for “70 activities”. Other opposition groups complained that the money had not been accounted for.

At the same time, the president of the Constitutionalist Liberal Movement Party, Deputy Wilfred Navarro said that the Nicaraguan government should, through the appropriate authorities, investigate the money that USAID gives to the internal opposition. He referred to the money as “illegal” because “it is to destabilise Nicaragua, is in the hands of the leaders, who are handling it at their discretion, but it is totally clear that most of that money goes to their pockets because it is their life insurance.” He added that the entry into the country of more than USD\$10,000 has to be reported “because otherwise it is a crime of evasion and money laundering.” He also asked a question as to where the Civic Alliance obtained the money for their recent purchase of 10 trucks worth USD\$250,000 that was distributed among its leaders (Informe Pastran. 15/10/2019)

US-funded organisations have long been vehicles for the destabilisation of governments resisting US policy in Latin America. US funding has been used to manufacture dissent in Nicaragua, as well as in Bolivia, Cuba, Venezuela and other countries in the region as part of the US effort to regain control and exert its dominance.

The National Coalition

As with the UNO coalition, the National Coalition has brought together opposition groups described by a number of media outlets on 25 June 2020 as fractious. Since April 2018, they have fought among themselves, jockeying for power and position. These groups like to portray themselves as a “strong and unified” movement that represents the sentiment and interest of the Nicaraguan people against a “repressive dictatorship”. In reality, it is far from being a cohesive political movement, with opinion polls consistently showing that even if they were able to combine with the traditional opposition political parties, they enjoy barely more than 10% popular support. Beyond the coalition’s unified demand for Daniel Ortega to step down and its support for US policy and sanctions against their own country, the severity of their differences has meant that they have been unable to present any coherent national development programme that might have widespread appeal.

This is reflected in certain changes to the speeches and positions of some members of the opposition groups. Before, they asked for the surrender of the government; then for a transitional government; then for early elections; but now it seems that the next elections are top priority as many vie for the presidency. For example, Felix Maradiaga, a member of the political council of coalition member UNAB (see below), has publicly admitted his interest in standing along with others such as Juan Sebastian Chamorro, Medardo Mairena and Violeta Granera (further information on these individuals can be found below in the section on National Coalition Members).

A number of prominent individuals such as José Pallais, a former vice minister of government and foreign affairs during the administration of Violeta Chamorro (1990-1997) have also refused to join the National Coalition.

National Coalition Members

The Coalition was established in June 2020 and stood at seven member organisations. However, by 22 July, less than a month after its formation, reports surfaced of "a new opposition quarrel" when Civic Alliance representatives demanded that all decisions should be made by consensus instead of giving priority to the majority, as stipulated in the Coalition's statutes. This would have given the Civic Alliance, dominated by business interests, power of veto in the Coalition, which was unacceptable to the UNAB-MRS. As a result, the Civic Alliance stated that it would be withdrawing, albeit on a temporary basis, from the Coalition.

Civic Alliance (Alianza Cívica)

As stated above, the Civic Alliance, dominated by big business interests, have said that if President Ortega does not step down, they will fund opposition candidates at the next election. Its members, bringing together the wealthiest capitalists in Nicaragua, include the following organisations:

- American Chamber of Commerce (Amcham)
- National Superior Council of Private Companies (COSEP)
- Nicaraguan Foundation for Socio Economic Development (FUNIDES)
- National Council in defence of our land, lake and sovereignty
- Federation of livestock associations, Managua (Faganic)
- Union of Agricultural Producers of Nicaragua (Upanic)

The leader of the Civic Alliance is Juan Sebastián Chamorro, one of the main ringleaders of the failed 2018 coup. He is a member of the powerful and wealthy Chamorro family who have controlled Nicaragua for much of its history and he himself served for brief periods in the neoliberal government of Enrique Bolanos (2002-2006) as Vice-Minister for the Economy and as Secretary for Strategic Planning.

His neoliberal thinktank, the Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUNIDES), has been bankrolled over the years with millions of dollars by the US Agency for International Development (USAID)—with current funding estimated at around USD\$212,554—and used as a conduit for funding smaller opposition groups.

Like his cousin Carlos Fernando Chamorro, editor of the right-wing media outlet *Confidencial*, Juan Sebastian has continued to churn out relentless false claims that the country is in crisis, that the economy is failing, and that the government is a dictatorship. Most recently he called unsuccessfully on the police and the army to rebel against the government.

Blue and White National Unity (UNAB – Unidad Nacional Azul y Blanco)

Like the right-wing Civic Alliance, the UNAB was founded in 2018, in the wake of the failed coup attempt. Originally part of the Civic Alliance, the UNAB became a separate organisation in January 2020 stating that both organisations had agreed to a separate

“definition of roles”. On joining the coalition, UNAB stated that its objective was to “remove Ortega, our common enemy”.

UNAB is run by a Political Council which includes Felix Maradiaga, Violeta Granera, Haydee Castillo and Alexa Zamora. Violeta Granera, who acts as one of the organisation’s spokespeople, is a former vice-presidential candidate with the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) and a former minister in the neoliberal Bolanos Government 2000-2007.

The misnamed Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS), with which Maradiaga worked closely until the end of the failed coup attempt in 2018, is now part of UNAB. The MRS was established in 1995 by former Sandinistas following substantial political disagreements with the FSLN and their inability to win power within the party. The MRS falsely claims that it was ‘outlawed’. In fact, it was simply unable to secure the legal status of a political party under Nicaragua’s electoral rules partly because its leaders failed to obtain more than 1.3% of the popular vote, which was not enough to qualify them to run in elections, and because they failed to meet the electoral rules for political parties to have an established national presence across all 153 municipalities.

Confirming its total break with Sandinismo, the MRS has received funding from the International Republican Institute, the funding arm of the extreme right-wing US Republican Party, and since April 2018, its leaders and prominent supporters have been an important source of information cited by Western media. In October 2016, Ana Margarita Vigil, then President of the MRS, took an active part in a delegation of Nicaragua right-wing political leaders to meet with one of the most right-wing members of Congress, Cuban-American Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. The reason for the meeting was to call on the US Congress to pass the NICA Act, which was subsequently signed into law under the Trump administration. The Act required the US to vote against loans to Nicaragua in the World Bank, IMF, and other international financial institutions (IFIs) and opened the door for a raft of other sanctions.

One of UNAB’s leading lights is Felix Maradiaga, Executive Director of the Institute of Strategic Studies and Public Policy (IEEPP), which received over USD\$2 million from USAID in 2018 and USD\$260,000 from the National Endowment for Democracy in the period 2014-18. During the events of 2018, Maradiaga was a frequent visitor to Washington, where he denounced alleged Nicaraguan government repression at a meeting of officials of the Organisation of American States. Maradiaga has openly called for President Daniel Ortega’s resignation by saying “I cannot imagine a way out at this moment that does not include a transition to democracy without Daniel Ortega.” (*La Prensa* 20 May 2018)

On 24 September 2018, Nicaragua’s Public Ministry issued an arrest order for Maradiaga and two others for organised crime and financing terrorism. Maradiaga used the IEEPP to train groups of people who then participated, beginning on 18 April 2018, in actions to destabilise and create chaos around the country, instilling fear and terror in the population. Part of the accusation stated that Maradiaga developed, under the title of ‘leadership courses’, methods that induced people to participate in violence and extremism to cause fear and terror. He also used social media to call for violence.

Farmworkers' Movement (MC-Movimiento Campesino de Nicaragua)

This organisation emerged out of the movement campaigning against the construction of an interoceanic canal across Nicaragua (the Anti-Canal Movement).

Formerly part of the Civic Alliance, the Movimiento Campesino left the organisation in June 2020 in order to join the National Coalition in its own right. MC Coordinator, Medardo Mairena, said at the time that their point of view had not been listened to by the Civic Alliance and that important decisions had been taken without consulting them.

In common with the other members of the National Coalition, the MC has an international profile which belies its position within the country, where it barely exists and has minimal support. Mairena portrays himself as a campesino (peasant) but is really a large landowner funded by the US government to push for anti-government proposals.

The true peasant movement of Nicaragua is the Rural Workers' Association (ATC) – which has over 40,000 members – and similar organisations who are working with the government to defend the rights and improve the lives of campesinos, who are an essential part of ensuring food security for the country. In contrast, the Movimiento Campesino has little support within Nicaragua and no agenda to promote the rights of Nicaraguan campesinos.

The MC was previously led by Francesca Ramirez, also a leader of the Anti-Canal Movement and a long-time opponent of the FSLN. Ramirez was one of the main organisers, together with Mairena, of the violent roadblocks that paralysed Nicaragua from April – July 2018 where they assaulted, robbed, extorted and intimidated people trying to pass through. As representatives of the Anti-Canal Movement themselves stated, they did so with the deliberate aim of strangling Nicaragua's economic life; in other words, they were trying to make it impossible for hundreds of thousands of people to meet their basic needs and enjoy fundamental social and economic rights.

Mairena operated the most notorious of these roadblocks at the strategically located San Pedro de Lovago junction from where he and Pedro Mena organised an attack on the small fishing town El Morrito where four police officers and a teacher were killed on 12 July 2018. Convicted and sentenced, along with Pedro Mena, to more than 200 years in prison for their involvement in the massacre at Morrito, Mairena was granted amnesty and released on 11 June 2019. Previously, he had lived 17 years in Costa Rica before being deported to Nicaragua in 2017 for human trafficking.

In September 2018, Francesca Ramirez, who is a local landowner despite being inaccurately portrayed as an impoverished peasant leader, left Nicaragua for Costa Rica, where she now seems to be based (although she has been reported as visiting Nicaragua). Despite the crimes of violence and extortion she and her supporters committed, they too have been beneficiaries of the Nicaraguan authorities' decision to prioritise peace and reconciliation rather than prosecute people guilty of serious offences during the failed coup attempt of 2018.

Ramirez herself has previously been extremely critical about the prospects for a National Coalition stating that “once again they're falling into a political game where just four people

are making the decisions ... We only see quantities of old people, there are no spaces for the youth from the universities, for the others, other people... We see in it more the same old thing instead of something new, and that creates a lot of doubt for us.”

The MC has reportedly received \$239,878 in US funding.

Liberal Constitutionalist Party (PLC - Partido Liberal Constitucionalista)

The PLC is the party of former President Arnoldo Aleman (1997-2002). Aleman was convicted of corruption and sentenced to a 20-year prison term in 2003 (the conviction was subsequently overturned), and he has been named by Transparency International as the ninth most corrupt leader in recent history. Aleman still retains influence in the PLC which is riven by internal conflict. Opponents of Aleman have objected to the recent appointment of Miguel Rosales, who is supported by Aleman, as PLC President and have mounted a challenge in the Supreme Electoral Council. At the same time, Aleman has threatened to expel his opponents from the party. The PLC received 15% of the vote in the 2016 elections.

Democratic Restoration Party (PRD - Partido de Restauración Democrática)

The PRD is a right-wing party led by fundamentalist Evangelical Saturnino Cerrato. Before the failed coup attempt in 2018, Cerrato was virtually unknown in the country. His PRD party received just over 4% in the 2016 general elections. A 2017 poll by a major firm showed that more than 85% of Nicaraguans did not even know who Cerrato was or had no opinion of him. Those who did know the right-wing pastor had a mostly negative view of him. The PRD has been seeking to become more influential since the failed coup attempt.

Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN -Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense)

The FDN is made up of former Contra fighters. It had strong ties to dictator Somoza and formerly had its HQ in Miami, where it was heavily backed by the CIA. It was part of the UNO Coalition. Its current leader, Luis Fley, is a former Contra commander. The FDN has no legal status.

Yatama (literally “Sons of Mother Earth”)

YATAMA is an indigenous party from Nicaragua’s Caribbean Coast. Founded in 1987, it has participated in regional elections since 1990. Its best electoral result was in the autonomous elections on the Caribbean Coast in 1990, where they won 26 Regional Council member seats out of 90.

The Yatama party is headed by its founder Brooklyn Rivera, who has served as a Miskitu indigenous leader for over 35 years. In 2006, Yatama made an alliance with the FSLN but broke them off again in March 2014, accusing the FSLN of stealing regional elections, despite Yatama’s own good electoral results. Rivera also claimed the government violated Nicaraguan communal property law, by allowing mestizo land colonists from the Pacific to illegally buy indigenous lands, something he and his Yatama associates were certainly involved in themselves.

In 2013, Yatama split following disagreements between Brooklyn Rivera's faction and another led by Osorno Coleman. Coleman formed a party called Myatamaran, currently allied with the FSLN and has accused Yatama of being "a political party kidnapped by Rivera" rather than an indigenous organisation.

An opposition divided

In a further sign of the divisions that mark Nicaragua's opposition forces, the Citizens for Freedom Party (CXL – Ciudadanos por la Libertad) has ruled out joining the National Coalition. Kitty Monterey, president of the organisation, which was founded in 2016, reaffirmed that they are not interested in being part of the National Coalition, stating that "they only have conflicts.... they have not even been able to reach an agreement ... We still believe that the Alliance can be rebuilt because it has the legitimacy to do so. We have to work hard to present the Nicaraguans with a unified proposal, but something decent, something different, no more of the same, not the same faces, the same tricks, the same fights, the same compromises. Nicaragua doesn't deserve that anymore."

Student organisations

There is also discord between various opposition groups of students and young people who were disappointed not to receive their own seat at the table. Edwin Carcache, who resigned from the Civic Alliance twice, stated in February 2020 that he had decided to leave because "there's been a displacement of the youth", and the "farmers, large businessmen and traditional politicians won't give up their own interests." He also accused Medardo Mairena of "speaking out of both sides of his mouth... he (Medardo) has to stop the doublespeak. Unity doesn't mean spending every day having meetings in hotels. There has to be real commitment."

Valeska Valle, founder of the 19 April University Movement, stated on Twitter on 1 July that "young people seem to be the 'theme' when it comes to speeches, but we become the 'problem' when we open our mouths to express our visions. This is not a war of the young versus the old, but there is certainly a generational issue at the heart of it that is not going forward".

Another student group has been meeting with CxL to explore their inclusion, while others have been meeting with UNAB-MRS.

What does the National Coalition Stand For?

Opposition activist Violeta Granera has admitted that members of the National Coalition have lobbied for sanctions against Nicaragua and that they have sought external pressure to help them with their internal pretensions. On Radio Corporación she said that they "have always lobbied for international sanctions to be stronger every day against Nicaragua." (*Informe Pastran*, 3/13/20).

All the members of the National Coalition supported, and most of them openly assisted, the attempted coup in Nicaragua in 2018, echoing Donald Trump's calls for regime change. All

have made regular visits to Washington to seek Trump's support to overthrow the government of the FSLN and Daniel Ortega.

In November 2019, opposition groups published numerous statements applauding the military coup in Bolivia and echoing Trump's agenda not only in Bolivia but for the whole of Latin America. The Civic Alliance stated: "Bolivians have demonstrated that unity is key to asserting the will of the people." They also quoted Donald Trump's declaration on the coup: "These events send a strong signal to the illegitimate regimes in Venezuela and Nicaragua that democracy and the will of the people will always prevail."

Unidad Nacional Azul y Blanco (UNAB) stated: "The great achievement of the Bolivian people gives us hope, only a people who resist guarantee freedom! Congratulations to the Bolivian people – Nicaragua is with you", while the Movimiento Campesino stated: "The dictator Evo Morales has resigned. Congratulations to our brother Bolivarian nation."

There are also links between Nicaragua's opposition groups and Venezuela's main right-wing opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), which threw its support behind the opposition, claiming that the Nicaraguan government was using a model "exported" from Venezuela. A statement issued by the MUD called on the international community to "support the civic struggle of the Nicaraguan people".

UK opposition activities

Nicaragua's opposition groups use social media and other networks to spread their message internationally, and a number of support groups have sprung up both in Europe and the UK. The two main groups in the UK are SOS Nicaragua-UK and UNAB-UK.

These groups seek to present themselves as the real face of solidarity with Nicaragua and claim that they represent the Nicaraguan diaspora in the UK. They have published articles in the press, organised UK tours of opposition students and issued a number of petitions, including a Change.org petition calling for an "end to repression now". They have also organised sporadic demonstrations outside the Nicaraguan Embassy and in Trafalgar Square in London and held public meetings with Nicaraguan women from the opposition who were on a tour of Europe.

Their Facebook posts have included interviews with Carlos Chamorro and leading figures from the MRS, videos of Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, articles from the Guardian, New York Times, Washington Post, Confidential – basically anything that demonises the Nicaraguan government, favours the opposition and supports US 'regime change' plans. They strongly support the NICA Act and also support OAS proposals to invoke the Democratic Charter against Nicaragua.

Both groups are clear about their hostility towards Daniel Ortega but have said nothing about what they want to see instead. Whatever their propaganda and statements may say, they are effectively supporting Trump and his agenda.

Conclusion

As Nicaragua prepares for yet another election in November 2021, the polls, but also the disarray and confusion among the opposition forces who are being financed and mobilised by the US to push for 'regime change', indicate that the FSLN remains popular and enjoys wide support among the electorate. No doubt, the defeat of the opposition forces in their coup attempt substantially contributes to their divisions, shenanigans and above all, their external dependence for their politics. The only factor that can bring about some unity among them is US intervention and the continued influx of millions of US dollars.

Paradoxically, the more the amount of dollars disbursed by the US the greater the scope for internal divisions within this fractious galaxy of failed politicians.

What is clear is that the US government needs a Nicaraguan domestic proxy to present as legitimate their request and demands for external (US) intervention, including sanctions and perhaps going as far as demanding a US military intervention. The colossal amount of resources, power and influence the US still enjoys in the world will be activated to depict these forces as 'freedom fighters' (Reagan did exactly this, with the murderous Contra mercenaries of the 1980s) and, simultaneously to demonise the FSLN government as the worst dictatorship in the history of humanity. On their side, the US relies on the continued active and enthusiastic complicity of the mainstream media.

Furthermore, the US government cannot allow or tolerate the consolidation of Nicaraguan democracy and social progress, especially after their 2018 coup attempt was defeated. They would rather have a Bolsonaro-type of government, even if, as is the case in Brazil, it leads to the destruction of society and the economy.

Thus, yet again, the Nicaraguan people will face another test of their resistance against imperialist intervention, which is likely to come to a head in the period leading to the November 2021 elections. It is our responsibility to provide information about the real nature of Nicaragua's opposition forces and expose who the real mastermind is. The campaigning slogan we used in the '80s was 'Nicaragua Must Survive' – it remains valid more than 40 years later.

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group

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