

Editorial

U.S. push sends Ortega to Soviets

Nicaraguan leader Daniel Ortega's meeting with Soviet President Konstantin Chernenko yesterday was not a happy event for Western observers, but it shouldn't have been much of a surprise.

The United States was largely responsible for that conference. Our government, indirectly, did everything but buy Ortega's plane ticket.

Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young has described the model for Third World-Moscow romance. Young says that many Third World revolutions are rebellions against exploitative regimes, popular revolts against oppression. The rebels have two places to go for assistance, the USSR and the United States, via various stooge nations. Since the United States is more often than not the muscle behind the oppressive governments, rebels turn to the Soviets, not necessarily out of any affinity to Soviet doctrines or methods, but by the process of elimination.

Nicaragua fits that model only too well. The United States backed the Somoza regime, turning its head on that government's abuses for the sake of keeping Nicaragua in the fold. However, it was Somoza, not Nicaragua, who was in the fold, and the Sandinista rebellion united the government with the people.

The United States has stood firmly behind the counter-revolutionary Contras, pseudo-covertly, in their efforts



to disrupt the Sandinista government's essays at rebuilding Nicaragua, going so far as to conduct its own terrorist campaigns such as mining Nicaraguan harbors. Reagan administration officials have made only forked-tongue offers at negotiation with Nicaraguan officials, claiming a desire for peace talks while simultaneously pressing for increased aid to the Contras and

further direct American involvement. Nicaragua's attachment to Moscow is not good — for Nicaragua or for Central America. The Soviet Union does not have good intentions and will not have a positive influence. The cost of its aid to the Sandinista government could well be dear for the Nicaraguan people. But when American officials go searching for a culprit, when we want

to know who is responsible for Ortega being in Moscow now, we need look no farther than Washington. And in five years, we may well be able to say the same of the latest example of Young's model for Western aid to Soviet expansionism, El Salvador. One thing about the United States — we sure know how to flog a dead horse.

Christopher Burbach

White House lethargic to racial issues

Several years ago, when my career was going nowhere, I had lunch with an editor and asked why I had not been promoted. Women and blacks, he said. And I, true liberal that I am, nearly collapsed in a paroxysm of guilt that soon turned to outrage. Why me? I asked.

The editor had no answer. He had quotas to meet, once mandated by progressive social policy, not to mention potential legal suits. It hardly mattered to him whether the women and the blacks being promoted at my expense were younger or older than me, had started their careers before or after me, or were then doing better or worse work than I was. Not only were they not true victims of discrimination, but even if they were, I was not their persecutor.

Richard Cohen

As a result, I have since had a very personal perspective on the issue of quotas or affirmative action — whatever the fancy term for a situation where someone is helped on account of race or sex at the expense of someone else. That's why a little cheer went up within me when the Supreme Court reversed a Memphis affirmative action plan that was substituted for a traditional seniority system.

But it was really just a little cheer because, the previous week, newspapers had published yet another episode in a long-running American horror story: the plight of blacks.

Since 1978, the number of blacks enrolled in college has actually declined — from 10.8 percent of all undergraduates to 9.8 in 1982.

If you're talking unemployment and desperate poverty, college education is a mere nothing — even though it's essential to the expansion of the black middle class. But the numbers represent countless personal tragedies, real people who could have done something with their lives. A mind might be a terrible thing to waste, but the Reagan administration is wasting them by the millions.

Statistics are hard to come by, but it's the assumption of experts that the chief reason for the decline in black enrollment is the reduction in federal aid — both real and perceived.

It would be one thing if the Reagan administration were fighting quotas while simultaneously doing everything

in its power to overcome the effects of past — and present — discrimination. But it is not. Instead, it is vocal and energetic in battling quotas, and downright lethargic when it comes to programs such as student aid which could be of assistance to blacks. By rhetoric, by legislation, by court suit, the administration has all but told blacks that it's

unsympathetic to their problems. What really gets its dander up, though, is the occasional white who suffers in an attempt to remedy past discrimination.

It is important for the government to stand up for the individual — to assert, as it did in Memphis, that a person is not just a member of a race but foremost an individual. But it is just as important to recognize the problems of racism and do something about them.

If quotas and the like are to be discarded, then at the very least the pie of opportunity for blacks (and for women) has to be expanded. So far, this administration has been interested in doing one and not the other. It summons up oodles of outrage for the victims of reverse discrimination, but almost none for the victims of traditional discrimination. The effect is that when it comes to both social conscience and outrage, the administration has a quota of its own.

And blacks need not apply.

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Where else could they turn?

Slowly, ever so slowly, the lies the Reagan administration has been telling the American people for so many months are being exposed.

Jeff Goodwin

Last week an article in the New York Times told about a former CIA employee whose area of expertise was Central America. He worked for the CIA up until this year and he thinks, contrary to the claims of the Reagan administration, that the Sandinista government represents no threat to its Central American neighbors.

How could it be? The Sandinistas are too busy fighting off the U.S.-backed Contras to have time to worry about anything else.

Much will be made of Nicaraguan leader Daniel Ortega's visit to Moscow this week. Where else are the Sandinistas to turn? The government of the United States, by its hostile statements and aid to the Contras, has made clear its attitude toward the Sandinistas.

Look at it this way: There's two banks — the bank of Ronald and the bank of Konstantin. Senor Ortega owns a small failing business. He needs a loan to get his business back on its feet. But the bank of Ronald is trying to run him out of business. So he has to go to the bank of Konstantin.

There are other chinks in the armor as well. A new book, "And Also Teach Them To Read" by Sheryll Hirshon, tells

how the Sandinista government has struggled to eliminate illiteracy in Nicaragua. To a great degree it has been successful, bringing the illiteracy rate down from 50 percent to 12 percent.

Hirshon, an American, still teaches Nicaragua. She writes passionately, but honestly, about the Sandinistas' struggles to organize the literacy crusade. It's impossible to read this book and not feel that the people of Nicaragua are better off now than they were under Somoza.

Incidentally, the Latin American country with the highest rate of literacy is Cuba. Say what you will about the Cubans, at least they can read the Wall Street Journal.

Sooner or later the lies will catch up with Reagan. They always do. Already the administration's lies about the mining of Nicaraguan harbors has drawn the criticism of Barry Goldwater. Goldwater is hardly a flaming liberal or pinko but he is a decent man. Most people are when they know the truth and the blinders are starting to come off.

This is all the more fortunate since Reagan looks to be heading for a landslide victory in the fall. It's important to get the message across that the fall election is not a referendum on sending Marines into the streets of Managua. Otherwise, Reagan will be tempted to try more of his Wild West diplomacy.

As someone once said, "Seek the truth and it shall set ye free." In this case it may set the people of Nicaragua free, too.

Daily Nebraskan

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