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Taking Stock of the Nicaraguan Uprising

Asking the Hard Questions after Three Months of
Revolt

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Since the beginning of the uprising in Nicaragua, we have published reports from anarchist participants in Managua. After three months of demonstrations, blockades, and street fighting, the Ortega government has succeeded in clearing the roads and driving many dissidents and rebels out of the country, but not at suppressing the revolt entirely. In the following update, we continue to give voice to Nicaraguan anarchists as they report on the struggle in their country and reflect on its future.

But first, let's address some of the questions that the revolt has raised.

Some statists on the left have attempted to frame the entire uprising as a plot concocted by the US, arguing that opposition forces in Nicaragua answer directly to "their US overlords"—effectively endorsing the killings carried out by Nicaraguan police and paramilitaries as some kind of anti-imperialism. From our perspective, on the contrary, leftist statism has enabled Ortega, a one-time revolutionary, to accumulate power and push through neoliberal reforms, generating the same kind of grass-roots revolt that has broken out in many other economic and political contexts including Greece, Turkey, Bosnia, and Brazil. This is not a question of mere international intrigue, but of the legitimate grievances that capitalism and the state are producing on a global scale. If Ortega and the statists who support him are able to monopolize the discourse of the left, there will be no outlet for legitimate popular frustration except right-wing reactionary movements.

For this reason, we consider it urgent that anarchists and other anti-authoritarians enter into dialogue with participants in the uprising in Nicaragua.

However, in the absence of a strong anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist movement that could offer a revolutionary horizon for change in Nicaragua, most participants have limited themselves to calling for “justice” and “democracy,” hoping to create the conditions for a new government to come to power. Some have even met with representatives of the Republican right wing to seek US backing. We are convinced that this approach is a grievous error, even for Nicaraguan protesters who do not share our opposition to capitalism, the US government, and government itself.

If the revolt aims to solve the problems created by neoliberal policies and authoritarian government, it must go much further than ousting Ortega. USAID and other forms of intervention are clearly intended to shape the protest movements according to the US agenda in order to determine what will come next. It’s naïve to imagine that the US government or any of the entities affiliated with it will support any sort of change in Nicaragua unless it advances the economic interests of capitalists in the United States. We have seen over and over—most recently in Afrin—how the US selectively empowers the most conservative elements within popular struggles, then ruthlessly betrays the movements as a whole as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

Can participants in the Nicaraguan uprising who do not wish to compromise with the US agenda outflank those who believe that the top priority is to oust Ortega by any means? It seems to us that this is the essential question. This will determine whether the movements in Nicaragua can follow through on

an “Anti-Terrorism Law” which gives up to 20 to 30 years of prison to anybody who aides the protests.

19. Because he betrayed Sandinismo. Ortegismo is not the same as Sandinismo. Sandino’s original ideas have been completely ignored and the spirit of the revolution has been co-opted by Daniel Ortega. Ortega has monopolized the left in Nicaragua, not allowing for any leftist critiques of his government.

their promises to create a foundation for true autonomy, freedom, and self-determination.

Thus far, participants in the uprising have focused on maintaining “unity” across ideological and strategic lines. In the face of brutal repression from the Ortega government, we can understand the tactical advantages of maintaining a united front. Yet if the movement continues to prioritize unity over debate, it will not be possible to criticize the compromises that the US will demand in return for support. In that case, even a revolution that ousted the Ortega government entirely would likely result only in more neoliberal economic policies and authoritarianism.

“The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.”

-Thomas Jefferson.

Manure—which is to say, bullshit. In fact, periodic revolutions can also refresh the illusion of liberty that maintains the legitimacy of the state. When we seek revolutionary change, the problem is how to take on the current reigning government in a way that will make it more difficult for *any* government to legitimize its authority. Otherwise, whatever new government comes to power will likely implement some version of the same policies that made people revolt against the previous one, answering as it does to the same structural factors such as global economic pressures and the exigencies of maintaining a monopoly on force. We can’t depend on governments to make the changes we want to see; we have to develop grassroots movements backed by powerful international solidarity.

Granted, it can be inconvenient for social movements to focus on making principled decisions when they are also attempting to deal with the immediate problems created by government crackdowns and criminalization. But acting in the present in a way that moves us towards our long-term goals is a prerequisite for being able to make real change. Nicaraguans movements need to develop practices that they can employ right now to go on building strength autonomously during the remainder of the Orteguista administration, practices that can continue intensifying through the inevitable electoral campaigns, promises of reform, and transitions of power that are to come.

“I have no particular love for the idealized ‘worker’ as he appears in the bourgeois Communist’s mind, but when I see an actual flesh-and-blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on.”

-George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*

All of this being said, we salute the courage of ordinary people who have rebelled in Nicaragua, occupying universities and standing up to the violence of the police. We call on anarchists and other sincere partisans of equality and freedom to create international networks of support that could offer a credible alternative to US backing, so rebels in Nicaragua and elsewhere will not be forced to choose between local authoritarianism and neoliberal colonialism.

For more background on the uprising in Nicaragua, consult our previous coverage:

14. Because he promoted an inhumane border policy that has left thousands stranded in Costa Rica. The Nicaraguan migration policy prevents hundreds who are trying to reach the United States from crossing over into Nicaragua. If you go to the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, you will find camps filled with Latin American and Caribbean families that want to travel through Nicaragua to go north, but the Nicaraguan government won't allow them through.
15. Because he has used state funds (like the ones in the social security system) to invest in his own family businesses. The Ortega family owns a lot of property and businesses and created their wealth by governing the state.
16. Because there is no transparency in how the government spends the money that arrives from Venezuela or other international cooperation. This money has ensured the Orteguista party's supremacy.
17. For using his social programs as clientelism, prioritizing aid to only Orteguista party members. He has privatized socialism, in the sense that government social programs are directly tied to pro-government affiliation, rather than to human rights or human dignity.
18. Because he has criminalized protests and murdered hundreds of students, campesinos, women, and children. The Orteguista party, which controls congress, passed

neoliberalism, Daniel Ortega has created the conditions in which campesinos and monocrop companies can illegally enter indigenous territories and occupy their land.

10. Because he ignored the popular fight against extractivism and gave international mining companies like B2GOLD permission to extract minerals in rural communities. Since Ortega's presidency in 2007, the campesino movement and figures like Francisca Ramirez have continually protested and mobilized against the extractive industries that affect campesino rural communities and environments the most.
11. Because he has continually harassed and persecuted feminists, human rights groups, and campesino leaders. Before April 2018, it was inconceivable to protest in the streets without being harassed by the Sandinista Youth or the Police. This ensured the supremacy of the Ortegaista Party over the public space.
12. Because he has co-opted other political parties and has prevented new political parties from forming and running in the elections. Elections are not internationally supervised and are not transparent. This has generated a large absentee culture. Additionally, he has fired government officials who were not willing to follow his orders or be complicit in fraudulent elections.
13. Because he forces all state employees to attend government marches, and if they don't attend they will be fired.

- The April 19 Uprising in Nicaragua
- Different Currents in the Nicaraguan Insurrection
- Update from the Nicaraguan Insurrection

Here follows the latest report and reflections from our Nicaraguan contacts.

Update on the Nicaraguan Insurrection: June-July

- Since April 19, approximately 300 people have been killed in political violence in Nicaragua; 2000 people have been injured; there are over 600 political prisoners, and approximately 600 more people are missing. In addition, some 23,000 people have requested refugee status in Costa Rica.¹ Bear in mind that Nicaragua has a population of about 7 million, much fewer than the other countries we are being compared with.

¹ These statistics come from the *Centro Nicaraguense de los Derechos Humanos* [CENIDH]. The CENIDH report doesn't discuss which side the deceased identified with, but ANDPH says that the list includes about 48 pro-government paramilitaries, 24 policemen, and one member of the military, with the remainder being protesters and other civilians. It is possible to find sources arguing that the protesters are responsible for many of the killings, but in any case, the protesters are not the ones arresting people or forcing people to leave Nicaragua.

- On July 16, the Orteguista Party passed an “Anti-Terrorism Law” criminalizing popular protests and justifying the imprisonment of hundreds of protestors. This law targets people transporting medicine and food, people organizing GoFundMe accounts, family members of students, and bystanders. This law has also justified the kidnapping of student activists, neighborhood leaders, and organizers from the campesino movement. People have already been arrested and charged under this law, including various campesino leaders. The Orteguista Party has adopted the language of *terrorism* to describe the popular uprising in general.
- The Orteguista Party has accused the priests and the Catholic Church of protecting the “terrorists” and “promoting a coup.” This has broken the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Orteguista Party. Orteguista supporters have attacked priests moderating the dialogue and protecting protesters at churches.
- There are arrest warrants now for most of the student leaders representing universities from the *Alianza Civica*; campesino leaders and other organizers have been targeted as well. Along with the break with the Catholic Church, this confirms that the Ortega Government is no longer trying to pursue dialogue.
- One of the chief goals of the *Alianza* was to fast-track the elections to 2019. Daniel Ortega has repeatedly turned this down, stating that he will hold elections when his term ends in 2021. A report from *Etica y Transparencia* says

- organizations, which was approved but later slowly watered down.
5. For selling the country to foreign enterprises, approving the building of the canal that displaced indigenous and campesino communities, and stripping away natural resources. The canal was never built, but the legal infrastructure to displace and occupy natural and indigenous territory is still in place.
 6. Because they changed the constitution in order that Ortega could be re-elected indefinitely and a family member like Rosario Murillo could be Vice-President. Ortega is now on his third term and is not willing to fast-track the next elections.
 7. Because he has accelerated the exploitation of natural reserves like *Bosawas* and *Indio Maiz*. These two natural resources are protected by the state and should not be used as resources; nevertheless, the state and economic elite benefit from the deforestations of these natural reserves.
 8. Because he has constituted a government based on nepotism. The members of his family hold key positions in the government. Daniel Ortega’s sons and daughters are political advisers and control government media and communications.
 9. Because he negotiated and allowed the expropriation of indigenous territories, displacing indigenous communities and murdering indigenous leaders. By embracing

2. Because in the late 1990s, he made a political alliance with right-wing capitalist Arnoldo Aleman, dismantling Nicaragua's *institutionality* and creating a two-party system. The Sandinistas, who were still a powerful force in Nicaragua in the 1990s, made a political pact through Daniel Ortega with Arnoldo Aleman in order to run the country together. This was a huge betrayal of the Sandinista Revolution. For many, this was event that betrayed all of Sandinista ideals and began the process of turning Sandinismo into Orteguismo.
3. Because in 2006, he negotiated with the Catholic Church and right-wing political forces to make abortion illegal. In order for Daniel Ortega to win the 2006/2007 presidency, he had to obtain the approval of the Catholic Church, a church that was extremely conservative and right-wing. The church would only give Ortega its blessing if Ortega made abortion illegal. In a poor developing country like Nicaragua, this law affected working class and rural women the most.
4. Because he removed the *Comisarias de la Mujer (State Women Centers)* and watered-down *Ley 779 (Law 779)*, a law that protected women from sexual violence, giving impunity to men who commit assaults. These women's centers were designed to protect and expedite women's and family issues, but after male pressure, they were defunded and are practically non-existent now. The 779 Law was a very progressive law designed by feminist

that 79% of the population wants new elections. It just so happens that the United States Government and the OAS are advocating for new elections, as well. The *Alianza* and some social movements have also floated the idea of a *transitional government*.

- In June, Masaya declared itself an autonomous city practicing self-government. They set up their own community watch, their own community assemblies, their own lines of defense, their own clean up committees. This was part of a strategy to complement a citywide workers strike. It's important to note that this was not proposed by the *Alianza Civica*. Masaya remained autonomous for a couple of days until pro-government paramilitaries carried out massive attacks to recapture it. Cities like Masaya that have been historically been Sandinista strongholds have been hotly contested between protestors and paramilitary forces. Masaya no longer has any blockades.
- Right next to Masaya, the city of Monimbo is an indigenous community of artisans and craft-makers. It was one of the first cities to rise against Orteguismo in April. It has been an inspiration since the beginning because of the resiliency and revolutionary spirit of the locals.
- Monimbo, the epicenter of indigenous resistance, and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN), the only university still occupied by students, were both viciously attacked and evicted by paramilitaries forces

shortly before July 19, the 39th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution. Moninbo and UNAN are now under the control of Paramilitary forces. UNAN and other universities are set to resume the academic calendar soon, but students fear persecution.

- Paramilitary forces have attacked and evicted every road blockade, killing dozens around the country. The circulation of vehicles and economic goods has resumed. In three separate interviews, when asked about the paramilitaries, Ortega gave three different answers: he claimed that the paramilitaries were funded by the US government, that the paramilitaries were funded by the MRS and the PLC, and that the paramilitaries were “volunteer policemen.”
- With the leadership of right-wing Republicans Marco Rubio and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has approved \$1.5 million dollars to promote “democracy, human rights, and leadership” in Nicaragua. How this money will shape the crisis remains to be seen.
- On July 31, *Universidad Centroamericana* (Central American University, or UCA) suffered government cuts and suspended classes, putting 95% of its personnel on hold. The national budget sets aside 6% of funds to go towards education, a victory from the student protests in the 1990s. UCA is semi-public: it still receives government funding, but students also pay tuition, which has enabled UCA to create programming and education

ernment. All movements need to be vigilant of the economic elite and the political right wing. There is a history of leftists making political deals with the enemy, but if these movements truly invest their power in the people, in politics from below, they will become hard to co-opt.

As we look for hope for the future, we must bear in mind the leaderless nature of all the new movements, we must bear in mind all the attempts at self-government and first and foremost the vision of autonomy that has been the main driving factor for campesinos, feminists, students, and other Nicaraguans.

Appendix: 19 Reasons Why the Ortega Party Should Go

This is a translation of an article that originally appeared on a Basque feminist site. The original article includes further resources regarding each point. We include it here to give greater context for how participants in the uprising are expressing their grievances.

1. For raping his stepdaughter, Zoilamerica Ortega-Murillo, since she was 12 years old. This occurred even during the Sandinista Revolution in the 1980s. Zoilamerica has been in exile in Costa Rica for years, escaping persecution in Nicaragua. When Zoilamerica denounced Daniel Ortega in the 1990s, for many this marked the beginning of the deterioration of the Sandinista Party, which slowly became the Orteguista Party.

the past. After 300 people have been murdered, after we have witnessed the lengths the Orteguista government is willing to go to ensure its supremacy, we need to change the political field completely and throw out the traditional approach to political participation and representation. People must be willing to critique and stand against these movements and their allies if they see that history is repeating again.

I find hope in another popular chant, “*El pueblo ni se rinde, ni se vende*”—the people neither give up nor sell themselves. There has been a popular call against “selling out,” started by students in relationship to the *Unión Nacional de Estudiantes de Nicaragua* (UNEN), and also by the *Autoconvocados* that refuse to participate in electoral politics. Hopefully this call will resonate just as strongly in the future.

If the right wing gains traction, they will have to deal with the feminists and their critique of the state and patriarchy; they will have to deal with the students and the demand for an accessible, high-quality, free, and autonomous education; they will have to deal with the demands of the campesinos that there be no more extractive industries in their land or on indigenous land; they will have to deal with the new Nicaraguan left, which is anti-authoritarian and opposed to corruption; they will have to deal with the people’s demand for transparency and direct democracy. If a new government messes with one sector, they will mess with all sectors—provided the calls for “unity” hold.

The current movements need to provide for the necessities of the people and develop an intersectional understanding of oppression. Hopefully, even if they gain representation in future governments, they will continue to operate outside of the gov-

that is not entirely in line with the Ortega agenda. UCA is considered a middle-class university devoted to the humanities; its students have played a critical role in the uprisings. SOSIndioMaiz and OcupaINSS both involved UCA student initiative. This is seen as government revenge against these students, but it also places additional pressure on the insurrection to work towards a future in which education is autonomous, accessible, and critical of authority.

- Weekly protests continue all over the country, all targeted by state repression.

Tensions, Divisions, and Realities

The people of Nicaragua are revolting against Ortega on the grounds that he represents authoritarianism, lack of transparency, the embezzlement of public funds, the co-option of supposedly neutral institutions like the police and medical system,² the exploitation of natural resources, the harassment of social movement leaders, and the hijacking of the education system.

² For example, police as well as paramilitaries display the FLSN flag, and children’s history books laud the Ortega government. The day immediately after UNAN was raided by paramilitaries, the FLSN flag was raised on campus.

This is not a centralized movement; all the demands and criticism of Ortega complement each other, but these demands are specific to different themes and regions. For example, Masaya has no student movement, per se, and the students are presenting very different demands than the campesino movement. There have been some efforts to centralize all the demands into a single common organization, but the present conditions have not allowed for the necessary meetings to occur.

At the beginning, the unified concentration was the *Alianza Cívica*. This group, *la Alianza Cívica* (the Civil Alliance), is a coalition including students, farmers, and members of “civil society,” the ones promoting the dialogue with the government moderated by the Catholic Church. The *Alianza* has maintained its role of calling for protests and marches, but it has been losing power since the government is no longer negotiating with it and most of the resistance has been organized autonomously. The only reason the *Alianza* was formed was to mediate the conversation with the government; it wasn’t intended to undertake long-term grassroots organizing efforts or to form a political party. Meanwhile, the *Autoconvocados* movement, a decentralized movement under a common name, continues encouraging all the protesting sectors, pressuring the *Alianza*, and organizing protests and marches. The demonstrations that draw thousands into the streets of Managua are the combined efforts of the *Alianza*, the *Autoconvocados*, the student groups, and “civil society.”

Inside and outside of the *Alianza*, discontent is growing with the *Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada en Nicaragua*

ought to recognize the demands of all the sectors that have participated in the uprising.

Participants in the student movements, the feminist movement, and the campesino movement should realistically consider whether a new political party and new elections can fulfill their demands. The truth is that electoral approaches will almost certainly water down the demands of the social movements, if they could fulfill them at all. To give these movements some credit, we hope that they will continue to protest with the same intensity against the next government if their demands aren’t met.

If elections occur in 2019 and the social movements don’t reach consensus on what kind of party they want to form, instead running with multiple parties, they risk dividing the opposition and losing against Ortega. From this vantage point, it is unclear whether Daniel Ortega would run for president.

Currently, no one has started campaigning for office; it has not been a priority because the anticipated elections have not been announced yet. All attention has been focused on the present, on condemning the violence, protecting all the people who are being persecuted, and trying to hold Ortega accountable.

There are already many politicians who want to take advantage of the situation. Recently, the chief right-wing political party in Nicaragua, the PLC, stated that it wanted to participate in the dialogue; but this was massively rejected on social media, on account of the oppressive history of the PLC.

All political parties and social movements need to take care not to perpetuate the mistakes that have been committed in

omy even if future governments distance themselves from the United States economic policies? Looking at hundreds of years of US intervention in Latin America, this seems unlikely, to say the least.

Thinking Ahead

The biggest fight right now is against authoritarianism, in whatever shape it takes. If the current popular insurrection is a reaction against everything that Ortega is, then the alternative would be a Nicaragua that is autonomous.

What does “autonomous” mean? For students, it means a free education without government intervention and manipulation. For feminists, it means that the government ought to keep its laws off women’s bodies while creating social and economic programs foster women’s independence from men. For the campesino movement, it means control and agency over their lands. For others, it would mean building a political organization that protects people’s rights and guarantees free health and education. In any case, autonomy means prioritizing the demands of the Nicaraguan people over those of international corporations.

Autonomy would mean abandoning the cutthroat policies of the Ortega government. It would mean respecting indigenous territories, expelling corporate mining companies, and rejecting the neoliberal policies that affect campesinos the most. Whatever government follows Ortega ought to radically change its political structure. It will be facing a population that has suffered under both right-wing and “left-wing populist” governments. It

(COSEP). COSEP is the chamber of private business, and they have yet to declare a National Strike that would bring pressure to bear against the Ortegas. Many believe that the window of opportunity for a strategic and effective National Strike has already closed. This “betrayal” from COSEP has diminished their political power.

Furthermore, some student groups have met with right-wing politicians in the United States and El Salvador, causing even more tensions among students and citizens. There are many different student organizations represented in the *Alianza*, and no one can speak on behalf of the others. For example, student organizations like the *Coordinadora Universitaria por la Democracia y la Justicia (CUDJ)*, *Alianza Universitaria Nicaraguense (AUN)* and the *Articulation of Social Movements and Civil Society (AMSOSC)*, all members of the *Alianza*, want nothing to do with US Republicans, and communicating with the United States is not their priority.

The context has shifted a great deal over the past month. Starting last weekend, everybody who participated in the UNAN occupation or in the resistance in Monimbo is being hunted and persecuted. Over 700 people are detained and many are missing; the state now has the legal foundation to charge protesters with terrorism, and vice president Rosario Murillo has emphasized several times in radio communiqués that the “terrorists” will be persecuted. In response, Costa Rica has set up two refugee camps in San Jose, and those who can afford to flee are leaving the country. The majority of the protestors who experienced direct confrontation with the paramilitaries are now hiding in safehouses.

In this situation, it is difficult for grassroots groups to organize, since they will immediately face the paramilitary forces that are constantly patrolling rural and cities streets. Nevertheless, there were massive marches celebrating the “Day of the Student” on July 23 and the “March of the Flowers.” Thousands have attended these marches and the paramilitary forces did not attack them. However, on account of the presence of paramilitaries, there is still a self-imposed citywide curfew at night.

Because of this situation, many people have set their hopes on the international community putting more pressure and sanctions on Ortega, hoping this will force Ortega to negotiate an exit. These hopes are motivated by the solidarity that Nicaragua has received from the international left, the resolution from the Organization of American States (OAS), and also—unfortunately—the involvement of the United States.

Relying on foreign intervention contradicts the popular chant *Solo el pueblo salva al pueblo*, “Only the people save the people,” a common demand for autonomy. Consequently, another part of the movement has been investing more in marches and protests as a way to take back the streets.

People working from outside of Nicaragua are setting up systems of support to give the Nicaraguan popular insurrection visibility and to prepare for the long-term battle ahead. The networks that are being built now are intended to provide solidarity to Nicaraguans on the ground, expose the actions of the Ortegaista Party, and, most importantly, build relationships that will be helpful in the future.

efits from its relations with Nicaragua. Nicaragua was the number one tourist destination in Central America, and expatriates from the United States were slowly relocating there. Nicaragua was a desirable destination for investment dollars due to its “economic and political stability.”

In Daniel Ortega’s second live speech to address the crisis, back in April, he appeared alongside a United States sweatshop owner, assuring him that things would go back to normal and that his business would not be affected. In his interview with Fox News on July 23, it appeared that he wanted to assure people in the United States that Nicaragua is still a stable place to invest in... while at the same time, in an interview with Telesur, he told viewers that the United States is financing the opposition.

The United States also benefits from Nicaragua’s immigration policy, which prohibits the transit of thousands of people who are trying to cross Nicaragua on their way overland to the United States.

The demands of the campesino movement are the chief factor that contradicts the agenda of the United States. Reacting against corporate mining companies, extractive industries, and monocrop industrial agriculture is a key element of the movement. If these demands were fulfilled, the United States would have to stop looking at Nicaragua as a place to extract resources from and invest money in for the sake of turning a profit.

The other factor that contradicts the agenda of the United States is the demand for autonomy. On what conditions will the United States help Nicaragua? Will they help us achieve auton-

ple to Western-centric ideas about “development” and “democracy.”

In view of the concentration of power under Ortega, the lack of infrastructure connecting Nicaragua and the international left, and the fact that Nicaragua has not been able to develop critically, academically, or socially, it is very likely that the social movements will accept all sorts of help, including from the United States.

US support for the Contras in the 1980s is well known. The more recent machinations of the United States against Ortega can be traced back to the Nica Act, which aimed to tie Nicaragua to Venezuela and Cuba as authoritarian socialist governments. We are experiencing a second wave of this kind of anti-socialism, which ebbed a bit during Obama’s presidency, when Obama and Cuba initiated a process of “normalizing” relations. The Obama administration did not make any major statements about Nicaragua, but actually implemented more neoliberal policies.

It is interesting that the United States government is now criticizing Ortega when it has benefited so much from *Orteguismo*. Presumably, the US worked with Ortega while he seemed like the only option, but now that it appears possible to arrange for an even more neoliberal government to take power in Nicaragua, this is the new priority. It is also a question of which government will be best at stabilizing Nicaragua for the sake of investment.

The United States government has major investments in Nicaragua—in free trade zones, *maquilas*, and tourism. Until April 2018, the United States drew tremendous economic ben-

Many of these international efforts, like the *Caravana de la Solidaridad Internacional*, a group of *autoconvocados* that has been traveling Europe for three months, have prioritized meeting with left-wing groups and organizations; they do not meet with right-wing groups. In cities across the world that have Nicaraguan immigrants, people are creating their own *Autoconvocado* affinity groups and organizing marches, manifestations, and declarations. But there are also *autoconvocado* groups that are in the United States talking to Democrats and Republicans.

This is the reality in a diverse movement based on unity against a common enemy. People will advocate for whatever they believe will solve the crisis. The short-term goals of all of these movements are “justice” and “democracy,” in the vaguest sense: justice for the victims, democracy in the government.

It is surprising how different movements have been able to come together. For example, the feminist movement and the Catholic Church cooperated in one demonstration. Another example is Francisca Ramirez, a leader from the *Movimiento Campesino*, joining the March for Sexual Diversity. The joke is that “Only Ortega has been capable of uniting feminists, atheists, Catholics, the LGBT community, and students.” But in terms of practice, there is not much discussion about how these differences are being addressed.

The hope is that a new government would open a national dialogue in which all the sectors and movements that participated in the insurrection could have a platform to present their specific demands and reach consensus together. This is optimistic, to say the least. But it’s hard to start framing long-term

goals in the present context of mass immigration and criminalization.

The Ortega government is also working on a day-by-day basis. We doubt that they have a long-term strategy, since everything has been escalating so rapidly. Recently, their strategy has been for Daniel Ortega to give controlled interviews to the international press. These interviews have backfired as the opposition keeps calling out Ortega's lies.

One thing that has not changed—that has not even been questioned—has been the nationalism at the basis of the movement. The current struggles are understood in a historical context, revisiting the history of the resilient Nicaraguan people standing up to their enemies, going all the way back to Sandino, who remains the most respected revolutionary nationalist. This is the second thing Nicaraguans have in common in the struggle: the first is that they detest Ortega, the second is that they are all Nicaraguans. The entire resistance has been based around this idea of shared national identity. Many see this popular uprising as an attempt to reclaim Nicaragua from the Ortuistas.

There have been moments of solidarity that transcend nationalism. For example, Costa Rica has historically been a rival to Nicaragua, but the new Costa Rican government has supported Nicaraguan rebels on the ground and in diplomatic meetings. This has disrupted the antagonistic notion of nationalism that Nicaraguans used to have.

The Involvement of the United States Government

People who advocate for the United States to intervene economically and with direct sanctions like the Nica Act and the Magnitsky Act claim that the United States is the only force capable of pressuring Daniel Ortega. The demands for the United States to intervene are not just coming from right-wing groups; there are many people who want the violence to stop and see US intervention as the only solution. Of course, US economic intervention is likely to cause harm to ordinary Nicaraguans, as well.

The United States has already intervened in Nicaragua by imposing sanctions, freezing US bank accounts, revoking the visas of government officials, and investing in Nicaraguan "Human rights, Journalism, and Leadership" through USAID. USAID is supposed to promote journalism to expose Ortega's corruption and fund "human rights organizations" so that they can document human rights abuses.

The response to USAID has been diverse. In a country like Nicaragua, where a lot of the population depends on the assistance of NGOs to survive, many people will accept this help. USAID has helped run schools and invest in social infrastructure, but this is only successful because of the failures of the government and the longstanding asymmetry in wealth resulting from colonial resource extraction. The government has not had the capacity to reach rural and Caribbean communities, where NGOs have worked established themselves. This perpetuates the non-profit-industrial complex and exposes peo-