

The Public Debate Over Carter's Human Rights Foreign Policy: Nicaragua, 1977-1979

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## Abstract

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*This paper looks at the views of intellectuals regarding Jimmy Carter's human rights foreign policy because Carter was the first president who overtly made human rights a part of his policies. He wanted the United States to be a champion of rights around the world. There has not been an extensive study as to what intellectuals during his presidency thought of his policies. To narrow the topic further, this essay focuses on the thoughts about U.S. policies toward Nicaragua. Research included looking at two American newspapers, numerous magazines and the opposition newspaper La Prensa in Nicaragua, digitally, as well as in print and on microfilm. Through this research, I found that intellectuals in the United States thought Carter's policies were uneven in their application, by favoring allies and communist countries and condemning actions in Third World countries. Writers for La Prensa thought that human rights could and should be promoted by the United States; but by 1979, the writers for La Prensa had seen little beneficial change on the ground in Nicaragua. A consensus of writers in the United States and in Nicaragua was that if human rights were to be pursued as foreign policy, then it needed a concrete definition and severe consequences for those governments that violated the rights of their people.*

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## Timeline

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20 January 1977	Jimmy Carter sworn into office
23 September 1977	State of siege lifted in Nicaragua along with censorship and curfew
5 October 1977	U.S. approves military aid to Nicaragua, denies economic aid
19 October 1977	Sandinistas launch major attack against National Guard
10 January 1978	Pedro Joaquín Chamorro assassinated
12 January 1978	Rioting/ strikes across Nicaragua in protest of Chamorro's death
28 January 1978	Martial law instated, along with censorship and a curfew
16 May 1978	Aid released to Nicaragua in policy reversal
30 June 1978	Carter sends letter to Somoza praising him on improved conditions and for allowing Commission of Human Rights to come in to make a report
22 August 1978	Rebels take and hold the National Palace with hostages
13 September 1978	Martial law declared again along with censorship and a curfew because of the intense fighting
17 November 1978	OAS Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Nicaragua
November 1978	U.S. led mediation for a plebiscite, along with Guatemala and Dominican Republic
8 December 1978	Martial law lifted
January 1979	Pursuit of plebiscite abandoned
21 May 1979	Mexico pleads with U.S. to sever ties with Somoza, after breaking ties themselves
6 June 1979	Anastasio Somoza declares state of siege for the last time
12 June 1979	<i>La Prensa</i> building burned to the ground during fighting in Managua
14 June 1979	U.S. asks for OAS involvement in Nicaragua situation
23 June 1979	OAS meeting to oust Somoza
7 July 1979	Somoza agrees to leave at U.S. timing
17 July 1979	Anastasio Somoza Debayle flees Nicaragua

## Map of Nicaragua



<sup>1</sup> Maps provided by lonelyplanet.com

## Introduction

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Jimmy Carter was the first American president to center his foreign policy on human rights. He sought to change the world and how the United States interacted with the world. He saw that all humans deserved certain rights, but that in numerous countries around the world governments did not respect those rights. Carter changed U.S. foreign policy to promote the respect and recognition of human rights abroad by oppressive regimes, not just for his four years in office but even now. He has been the most significant political figure in the last forty years who has promoted and fought for human rights, even after he left office. Even now at age eighty-eight, he works abroad criticizing governments and leaders for how they treat their people.

Roughly fourteen years after Carter left the White House, genocide occurred in Rwanda. The Hutus rose up against the minority Tutsis with the purpose of completely destroying them. In 1994, Paul Simon (D, IL), a senator during President Clinton's administration, said, "We don't feel there is a base of public support for taking any action in Africa."<sup>2</sup> A press conference was never even held to inform the American public about the one-hundred-day genocide in Rwanda because Simon said, "I just assumed nobody would show up."<sup>3</sup> The American public knew little about the genocide because the government made the decision for the American people that they would not care about the Hutus destroying the Tutsi population in Rwanda. President Clinton also said that his administration would have supported General Dalliere of the UN Peacekeepers but "did not fully appreciate the depth or the speed with which [the Tutsi] were

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<sup>2</sup> Stephanie Power, *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 376.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 377.

being engulfed by this unimaginable terror.”<sup>4</sup> In her book *A Problem From Hell*, Stephanie Power argues that if the public had protested and informed the government that they thought something should be done, President Clinton would have done something to help the Tutsi.

During Carter’s administration, he lived up to his call of “Never again!” and did what he could to stop human rights violations abroad, and American public intellectuals made it known that they supported or did not support his policies. The general consensus was that his policies could have been more effective if they had been enforced.

During Carter’s years in office, human rights foreign policy had many faces in different parts of the world. In Latin America, there was a fear of communism spreading due to the people’s unrest because of oppressive dictators.<sup>5</sup> One such example, on which this paper will focus, is Nicaragua. President and General Anastasio Somoza was the third of the Somozas who ruled in Nicaragua. He controlled not only the government but also the military and police force—the National Guard. The political and civil rights of Nicaraguans were limited and abused. The government arrested those who opposed Somoza’s rule, and they were never to be seen alive again. In addition to this, the people of Nicaragua lived in dire poverty and could not provide enough for their families’ subsistence.

Knowledge of the events in Nicaragua led Americans to speak up about whether or not the U.S. government should have been involved in what was happening under the presidency of Somoza. Future U.S. presidents could learn from Carter’s example to act, even if the American public did not know about the situation in full and did not voice their concern of the U.S. needing

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>5</sup> For the rest of the paper, Latin America refers to Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America, unless otherwise stated.



to intervene in the conflict. Unfortunately, in the case of Rwanda, the American government did not see any benefits to helping the Tutsi.

Numerous historians, journalists, intellectuals, and Congressmen have written about Carter's stance on human rights. Were Americans behind Carter's desire to pursue these universal rights for those in other countries? For those who supported Carter's foreign policy, how did they think that it could have been improved to further human rights throughout the world. In addition to this, what did Nicaraguan writers think about American involvement and efforts to better their lives by pressuring their government to respect them as human with rights?

In an invaluable article written in 2004 about Jimmy Carter's human rights foreign policy, which drew on newly released confidential government information, authors David F. Schmitz and Vanessa Walker argue, "Carter succeeded in shifting the discourse on American foreign policy away from the dominant concerns of the Cold War and containment."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, any research on Carter's foreign policy must be framed in light of human rights and their influence on formulating U.S. foreign policy. Their article looks at how Carter broke from Cold War foreign policy and how it influenced future presidents' foreign policy. Other articles and books that look at Carter's human rights foreign policy before this information was released do not provide a complete picture of what was going on during his administration and why certain policies were instituted. The views of intellectuals during the Carter years need to be assessed in light of this new information. Most historians before Schmitz and Walker argued that Carter's policies were inconsistent in their implementation against national governments that were violating the rights of their people. Schmitz and Walker claim, through use of the new

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<sup>6</sup> David F. Schmitz and Vanessa Walker, "Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 28 (January 2004):114.

confidential information available, that one can see that Carter and his advisers were well aware of the potential problems with human rights as a foreign policy. There was a deep commitment to human rights as much as was feasible in light of other considerations that had to be taken into account in making foreign policy. To see how deeply imbedded human rights was in how Carter approached foreign policy, they looked at Nicaragua as an example.

Another recent scholar Betty Glad wrote a book about Carter and his advisers in drafting foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> She argues that Carter's human rights foreign policy seemed inconsistent because of the outside influences on Carter in conceiving those foreign policies. Ultimately, Carter signed off on the foreign policy that would be implemented, but he and the advisers who surrounded him developed it. A couple of these influential men, Glad argues, were Zbigniew Brzezinski, his National Security Adviser, and Cyrus Vance, his Secretary of State. Vance and Brzezinski were opposites politically and therefore pulled Carter to make decisions that were sometimes compromises, and at other times, were more liberal or more conservative. In this way, his policies did not seem focused on promoting human rights.

In an article on American public opinion, Andrew Z. Katz argues that Carter's administration misused the information they gathered regarding what the American public thought about his foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> By using Gallup Polls and other polls published in newspapers such as the *New York Times*, Katz interprets the information that Carter could have gathered and how it should have been used, and then compares his results to how he saw the Carter administration utilizing this information. He finally argues that Carter did not have the support

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<sup>7</sup> Betty Glad, *An Outside in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Z. Katz, "Public Opinion and the Contradictions of Jimmy Carter's Foreign Policy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30 (December 2000): 662-687.

he could have had for his human rights foreign policy because this information on public opinion was not used to his advantage. However, Katz only focused on polls of the American public and did not look at any sentiments published by American intellectuals to see why they felt the way they did.

This paper looks at magazines, representing a range of viewpoints, and at the two most widely read newspapers in the United States—the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*—to see what the sentiments were among published intellectuals and editorials, while also including the sentiments of those who wrote for *La Prensa*, an opposition newspaper in Nicaragua.<sup>9</sup> How the educated in the United States viewed foreign policy should be taken into consideration because the government is supposed to be the extension of the will of the people—at least in theory. These individuals also had a different view of foreign policy because they were not involved in the formulating of foreign policy and had invaluable insight as to how the government’s actions appeared to Americans. This paper looks at how individuals criticized Carter’s human rights foreign policy and what they thought it should have been as well as how Carter tried to promote human rights in that policy. In order to look at these intellectuals’ thoughts during this two-and-a-half year period, this paper is broken up into four chapters.

The first chapter, “Setting the Stage,” begins with an overview of Jimmy Carter’s human rights foreign policy. Next, it includes a look into how Carter defined human rights through the use of his speeches. It ends with Carter’s foreign policy aims for Nicaragua due to government abuse of human rights, how the president General Anastasio Somoza Debayle came to power in Nicaragua, and a brief history of the relations in Nicaragua between the government, the military force of the National Guard, and the opposition, both intellectuals and guerrillas.

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<sup>9</sup> The magazines used in this paper are *Commentary*, *The Nation*, *National Review*, and *New Republic*.

Chapters two, three, and four are the heart of the paper. Chapter two focuses only on important events of 1977 and articles written during that year that show what American intellectuals thought of Carter's human rights foreign policy, first generally and then specifically in Nicaragua, and concludes with articles from *La Prensa* about Carter's policy generally and towards their country.

The third chapter continues the story in 1978. First, it covers the views of Carter's human rights policy in general for the year with the bulk of the chapter focusing on policies toward Nicaragua, following the year's events chronologically through both U.S. and Nicaraguan sources.

In chapter four, the story concludes in July of 1979 with a regime change in Nicaragua from the Somoza dynasty to the Sandinista junta, an eclectic group of Marxists, professionals, and guerrilla fighters, who took control of the government by force while Somoza fled the country. This chapter illustrates the final views of American and Nicaraguan intellectuals and editorial writers alike as to what Carter's foreign policy should have been toward Nicaragua's government, and how human rights failed as a policy.

## Chapter One: *Setting the Stage*

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When Jimmy Carter became the U.S. President on 20 January 1977, foreign policy toward Latin America was focused mainly on the Monroe Doctrine and American interests south of the border. Carter wanted instead to change the focus of American foreign policy to human rights as long as national security, containment of the Soviet Union's influence, and American business interests were not going to be compromised.<sup>10</sup>

Jimmy Carter desired to change American foreign policy because he believed all humans possessed unalienable rights that should be protected. He explained what he wanted to do during his time in office: "We're trying to have enhancement of world peace, focusing on human rights."<sup>11</sup> In his view this was a "sound policy" for the United States to promote "the enhancement of human rights on a worldwide basis."<sup>12</sup> In Carter's opinion, people everywhere have rights as pronounced in the United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Rights"; and under Carter's guidance, the United States sought to protect them when their governments did not.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, "Security Assistance Programs Letter to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate Transmitting Proposed Legislation," *The American Presidency Project* (March 28, 1977) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7243>, (accessed May 15, 2012); David Schmitz and Vanessa Walker, "Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 28 (January 2004): 113.

<sup>11</sup> Jimmy Carter, Interview, "Interview with the President Question-and-Answer Session with Bill Moyers of the Public Broadcasting Service," *The American Presidency Project* (November 13, 1978) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30161>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Jimmy Carter, Interview, "Interview with the President and Mrs. Carter Question-and-Answer Session with Barbara Walters of the American Broadcasting Company," *The American Presidency Project* (December 14, 1978) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30303>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, "Shimoda, Japan Remarks and Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting," *The American Presidency Project* (June 27, 1979) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32556>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

Even the people serving him in the Executive Branch, the Cabinet, and the National Security Council were chosen partially because of their commitment to advocate for human rights. Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, wrote in his memoirs, "I felt strongly that a major emphasis on human rights as a component of U.S. foreign policy would advance America's global interests by demonstrating to the emerging nations of the Third World the reality of our democratic system, in sharp contrast to the political system and practices of our adversaries."<sup>14</sup> Carter's Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, was also a spokesman for human rights as a theme for foreign policy. This was evident in the number of speeches he gave throughout Carter's term in which he defended the President's position that human rights were an important aspect of foreign policy, despite his not being involved in designing that policy. Another tradition that Carter did not follow was that the Secretary of State should design and implement foreign policy. Instead, his National Security Adviser was the extension of his will. Brzezinski and Carter had a standing meeting every morning in which Brzezinski briefed the President on world events and also gave his advice on how best to respond to arising foreign policy issues.

Brzezinski played a large role in educating Carter before and while he was in office so that he would make the most informed decisions possible. In order to prepare for one of the most important roles that a president plays, Jimmy Carter read and learned as much as he could about United States foreign policy before he took the oath of office. According to Brzezinski in his book *Power and Principle*, he prepared short papers concerning previous and current U.S. foreign policy so that Carter would know what was going on and how the United States had acted in past situations. Reading the papers and discussing them with Brzezinski helped to

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<sup>14</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: The Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985), 124.

increase Carter's understanding of American foreign policy procedures.<sup>15</sup> Carter urged a more peaceful and less intrusive method of involvement that would allow for state sovereignty and democracy abroad instead of military occupation, as his predecessors emphasized.<sup>16</sup> Carter addressed a joint session of Congress: "We've gained new trust with the developing world through our opposition to racism, our commitment to human rights, and our support for majority rule in Africa."<sup>17</sup> Because Carter was a president during the Cold War, all of his foreign policy reflected the influence of containment and anti-communism. The constant international tensions with the Soviet Union colored what he could feasibly do regarding human rights overseas. This was more evident in Eastern European than in Latin American relations, as the U.S. has exerted more influence in Latin America than in any other region since President James Monroe established the Monroe Doctrine in 1823.

Carter did not see it as necessary to be the hovering parent of these nations; rather, he saw the need to promote human rights, by rewarding those who respected them and punishing those who did not. In a speech when arriving in Jackson, Mississippi, Carter remarked, "But we say that government ought not to subjugate people, that people ought to have a right to speak their own voice, that they ought not be imprisoned because they believe in a certain political philosophy, and I have been criticized for this stand. But I'll never back down, as long as you stick with me."<sup>18</sup> In a speech in Lagos, Nigeria, Carter further expressed his commitment to

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<sup>15</sup> Brzezinski, 6 and 18.

<sup>16</sup> Brzezinski, 48.

<sup>17</sup> Carter, "Address Before a Joint Session of Congress," 25.

<sup>18</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, "Jackson, Mississippi Remarks on Arrival at Allen C. Thompson Airport," *The American Presidency Project* (July 21, 1977) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7853>, (accessed June 2, 2012)

human rights: “Our concern for human rights extends throughout this continent and throughout the world. Whatever the ideology or the power or the race of a government that abuses the rights of its people, we oppose those abuses.”<sup>19</sup> Carter and his administration saw the United States in a unique position to provide help to the less fortunate around the world, and Carter felt a moral obligation to make it a better place whenever possible. Brzezinski wrote, “We all felt that the United States had a compassionate mission to perform and that American power should be applied not only to serve tangible American interests but, to the extent possible, also to help mankind improve its condition.”<sup>20</sup> As much as possible, human rights would be the guiding force of domestic and foreign policy during Carter’s administration. It would not be just rhetoric but action as well.

As much as Carter wanted to see the leaders of the Soviet Union respect the rights of their people more, he knew that pushing the issue could lead to more than a verbal argument. With the arms race at a standoff,<sup>21</sup> Carter said at a question-and-answer session in Clinton, Massachusetts, he was “trying to search with the Soviet Union for a way to reduce the horrible arms race” and “we are dealing with the Soviet Union, quietly and diplomatically and, I hope, effectively, to search out a way to reduce dependence on weapons without damaging at all our

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<sup>19</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, “Lagos, Nigeria Remarks at the National Arts Theatre,” *The American Presidency Project* (April 1, 1978) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30399>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Brzezinski, 123.

<sup>21</sup> The time Leonid Brezhnev served as the General Secretary of the Soviet Union is called the “era of stagnation” because he did not change much in domestic affairs, nor were tensions between the United States and the USSR as volatile, though the Cold War was still being fought in Third World countries over alliances to either the West or the Soviet Bloc.



Nation's own security.”<sup>22</sup> General Secretary Brezhnev was not one who would back down should the United States antagonize him. Because the fear of a nuclear war loomed over Carter if he chastised Brezhnev over his human rights violations, Carter had to largely leave the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc alone during his presidency. More lives would be saved if he did not pursue the human rights policy towards the Soviet Union than if he did.

In contrast, Latin American countries were what Brzezinski described as weak, and as such, “our influence was greater with weak and isolated countries than with those with whom we shared vital security interests.”<sup>23</sup> This meant our influence to change the human rights conditions in countries such as Brazil or Venezuela was minimal; however, smaller nations that were less developed and poor, like Nicaragua, were more easily influenced to change their ways.<sup>24</sup>

The one major problem with Carter’s new foreign policy was that he did not have a set definition of human rights on which he could act. Carter’s foreign policy response varied depending on the specific issues in the country abusing its citizens as well as on U.S. national security concerns and U.S. foreign allies’ interests. This made his policy seem arbitrary and inconsistent to intellectuals of the time as well as to historians who have written about his administration.<sup>25</sup> In their article “Jimmy Carter and His Foreign Policy of Human Rights,”

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<sup>22</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, “Clinton, Massachusetts Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the Clinton Town Meeting,” *The American Presidency Project* (March 16, 1977) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7180>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Brzezinski, 128.

<sup>24</sup> Brzezinski qtd. by John Osborne, “White House Watch: Zbiggy Zpeaks,” *The New Republic*, October 22 1977, 8-9.

<sup>25</sup> This is the main criticism of his foreign policy both in primary sources and in secondary accounts. The historiography in Schmitz and Walker’s article, “Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights” shows one of the many lists of books written by individuals who saw his policies as inconsistent.

Schmitz and Walker describe “the three main categories of human rights as: ‘the right to be free from governmental violations of the integrity of the person’; the ‘economic and social rights’ of the individual to ‘food, shelter, health care, and education’; and ‘the right to enjoy civil and political liberties,’ notably freedom of thought, religion, assembly, press, and speech.”<sup>26</sup> Carter and his administration focused mostly on political, civil and economic rights rather than social rights when it came to implementing policies, though in many speeches he referenced the duty of the United States to do something about the “basic right of every human being to be free of poverty and hunger and disease.”<sup>27</sup> Carter’s definition of human rights in speeches depended on his audience, because different kinds of rights were more important to different audiences.

For example, when Carter spoke in Nigeria, his speech about human rights focused on “majority rule and individual human rights” and the United States’ “commitment to economic growth and to human development,” along with “an Africa that is at peace, free from colonialism, free from racism, free from military interference by outside nations, and free from the inevitable conflicts that can come when the integrity of national boundaries are not respected.”<sup>28</sup> Whereas, when he spoke in Shimoda, Japan, he focused on “humane treatment of ...refugees... from Vietnam and South Asia” in the aftermath of the Korean and Vietnam Wars and support for those who could not stand up for themselves because of the repressive regime under which they lived.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Schmitz and Walker, 126.

<sup>27</sup> Jimmy Carter, Inaugural Speech, “Join Us in a Common Effort Based on Mutual Trust and Mutual Respect,” January 20, 1977, *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents*, Doc. 1, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Carter, “Lagos, Nigeria Remarks at the National Arts Theatre.”

<sup>29</sup> Carter, “Shimoda, Japan Remarks and Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting.”

To further his definition, in a news conference at the end of 1977, Carter addressed the crowd: “We have strengthened our foreign policy on human rights, and we are letting it be known clearly that the United States stands for the victims of repression. We stand with the tortured and the unjustly imprisoned and with those who have been silenced.”<sup>30</sup> Through these few speeches, one can see the breadth of what human rights could mean and how Carter sought to encourage different kinds of human rights abroad and domestically.

By looking at his speeches throughout 1977 when Carter was attempting to define and explain his position on human rights, one has an idea of how he wanted to define “human rights” and what was included in those rights. Carter’s loose definition included the “right to live”<sup>31</sup>; protection against wrongful imprisonment or detainment in a country;<sup>32</sup> and freedom of speech, written and spoken.<sup>33</sup> Carter broadened his definition further in a speech in Lagos, Nigeria, stating, “I believe, as I know you do as well, that every person also has a right to education, to health care, to nutrition, to shelter, to food, and to employment. These are the foundations on which men and women can build better lives.”<sup>34</sup> It was not feasible for Carter’s foreign policy to pursue such broad ranging human rights specifications; rather, this rhetoric showed the depth of his commitment to and belief in universal human rights.

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<sup>30</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, “The President’s News Conference,” *The American President Project* (December 15, 1977) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7016>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, “Genocide Convention Message to the Senate Recommending Ratification,” *The American Presidency Project* (May 23, 1977) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7572>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, “Democratic National Committee Dinner Remarks at the Fundraising Dinner in New York City,” *The American Presidency Project* (June 23, 1977) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7719>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Carter, “Jackson, Mississippi Remarks on Arrival at Allen C. Thompson Airport.”

<sup>34</sup> Carter, “Lagos, Nigeria Remarks at the National Arts Theatre.”

Jimmy Carter was not the only U.S. government official who was concerned with human rights. Before he assumed the presidency, Congress passed the Harkin Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which “set some of the parameters of the human-rights issue by placing significant restrictions on security assistance and economic aid to regimes that had exhibited”<sup>35</sup> a “consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.”<sup>36</sup> This Amendment set the precedent for the direction of President Carter’s foreign policy with regard to countries violating citizens’ rights. For example, in the case of Uganda, Carter issued an Executive Order that “prohibit[ed] a corporation, institution, group or individual from importing, directly or indirectly, into the United States or its territories or possessions any article grown, produced, or manufactured in Uganda.”<sup>37</sup> This Order was in effect from February of 1979 until the Ugandan regime was found no longer to be violating human rights later in May of the same year, when the restrictions were lifted by memorandum.<sup>38</sup> As with Uganda, the United States dealt with Latin American countries by utilizing embargos, sanctions, and restrictions of economic aid or military assistance. Every time Carter urged President Somoza of Nicaragua to end the state of oppression of his people, he threatened to reduce monetary aid to Nicaragua. This did not always work because Somoza acted as if he could push the envelope. Carter’s

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<sup>35</sup> Brzezinski, 124.

<sup>36</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1978, pt. 21: 28471, [HTTP://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/result/pqpresultpage.previewtitle/\\$2fapp-gis\\$2fcongreCORD\\$2fcr-1978-0907/Congressional+Record+Bound?accountid=14503](http://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/result/pqpresultpage.previewtitle/$2fapp-gis$2fcongreCORD$2fcr-1978-0907/Congressional+Record+Bound?accountid=14503), (accessed October 6, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> Executive Order No. 12,117, *Imports From Uganda*, *The American Presidency Project* <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=31746>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Jimmy Carter, Memorandum, “Human Rights in Uganda Memorandum on the Normalization of U.S.-Ugandan Trade Relations,” *The American Presidency Project* (May 15, 1979) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=32342>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

rhetoric of nonintervention and the fact that he had not occupied other nations who were also violating the rights of their people showed that Carter would not send American troops to take over Nicaragua or initiate an embargo as he had done toward Uganda. On the other hand, Somoza knew that his country was on the brink of bankruptcy and needed loans or economic aid to keep his government afloat, so he made concessions to keep receiving that aid.

Because Somoza's rhetoric and his actions did not always line up,<sup>39</sup> Amnesty International sent an inspection team into Nicaragua to investigate the situation and published a "Human Rights Report" in 1977 that showed the Somoza government and the National Guard were severely violating the rights of the people of Nicaragua.<sup>40</sup> Political prisoners were being tortured, summarily executed or detained for extended periods of time for no real reason except that they disagreed with Somoza in some way or were considered communist.<sup>41</sup> Somoza prided himself on being anti-communist, and would do or say whatever he needed to remain in the good graces of the United States.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Somoza charged in a *New York Times* article that "opposition leaders speak freely and vividly, the press prints articles critical of me or my administration, persons are free to travel, to gather and speak their minds." Anastasio Somoza Debayle, "Nicaragua Reviewed," *New York Times*, March 6, 1978. However, there were instances when *La Prensa* was attacked after some of their pointed criticisms (on April 21, 1978, a bomb was thrown through a window of the building), and there was the assassination of Somoza's harshest critic, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro.

<sup>40</sup> Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Human Rights Report for Nicaragua 1974-1976* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1977).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Pedro Joaquín Chamorro qtd. by Nick Thimmesch, "Somoza, Under U.S. Pressure, Defend Nicaragua Rule," *Chicago Tribune*, December 23, 1977.

His father had become president of Nicaragua in 1933 with the help of the U.S. Marines, who had succeeded in putting down a popular rebellion led by Augusto César Sandino.<sup>43</sup> Once Anastasio Somoza Garcia, father of Anastasio Somoza Debayle (president of Nicaragua from 1965-1979), was in power, he established the National Guard to protect his family, solidify his control of the nation, and serve as a military and police force against communism and internal rebellions.<sup>44</sup> Anastasio Somoza Debayle was put in charge of the National Guard when he came home to Nicaragua after graduating from West Point in 1942 and returning home in 1946.<sup>45</sup> The human rights abuses had begun under his father, who was authoritarian and anticommunist as well, having been supported by the United States when coming to power.

After Jimmy Carter's inauguration, Somoza sought to clean up his public image by openly telling his National Guard to start respecting the rights of the Nicaraguan people.<sup>46</sup> This included but was not limited to lessening the torture of political prisoners, arbitrary arrests of individuals, and stealing from the country folk. In 1977, the amount of damage inflicted on the people lessened, and Somoza denounced any reports of the National Guard continuing the aforementioned actions. He claimed that they were acting on their own and without his

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<sup>43</sup> Alan Riding, "U.S. Leads Efforts to Oust Somoza and Lead Nicaragua to Democracy," *New York Times*, November 16, 1978; Tad Szulc, "Rocking Nicaragua—the Rebels' Own Story," *The Washington Post*, September 3, 1978.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Stephen G. Rabe, *The Killing Zone* (New York: Oxford University, 2012), 150; Alan Riding, "In Nicaragua This May Be the Twilight of the Somozas," *New York Times*, October 30, 1977.

<sup>46</sup> This is according to a human rights report that was put out by the State Department, February 16, 1978.

permission when accusations were made.<sup>47</sup> Somoza knew of Carter's ardent human rights campaign and saw that if he wanted to keep U.S. aid and arms flowing into his country, his government and military would have to make an appearance of complying with U.S. demands.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the harsh treatment of political prisoners under Somoza, the general public lived under a state of siege<sup>49</sup> that lasted from 1974 to September of 1977, and that was reinstated in September of 1978, following after a month of what the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *La Prensa* called a civil war between the Sandinista guerrillas and the National Guard. The public also lived with censorship and sometimes suppression of newspapers and radio that opposed Somoza's rule. In addition to censorship, at times curfews were included in the state of siege, which were meant to prevent fighting in the city streets at night.<sup>50</sup>

At times during Carter's presidency, Somoza lifted martial law, censorship, and the curfew in order to appease the U.S. so he could get the loans he needed to keep Nicaragua's economy afloat. By 1979, Somoza's government was in need of a loan, which Somoza requested from the IMF in order to "avert bankruptcy."<sup>51</sup> His appeasements did not always work, and

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<sup>47</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "National Intelligence Daily Cable," March 7, 1977 *Declassified Documents Reference System* Doc. no. CK3100242259; "Nicaraguans Denounce Charge of Terrorism," *New York Times*, August 17, 1977; Anastasio Somoza Debayle, "Nicaragua Reviewed," *New York Times*, March 6, 1978.

<sup>48</sup> Riding, "In Nicaragua This May Be the Twilight of the Somozas."

<sup>49</sup> A common definition of a "state of siege" is that the government puts restrictions on the lives of its people. In Nicaragua in particular, it included censorship, curfews, and martial law. According to a report by Charles Wilson and George O'Brien, the state of siege in Nicaragua had three parts: "Substitution of the regular trial process by a military trial system...; the prohibition of public rallies; and press censorship."

<sup>50</sup> "In Nicaragua, Calm Before Likely Storm," *New York Times*, November 6, 1978.

<sup>51</sup> Karen DeYoung, "Nicaragua Asks Loan from IMF to Prevent Collapse of Economy," *Washington Post*, March 13, 1979.

specific loans he requested from IMF were denied because of the U.S. vote as a participant in IMF.<sup>52</sup> Even with international loans, the United States had a vote on approving funds to requesting countries. As “an apparent attempt to pressure Somoza,” the U.S. had made known that they would not approve a twenty million dollar loan to Nicaragua.<sup>53</sup> This was not the first or last time the United States would deny a loan in order to coerce Somoza into changing his ways or stepping down.

In 1977 it was obvious that the Somoza government was in trouble because of the amount of debt it had incurred as well as the unrest of the citizens.<sup>54</sup> The people were tired of starving and living in slums, with minimal education for future generations, a short lifespan (about forty-six years), and high infant mortality.<sup>55</sup> The Sandinistas grew in number and Somoza’s popularity declined. This change could be seen in the newspaper *La Prensa* as the rhetoric became increasingly anti-Somoza after censorship was lifted in September 1977. The violence between the Sandinista guerrillas and the National Guard also increased slowly until the civil war broke out in the fall of 1978 and then again the following summer in June and July, which led to the resignation of Somoza.

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<sup>52</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Human Rights and Foreign Assistance: Experience and Issues in Policy Implementation, 1977-1978*, 96<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1979, S. Rep. 382-41, 194-195.

<sup>53</sup> DeYoung, “Nicaragua Asks Loan from IMF to Prevent Collapse of Economy.”

<sup>54</sup> Morris H. Morley, *Washington, Somoza, and the Sandinistas: State and Regime in U.S. Policy Toward Nicaragua, 1969-1981* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89.

<sup>55</sup> Rabe, 150.



The Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN or Sandinistas for short) began as an opposition group to Somoza in 1961.<sup>56</sup> “Sandinista” came from Augusto César Sandino who fought against U.S.-supported Somoza family rule in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>57</sup> The Sandinistas evolved over time and did not have a set ideology, though some of their top leaders thought that Marxist socialism offered a good future for Nicaragua, while numerous others wanted Nicaragua to be a “pluralistic democracy.”<sup>58</sup> Writers for *La Prensa* openly advocated for democracy and liberties. By 1978, the Sandinistas were an eclectic group with Marxists, professionals, businessmen, and commoners with conflicting ideologies but with a common purpose—to remove Somoza from the presidency. There were three major factions within the larger FSLN movement. The Group of Twelve was made up of the professionals, clergymen, and wealthy businessmen who were moderate and advocated for democracy in Nicaragua.<sup>59</sup> The “Tercerarios” or “Terceristas,”<sup>60</sup> which was more cohesive than any of the other groups in their belief system, was made up of over five hundred individuals who wanted a Marxist regime.<sup>61</sup> There were also the guerrillas or insurrectionists, who fought in the name of Sandino and wanted revenge instead of diplomacy to forcefully remove Somoza and the National Guard from Nicaragua. This group acted against the government in small, seemingly random acts of sabotage

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<sup>56</sup> Tad Szulc, “Rocking Nicaragua—the Rebels’ Own Story.”

<sup>57</sup> Thomas W. Walker and Christine J Wade, *Nicaragua: Living in the Shadow of the Eagle*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2011), 26.

<sup>58</sup> Karen DeYoung, “Sandinistas Disclaim Marxism,” *New York Times*, October 16, 1978.

<sup>59</sup> “Los Doce” in Spanish.

<sup>60</sup> Simply means the third group, faction, or way.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Pastor, Memorandum, “NSC Secret: To Zbigniew Brzezinski,” *Declassified Documents Reference System*, August 28, 1978.

throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. However, they were not a threat in Somoza's eyes until after the earthquake in December 1972 that leveled most of the capital of Managua, when the acts became more frequent and pointedly against the National Guard.<sup>62</sup> Around 1977, when all three factions and others in opposition realized they all wanted Somoza out of power, their ideologies did not matter as much, at least until he was no longer president and in Nicaragua. These conflicting ideologies would be difficult to resolve once the Sandinistas seized power in July 1979.

Those who wrote for *La Prensa* expressed their and other intellectuals' dissatisfaction with how the government failed to rebuild the capital and did not sufficiently provide for the people who were hurting because of the devastation caused by the earthquake. The Sandinistas' numbers grew because of the dire situation of most Nicaraguans, who were finally fed up with Somoza and the corruption of his government. For example, aid and foreign loans were granted for rebuilding Managua from several European and Latin American countries as well as the United States. Aid and also loans came from the World Bank and such private banks as the First National Bank of Chicago and Bank of America. But the funds for this large project were invested in bogus construction companies owned by General Somoza and other rich Nicaraguans. After the projects were declared as "failed" after a few years, this money did not have to be repaid and so went into Somoza's and these other corrupt Nicaraguan's bank accounts.<sup>63</sup>

Articles in *La Prensa*, featured titles such as "We Have Voted, Somoza Should Leave," "Somoza is Sin," "The Nicaraguans Do Not Deserve the Somoza Government," and "Somoza is

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. See also: Rabe, 150; Tad Szulc, "Rocking Nicaragua—The Rebels' Own Story."

<sup>63</sup> Karen DeYoung, "Somoza Legacy: Plundered Economy," *Washington Post*, November 30, 1979; Alan Riding, "National Mutiny in Nicaragua," *New York Times*, July 30, 1978.

an Obstacle to Peace.” Clearly, the writers for *La Prensa* did not want him as their president any longer.<sup>64</sup> The number of violent acts in opposition to the government grew significantly; however, the National Guard was still able to maintain control of the countryside for the time being.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> “Somocismo es Pecado,” *La Prensa*, December 10, 1977. Carlos A. Cajina H., “Los Nicaragüenses No Merecemos el Gobierno Somoza,” *La Prensa*, December 9, 1977. “Somoza, Principal Obstáculo Para la Paz,” *La Prensa*, November 17, 1978.

<sup>65</sup> Morris H. Morley, *Washington, Somoza, and the Sandinistas: State and Regime in U.S. Policy Toward Nicaragua, 1969-1981* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89.

## Chapter Two: 1977

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With Carter came a new outlook on foreign policy, which *La Prensa* dubbed “El Espíritu Nuevo” (New Spirit).<sup>66</sup> Luis Pasos Argüello explained this new spirit by quoting Carter at a Congressional meeting, “We support their efforts to tell the people of the world that the American foreign policy will remain dedicated to the cause of freedom.”<sup>67</sup> The articles in *La Prensa* in 1977 showed the United States holding the banner and leading the way into a new era, with hope for a better future.

Journalists and intellectuals debated the question of human rights as a foreign policy for several months after Jimmy Carter became President. The argument was featured in both American and Nicaraguan newspapers, such as the American conservative *Washington Post* and the liberal *New York Times*, and the Nicaraguan opposition newspaper *La Prensa*.<sup>68</sup> Other countries were criticized for violating their people’s rights, but the columnists of *La Prensa* were silent throughout 1977 (until censorship was lifted in September) on what should be done to Somoza and his National Guard. The paper was not shy, however, about reporting the latest disappearances, shootings, or other violence perpetrated by the National Guard as well as skirmishes between guerrillas and the National Guard.

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<sup>66</sup> Luis Pasos Argüello, “La Doctrina Carter del Nuevo Espíritu,” *La Prensa*, January 26, 1977.

<sup>67</sup> Luis Pasos Argüello, “El Espíritu Nuevo,” *La Prensa*, April 4, 1977. The Spanish is “Apoyamos sus esfuerzos destinados a decir a los pueblos del mundo que la política exterior norteamericana seguirá siendo consagrada a la causa de la libertad.”

<sup>68</sup> *La Prensa* did not favor one faction of the opposition over others in allotting pages in the paper to express views and positions. The editor-in-chief, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro was a moderate and did not necessarily agree with the actions of the guerrillas but did print articles for all the different opposition groups so the public knew what they all stood for and who was their voice. *La Prensa* was a forum for all oppositional voices could be heard. Chamorro fought with his words and not with violence. After his death, with his brother as editor, *La Prensa* was more radical and supported the FSLN guerrillas against the National Guard more openly.

There were also numerous articles about Carter and his development of foreign policy concerning human rights. Articles appearing in *La Prensa* were the expressions of a people ready to rise up against Somoza and hoping for support from the United States, who would remove their support from the Nicaraguan government because of the human rights violations that Somoza's men were committing.<sup>69</sup> The United States was in a position to do something about the Nicaragua dilemma, if only Nicaraguans who lived under the oppressive hand of Somocismo could cry out and be heard, so the United States could answer the cry of the oppressed.<sup>70</sup>

The silence in *La Prensa* regarding U.S. actions against Nicaragua's government was twofold. First, *La Prensa* operated under censorship by the government, where a sanctioned government official read every single article before it was allowed to be published.<sup>71</sup> This remained in effect until September 1977 when Somoza lifted censorship and martial law.<sup>72</sup> Freedom of the press and free speech were short lived, however, because by the same time the following year, the state of siege was reinstated due to heavy fighting between the Sandinista guerrillas and the National Guard.

Second, those who opposed the Somocismo saw the United States as part of the reason why Somoza was in power, and believed therefore that the U.S. was part of the dictatorial system

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<sup>69</sup> For a few examples of the many in 1977 alone: Arthur L. Gayshon, "Carter Influencia Justicia en el Mundo," *La Prensa*, January 25, 1977; "Carter Ataca el Egoísmo Dictatorial," *La Prensa*, January 28, 1977; "Derechos Humanos lo Primero Para Carter," *La Prensa*, February 22, 1977; "¿Derechos Humanos: Cruzada Redentora o Cartel Publicitario?" *La Prensa*, May 2, 1977.

<sup>70</sup> Somocismo is the Nicaraguan term for Somoza, his government, and how he ran the country.

<sup>71</sup> Organization of American States, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Chapter V: Freedom of Expression and Dissemination of Ideas," *Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Nicaragua* (Washington D.C.: General Secretariat of the OAS, 1978), 66 and 67.

<sup>72</sup> Then Chamorro, the Editor-in Chief of *La Prensa*, began telling his readers about every article from 1974 to 1977 that had been censored and what had been censored.

in Nicaragua.<sup>73</sup> Their feelings toward U.S. involvement changed over time from hopeful to bitter. They preferred that if Carter were to intervene, it would be to support democracy and the freedom of Nicaraguans.<sup>74</sup> They accused the United States of supporting Somoza by sending him weapons and other military aid. Contrary to this accusation, Carter's administration did not send weapons in support of Somoza's regime.<sup>75</sup> At the end of the war, in July 1979, the United States was criticized for not sending enough aid to help the people of Nicaragua who were starving. Richard J. Meislin in *La Prensa* quoted a moderate member of the junta, Sergio Ramirez Mercado, in an article, as saying, "There has been no aid from Government to Government... There has been aid to the Red Cross. We are getting help from the Red Cross, but we'd prefer it ourselves."<sup>76</sup> As a safety precaution, the U.S. had sent aid to the Nicaraguan Red Cross for food to be distributed as necessary because trust for the new government was small and because under Somoza, aid that was sent had not always made it to those who needed it. The other criticism was that the United States did not send enough aid to Nicaragua, even though the U.S. had sent the most aid of all the nations who helped promote economic recovery in the post-Somoza era.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Luís Rivas Leiva, "Amigos de Nicaragua, o Amigos de Somoza?" *La Prensa*, March 2, 1978; "Llega a Carter Carta de Condena Para Somoza," *La Prensa*, March 28, 1978.

<sup>74</sup> Joaquín Absalon Pastora, "Carter: La Base de Su Modestia, y Los Préstamos," *La Prensa*, April 22 1977.

<sup>75</sup> "Somoza's Last Days," *New Republic*, September 16, 1978, 5; John M. Goshko and Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Aid to Nicaragua: 'Garbled' Rights Message," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1977. Military aid was sent to Nicaragua in the fall of 1977 and spring of 1978 in the form of military training and equipment, but not weapons. This was done to support the stability of the country, not Somoza or the National Guard's actions.

<sup>76</sup> Richard J. Meislin, "Nicaraguan Leaders Say the U.S. Gives Too Little Aid," *New York Times*, August 6, 1978.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*; Special to *New York Times*, "U.S. Increasing Aid to Nicaragua," *New York Times*, August 7, 1979.

Blame was deflected onto the United States when it was not possible to blame Somoza due to censorship. The State Department was blamed either for doing too little<sup>78</sup> or too much.<sup>79</sup> The Sandinistas thought Nicaraguans themselves could handle the situation; or, if mediation was really necessary, then a fellow Latin American country should lead it, not the United States.<sup>80</sup>

The longer Carter was in power, the more contradictions American intellectuals saw in his foreign policy. They saw his human rights foreign policy as inconsistent, because it was not applied equally across all nations violating human rights.<sup>81</sup> The State Department did not broach the subject in the same way with larger countries that possessed more international political clout (such as Venezuela, South Korea, or Russia) or with U.S. allies.<sup>82</sup> But smaller countries with impoverished economies were chastised for the treatment of their people and economic aid was either removed completely or significantly reduced.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> The U.S. was criticized for not sending enough aid as mentioned and for not supporting the opposition forces during the fight against Somoza or recognizing the Sandinistas as the legitimate government in July 1979.

<sup>79</sup> In the fall of 1978 with the Dominican Republic and Guatemala through the Organization of American States, the United States was part of a mediation force seeking a plebiscite (a direct vote of the people of Nicaragua to decide the next president). In the spring of 1979, the United States requested OAS involvement in the Nicaragua situation because mediation had failed.

<sup>80</sup> “‘Los 12’: Periplo en Busca de Apoyo,” *La Prensa*, April 1, 1979.

<sup>81</sup> William F. Buckley, Jr., “Mr. Carter’s Discovery of Human Rights,” *National Review*, April 1, 1977, 402-3; Editorial, “Carter Talk,” *National Review*, June 10, 1977, 686-7. Tad Szulc, “Limits of Linkage: Carter’s Human Rights Campaign May Stumble,” *The New Republic*, March 5, 1977, 17-19.

<sup>82</sup> John Osborne, “Administration Under Siege,” *The New Republic*, October 22, 1977, 9; Clare Boothe Luce, “The High Human Price of Détente,” *National Review*, November 11, 1977, 1289.

<sup>83</sup> Nick Thimmesch, “Somoza, Under U.S. Pressure, Defends Nicaragua Rule,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 23, 1977.

*1977*

In the months before Carter became president, journalists and writers were publishing articles in both the United States and Nicaragua about his proposed outlook on foreign policy and how human rights foreign policy would develop. The first year he was in office was an informative year. Intellectuals and journalists were writing philosophical pieces and news pieces about his speeches to further spread the word about his definition of human rights as well as about which countries would have to change their ways if they wanted to continue receiving American economic aid. There was a concern about what this policy would look like with regard to the Soviet Union and the communist bloc, and whether or not allies would be able to get away with violating human rights.

One writer for William F. Buckley, Jr.'s conservative *National Review* saw some major problems with human rights as a foreign policy. James Burnham, an American conservative public intellectual, wrote, "Difficulties suggest themselves:

1) If it really is moral principle that obliges us to impose sanctions on nations that are undemocratic and violate human rights, we can't stop with Chile, South Korea, and India. Practically all nations violate human rights. 2) If it's a question of degree and quantity of violations, Chile, South Korea, and India will be way down the list. 3) This moral sort of foreign policy isn't a simple one-way street. When we cut off our trade with them we also cut off their trade with us. 4) It is even conceivable that the peoples of some nations don't share our views about rights and democracy and might resent our telling them what is good for them."<sup>84</sup>

For Burnham, it was not the United States' responsibility to make sure that these rights were respected the world over. He also indicated how detrimental a universal human rights foreign policy would be—not only to those nations who would be affected by our trade policies if they

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<sup>84</sup> James Burnham, "Do-Good Policy: The Protracted Conflict," *National Review*, January 7, 1977, 23.



were violating the rights of their people, but also to American businesses and therefore the American economy.

Michael Reisman, a writer for the leftist *The Nation* magazine, saw why leaders in other countries would be led to such actions toward their own people: “Persons in power violate human rights because they find it effective politics to do so. In cost-benefit terms, it’s cheaper for elites to jail and torture opponents and terrorize populations than to take responsibility for failing to meet popular substantive and procedural demands.”<sup>85</sup> In order for the U.S. to make a difference against dictators with this mentality, the United States would have to make it more expensive for a government to treat its people poorly than to take responsibility for their actions and reform the workings of their governments. Reisman went on to write, “Sometimes the price is too high. No matter how fervent our belief in human rights, we can’t protect them all the time. Like it or not, national interest sometimes obliges us to deal with and even aid gross violators.”<sup>86</sup> It was important to promote human rights, but it was not completely possible to do so because other considerations must be taken into account when a sovereign nation such as the U.S. dealt with other sovereign nations.

Looking at speeches Carter made during his campaign for the presidency, John Osborne, a journalist who wrote the “White House Watch” column for Martin Peretz’s neo-conservative *New Republic*, noticed a trend in Carter’s rhetoric about human rights as being “naturally

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<sup>85</sup> Michael Reisman, “The Pragmatism of Human Rights: Diplomacy of the Possible,” *The Nation*, May 7, 1977, 555.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 555.

ambiguous.”<sup>87</sup> As mentioned in chapter one, Carter did not define human rights concretely. This added to the confusion over exactly how this policy would be implemented.

As 1977 progressed, editorial writers and intellectuals realized that Carter’s policy was mostly rhetoric without much action to back it up. Looking back, his National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote, “Every new Administration feels it has a mandate for new foreign policy. . . . To be sure, the new men soon discover that the problems they face are more intractable and lasting than they had expected. . . . Proud claims of originality quietly give way to statesmanlike appeals for bipartisanship on behalf of the enduring national interest.”<sup>88</sup>

Sometimes the status quo is too difficult to change and should stay the same for the sake of stability in governmental operations. William F. Buckley, Jr. was a staunch conservative “who wove the tapestry of what became the new American conservatism. . . [and] argued for a conservatism based on national interest and a higher morality.”<sup>89</sup> In an article in *National Review*, he recognized Carter’s human rights campaign as little more than political rhetoric. Buckley continued, “Mr. Carter has with utter dignity done just a little more than talk abstractly about human rights.”<sup>90</sup> Buckley was definitely among Carter’s harshest critics and wrote numerous articles tearing down Carter, his speeches, and his policies—both domestic and foreign.

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<sup>87</sup> John Osborne, “White House Watch: Carter’s First Days,” *New Republic*, February 5, 1977, 9. He later became the senior editor for *New Republic* magazine.

<sup>88</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: The Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985), 81.

<sup>89</sup> Douglas Martin, “William F. Buckley Jr. Is Dead at 82,” *New York Times*, February 27, 2008.

<sup>90</sup> William F. Buckley Jr., “Mr. Carter’s Discovery of Human Rights,” *National Review*, April 1, 1977, 402.

Carter's desire to focus on human rights and nonintervention were overshadowed at times by the Cold War. The only countries where Carter would be able to use economic aid as leverage for bettering human rights conditions abroad would be small, third world nations without much international political sway. This was because they relied on U.S. aid to feed their people, to provide their troops with weaponry, and to keep themselves in the world market. Walter Laqueur, an American historian and political commentator, wrote in the neo-conservative magazine *Commentary*, that in order for human rights as a foreign policy "to be credible," it "must be consistent."<sup>91</sup> Tad Szulc, a foreign affairs writer based in Washington for the liberal *New York Times*, agreed that the policy must be consistent when he wrote, "President Carter must define a consistent human rights philosophy to avoid international diplomatic chaos and confrontations."<sup>92</sup> Carter "will have to address himself soon to the non-Communist world, including countries that are America's allies."<sup>93</sup> Szulc argued that "evenhandedness" was key in this kind of foreign policy; Szulc agreed with the policy but saw its potential downfall if Carter did not fix some gaps between rhetoric and action.<sup>94</sup> As human rights in foreign relations needed to be evenly applied to allies and communist countries, so also Szulc acknowledged that this could be seen as American imperialism with a different face.

In an editorial in *The Nation*, a liberal magazine, published the same day as Szulc's article in March of 1977, the author wrote, "there are risks in President Carter's simple, stubborn adherence to the policy... the most obvious one is that it could be turned into an argument for a

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<sup>91</sup> Walter Laqueur, "The Issue of Human Rights," *Commentary*, May 1977, 33.

<sup>92</sup> Tad Szulc, "Limits of Linkage: Carter's Human Rights Campaign May Stumble," 17.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

missionary crusade of the kind that darkens the American past.”<sup>95</sup> The human rights crusade was one that the United States was on alone; not even democratic NATO countries were willing to promote human rights and democracy as broadly as the U.S. was. Ronald Steel, an award-winning writer for the neo-conservative *New Republic* as well as a historian and professor, suggested, “Human rights is all very well it seems, but our cold war allies, after all, have feelings.”<sup>96</sup> In order to keep our allies, at times we would have to look the other way—as Brzezinski realized in his memoirs, as mentioned above.

In the United States, however, “human rights” was a unifying policy, at least for a while. Steel wrote, “the hawkish neo-conservatives at *Commentary* and the dovish leftists at the *New York Review* have found one issue on which they can agree ... almost.”<sup>97</sup> By June 1977, the policy that had gotten bipartisan support was starting to break down and was not enforced as Carter had said it would be. Steel went on to explain, “Liberals complain that while the administration piously lectures the Russians, and raps the knuckles of the Brazilians and the Argentines, it pointedly exempts such blatant offenders as South Korea, Iran and the Philippines.”<sup>98</sup> He saw this policy as one “to please everybody and offend nobody” so that it would “end up not meaning much of anything to anybody.”<sup>99</sup> Carter’s human rights foreign

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<sup>95</sup> Editorial, “Carter’s Plain Talk,” *The Nation*, March 5, 1977, 258. The editorial policies for the *Nation* allow for articles that align with the views of the editors; however, the January 27, 1979 issue stated, “the views expressed deserve to be called to the attention of our readers by us” so that the readers can “determine for themselves what views to accept or reject.”

<sup>96</sup> Ronald Steel, “Motherhood, Apple Pie and Human Rights: Where the Old Left Meets the New Right,” *New Republic*, June 4, 1977, 15.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

policy seemed nice in theory, but it had not been implemented in a meaningful way that was going to lead to change in nations where rights were being violated. Steel saw this policy as a “gimmick” because Carter would “maintain an ‘undeviating commitment’ to human rights everywhere ‘until the last day I’m in office,’” but Steel still did not see how it was going to be a real foreign policy because it was not objectively enforced toward our own allies, but only against small poor countries and some countries in the communist camp.<sup>100</sup>

In an article called “Dealing with Dada” in the *New Republic*, the author wrote that the State Department’s actions were self-interested and did not contain a directly moral element other than a call for democracy around the world. This value of democracy was the guiding force for American foreign policy the author argued. He understood that “the current discussion of President Carter’s foreign policy is confused by the suggestion that some alien substance known as ‘morality’ or ‘concern for human rights’ is being grafted onto a coherent entity called ‘foreign policy’—an organism more naturally constituted of ‘self-interest,’ ‘national security,’ etc.”<sup>101</sup> In his view, human rights foreign policy was just another name for what the U.S. had always had as a foreign policy toward the whole world—how were the politics of other nations going to affect the United States and its business interests? He understood why Carter pursued such a policy—because “the demand for justice, liberty and respect are among the most powerful animating forces of the planet.”<sup>102</sup> There was something noble in Carter’s foreign policy that could not be dismissed as what the author called “mere idealism.” The United States would be able to promote democracy abroad with an extensive and broad reaching foreign policy such as human

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 16. President Jimmy Carter qtd. by Ronald Steel.

<sup>101</sup> “Dealing with Dada,” *New Republic*, March 19, 1977, 6.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 6.

rights. The writer also critiqued nonintervention and those who advocated that the U.S. should not intervene in other nations' affairs. He thought that this was utterly impossible because whether or not the United States was actively involved in a country, it still engaged in interventionism because "action and inaction are just different forms of intervention."<sup>103</sup> With this conclusion, he resolved that the U.S. would be involved wherever the government saw fit. It was just a matter of *how* the United States would be involved.<sup>104</sup>

The United States had been deeply involved in Nicaraguan politics since the early twentieth century. For this reason, the U.S. government felt a sense of responsibility not to leave the Nicaraguans to fight alone against their government's human rights violations, which could lead to a civil war. The United States had to fight for democracy and human rights to prevent Carter's foreign policy from looking inconsistent to the public as one of anti-communism instead of the promotion of human rights.<sup>105</sup>

Although Carter's human rights foreign policy was seen as inconsistent and was regarded as a low priority in foreign policy, advocacy and church groups still called for the U.S. government to be involved in Nicaragua by sending aid to promote the wellbeing of Nicaraguans.<sup>106</sup> Alan Riding, a journalist and writer for the *New York Times* stationed in Nicaragua, wrote, "Many priests and politicians, whose denunciations of indiscriminate torture, rape and summary executions by government troops have now been endorsed by Nicaragua's

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>105</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Assistance: Experiences and Issues in Policy Implementation, 1977-1978*, 96<sup>th</sup> Cong, 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1979, S. Rep. 382-41, 46-49.

<sup>106</sup> Alan Riding, "Nicaragua Groups Looking to Carter for Help on Rights," *New York Times*, March 3, 1977.

Roman Catholic bishops, believe that only swift intervention by Washington can halt the violations of human rights here.”<sup>107</sup> Religious leaders in Nicaragua knew the influence that the United States government had in their nation and over Anastasio Somoza. Their hope was that the U.S. could and would force him out of office because the U.S. was the only major supporter of Nicaragua capable of doing so. In Riding’s article, “Nicaragua Groups Looking to Carter For Help on Rights,” he quoted an American Capuchin priest in Nicaragua as saying, “If the United States would somehow publicly express its disapproval, things would change here very quickly.”<sup>108</sup> The Editor-in-Chief of *La Prensa* was also quoted in the article, saying, “It is now time for President Carter to show that his fine words can become a reality.”<sup>109</sup> The Latin American view of American influence and power in the region, especially in Nicaragua, is apparent in such quotes. Carter had only to act by talking with Somoza or sending aid to those who needed it. However, in reality it was not that simple. Somoza was not willing to give up his presidency until his term ended in 1981. Further, the threat of reduced economic aid did not lead to the National Guard acting more civilly nor to Somoza’s government distributing aid in a way to help the poor of his country. Censorship and the state of siege were lifted; but most Nicaraguans still lived in dire poverty, and individuals were still disappearing because they opposed Somoza, their bodies being found by family later—though Somoza denied that he had approved such actions by the National Guard.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Charles Wilson and George O’Brien, Committee on Appropriations, 95<sup>th</sup> Cong. 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1977, *Report of a Study Mission to Costa Rica, Panama, and Nicaragua, July 1-10, 1977*, August 5, 1977 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977).

In an editorial in the conservative *Washington Post* on 22 June 1977, the writer was disgusted that the U.S. had supported the repressive Somoza regime for over forty years. He thought “that [because] the Carter administration has breathed [life] into the human-rights cause, there’s now a good chance to cut the Nicaraguan military off.”<sup>111</sup> He saw the possibility for a change to occur in Nicaragua once the United States stopped supporting the Somoza government. John M. Goshko, a staff writer for the *Washington Post*, reported that “[h]uman rights advocates... contend that the administration is being taken in by cosmetic changes that do not really alter the allegedly repressive policies of the Somoza [regime].”<sup>112</sup> Goshko quoted Joe Elridge, director of the Washington Office on Latin America. Elridge argued that “Giving aid to Nicaragua... would be a very bad mistake,” explaining that if Somoza still received aid without really changing the treatment of his people, then other dictators would not see any reason to stop their repressive policies either.<sup>113</sup> Elridge argued for a strong human rights foreign policy as the only way to diminish violations of rights by dictatorial governments. If Carter wanted to see a better world for the masses, his human rights foreign policy had to be more than just theoretical; it had to be put into practice.

At the end of the fiscal year in 1977, the U.S. government approved military aid to Nicaragua instead of economic aid that would help the nation’s poor. The reasoning the State Department gave for such a decision was that by denying economic aid, they could ensure that

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<sup>111</sup> Editorial, “No More Nickels for Nicaragua,” *Washington Post*, June 22, 1977. Opinion editorials in the *Washington Post* are typically written by the staff though outside contributors’ pieces are also published. They do not reflect the views of the paper but have to have a clear argument and supporting evidence. They are checked for facts before being selected and published.

<sup>112</sup> John M. Goshko, “U.S. Decides to Aid 2 Nations: Rights Targets Nicaragua and El Salvador,” *Washington Post*, September 29, 1977.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*



Somoza's government would not use that money for ill; but by approving military aid, they could verify Somoza's compliance with their demands for reducing human rights violations. Also, the military aid was in the form of credits to buy weapons, meaning the United States could refuse each individual request for arms when the time came if they deemed it necessary.<sup>114</sup> What seemed to the public like a "garbled rights" message was actually a well-thought out plan. Unfortunately it was not seen this way, as evidenced by an article by Karen DeYoung, Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist, and John M. Goshko entitled "U.S. Aid to Nicaragua: 'Garbled Rights' Message," where they wrote, "Nicaragua... has become a proving ground where the Carter administration is undergoing a trial-and-error test of its ability to translate a concern for human rights into an effective instrument of U.S. foreign policy."<sup>115</sup> The practicality of human rights as a foreign policy was proving difficult to demonstrate. Those outside the government, such as "diplomats and human rights activists," were "bewildered" by the policy as it had been put into practice in Nicaragua.<sup>116</sup> On its face, complicated foreign policy could be confused until there could be clarifying reasons for why the State Department had acted the way it had. It was a losing publicity battle for Carter and his administration.

Both the Left and the Right in the United States saw difficulties with Carter's human rights policy. The Left focused more on how this policy could help the people who were being oppressed and the care with which that Carter's administration had to tread so as not to jeopardize a nation's sovereignty. The Right thought the policy was not feasible and thought that

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<sup>114</sup> Karen DeYoung, "Nicaragua Denied Economic Aid, Gets Military," *Washington Post*, October 4, 1977.

<sup>115</sup> John M. Goshko and Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Aid to Nicaragua: 'Garbled Rights' Message," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1977.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

only the complete removal of aid from the violating countries would change situations without sending in troops. Those in the middle, both neo-conservatives and moderately liberal, saw the need for an evenhanded and well-defined policy if it were to be consistent and meaningful.

While American intellectuals and journalists were trying to make sense of and figure out Carter's human rights foreign policy, so too were the writers of *La Prensa*. The newspaper included articles from their own writers as well as from several other Latin American countries that showed a broad range of sentiments about what Carter said his foreign policy would be and what U.S. involvement in the past had meant. This paper will focus only on articles written by Nicaraguans along with a few articles reprinted from U.S. newspapers or by American intellectuals. At the beginning of Carter's administration, there were at least two or three articles every day in *La Prensa* about Jimmy Carter, human rights, and Carter's foreign policy. Much was written in the first six months of Carter's presidency. From there, the newspaper dealt more with local news, carried fewer world news stories, and was seemingly less concerned with Jimmy Carter's foreign policy. As tensions rose between the Sandinista guerrillas and the National Guard, there was much to report on those events and not as much to report about Carter's human rights policy in action. However, *La Prensa* did publish numerous articles from 1977 to 1979 about the U.S. human rights foreign policy in other countries, as well as other countries' views on Carter's human rights crusade.

In an article by Anthony Lewis, a prominent, American liberal intellectual, entitled "As Far As Human Rights Came,"<sup>117</sup> he presented Jimmy Carter with a question: "Will it do any

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<sup>117</sup> I translated all the Spanish myself with help from Google translate and the University of Chicago's *Spanish-English, English-Spanish Dictionary 5<sup>th</sup> Ed.*, 2002 for unknown words. The Spanish is "Hasta Donde Llegaron Derechos Humanos."

good?”<sup>118</sup> What was the purpose of human rights as a foreign policy? Lewis wanted to know if “help, in reality, to the thousands of persons whom the totalitarian governments have silenced, and jailed, and tortured” was the real goal of Jimmy Carter’s fight for human rights.<sup>119</sup> Lewis understood that any government, let alone the United States, had more on their plate than making sure that the rights of people in Latin America were respected. As he wrote, “One difficulty is that governments have many interests to pursue—not only human rights but also natural resources and arms control, and so on. . . . But for governments there is no universal way to apply universal principles.”<sup>120</sup> He also understood that human rights might be part of U.S. foreign policy but would not be the only guiding force for the U.S. in making foreign policy.

Later in March of 1977, Ary Moleon, a writer for Associated Press’s Latin American service, wrote an article published in *La Prensa*—“Carter Expects ‘Long and Difficult’ Fight for Human Rights”—about Carter’s willingness to fight against violations of human rights all around the world, even though it would not be an easy fight.<sup>121</sup> Moleon pointed out that Carter’s policy was inconsistent because of the way in which the State Department punished offenses. For example, in Uruguay violations of rights were met with suspended military aid, but Korea had

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<sup>118</sup> Anthony Lewis, “Hasta Donde Llegaron Derechos Humanos,” *La Prensa*, March 4, 1977. The Spanish is “¿Servirá para algo?” This article originally appeared in the *New York Times* on February 28, 1977 under the title, “A Question of Humanity.” The English is from the original article. *La Prensa* frequently translated and reprinted articles from U.S. newspapers, citing which paper they came from originally.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “ayudara, en realidad, a algunos de los miles de personas a quienes los gobiernos totalitarios han silenciado, y encarcelado, y torturado?”

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “Una dificultad consiste en que los gobiernos tienen numerosos intereses en sus miras: no solamente por derechos humanos sino los recursos naturales, y el control de almas (sic), etc. . . . [P]ero, para los gobiernos no hay manera universal de aplicar principios universales” (“almas” should be “armas”).

<sup>121</sup> Ary Moleon, “Carter Espera Lucha ‘Larga y Difícil’ Por Derechos Humanos,” *La Prensa*, March 17, 1977.

not been reprimanded for the blatant offenses occurring there.<sup>122</sup> Later in his article, Moleon wrote, “Carter’s politics has also demonstrated its ability to produce phenomena of regression.”<sup>123</sup> Carter’s rhetoric and the policies he had implemented by March 1977 did not seem to be enough of a deterrent for other Latin American countries to change their ways. If Carter wanted human rights to be bettered anywhere, his human rights foreign policy had to have more serious consequences for the abusers of rights.

Around the same time, Domingo J. Ramos, a writer for *La Prensa*, was writing about Jimmy Carter being “the humanitarian President of the century.”<sup>124</sup> He wrote that what the United States was trying to do was wonderful because they “can eliminate or better the condition of those who suffer torture or unjust imprisonment when the United States denies the supply of weapons, ... and human rights continue to be violated.”<sup>125</sup> The United States was capable of doing much more to stop these human rights violations than the OAS could, in Ramos’s opinion. He thought that the OAS had not done much for American nations.

Joaquín Absalon Pastora, a journalist for *La Prensa*, wrote about why Nicaragua relied on the United States and the benefits that the U.S. gave Nicaragua and other countries because of Carter’s human rights foreign policy. Pastora did not think that the United States being involved in their country was interventionist, but that the U.S. was more of a good friend, who was

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “La política Carter ha demostrado además su capacidad de producir fenómenos de regresión.”

<sup>124</sup> Domingo J. Ramos, “Derechos Humanos,” *La Prensa*, March 25, 1977. The Spanish is “el Presidente humanitario de esta siglo.”

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “puede eliminarse o mejorarse la condición de los que sufren torturas o prisiones injustas de que cuando Estados Unidos niega el suministro de armas, ... y los derechos humanos continúan violándose.”

helping out because they had the money to do so.<sup>126</sup> This was not free money, but money with conditions, which Pastora argued led to the discontent and the protests in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. He thought, “Human rights are, then, universal. They could never relate them within the restrictions of [human interactions]. The condition is not political but HUMAN. Before weapons or marines: HUMAN RIGHTS.”<sup>127</sup> Above sovereignty of nations and foreign policy, the lives and conditions of humans should be more important and relevant than imperialistic intervention. Because of this view, he understood why Carter had this “reiterated plausible attitude” regarding human rights and how it was so broad in its applications and variable in its consequences for different nations.<sup>128</sup>

Towards the end of 1977, Nicaraguans regarded Carter’s human rights foreign policy as contradicting U.S. internal policies. Adolfo Bonilla’s *La Prensa* article “The Democracy of Nicaragua” shows another view of American foreign policy in Nicaragua. In Bonilla’s opinion, U.S. foreign policy was intended to spread democracy, where Nicaragua was the antithesis of democracy.<sup>129</sup> Bonilla thought that the United States promoting democracy elsewhere in the world actually worked against the kind of democracy that was practiced in the United States.<sup>130</sup> As he put it, “internally the United States practices a type of political democracy for the good of their own people; but in its foreign policy, it does or contributes to doing everything contrary to

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<sup>126</sup> Joaquín Absalon Pastora, “Carter: La Base de Su Modestia, y los Préstamos,” *La Prensa*, April 22, 1977.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “Los derechos humanos son, pues, universales. No podrían nunca relacionarse con la íntima brevedad de los límites. El condicionamiento no es político sino HUMANO. Antes que armas o marines: DERECHOS HUMANOS.”

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “plausible la actitud reiterada.”

<sup>129</sup> Adolfo Bonilla, “La Democracia de Nicaragua,” *La Prensa*, October 23, 1977.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

their principles, which is for the benefit of their own citizens.”<sup>131</sup> Democracy benefited American citizens in U.S. domestic policy but in foreign policy it did not help the citizens of the other country in the same way. An unfortunate side effect of U.S. involvement in Nicaragua, Bonilla thought, was that the dictatorial Somoza family, in addition to American interests in Nicaragua, benefited instead of Nicaraguan citizens.<sup>132</sup>

The cultural journalist for *La Prensa*, Raúl Orozco, who mainly wrote about foreign policy and who also contributed editorials, had a somewhat philosophical view of American foreign policy as it affected Nicaragua. The title of his article “Jimmy Carter: Contradiction and Boldness”<sup>133</sup> highlights how Carter was seen around the world. Orozco did not think these were exactly the words to describe Carter because “it is too early yet to try to define clearly what the Carter Administration means as its central line of conduct, to understand—even partially—the ups and downs of imperial diplomacy.”<sup>134</sup> He thought that Carter’s ten months in office had produced an inconsistent and hard-to-follow U.S. foreign policy that had quite a different focus than that of previous presidents. Orozco thought Carter and his administration needed more time before one could really judge what was going on with any clarity. In his opinion, human rights foreign policy would ebb and flow like waves on a beach as situations bettered and as Carter

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “internamente los Estados Unidos practican un tipo de democracia política para bien de su propio pueblo, aunque en su política exterior haga o contribuya a hacer todo lo contrario a sus principios, incluso lo hacen para beneficio de sus propios ciudadanos.”

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> The word “audacia” could also be translated as audacity.

<sup>134</sup> Raúl Orozco, “Jimmy Carter: Contradicciones y Audacia,” *La Prensa*, November 25, 1977. The Spanish is “aunque es demasiado pronto todavía para intentar definir con claridad lo que significa la Administración Carter para los revelar una línea central de conducta, entender— aunque sea parcialmente—los vaivenes de la diplomacia imperial.”

understood how to form policy that could lead to change.<sup>135</sup> A concern that Orozco did have was that “the enormous responsibility to change this dirty little world we live in [would be] left in the hands of President Carter only” with no other nations pursuing reform, leaving the burden on a single nation—the United States.<sup>136</sup> The new year would bring about new feelings from American intellectuals as well as from Nicaraguans, who did not see a change in their situation and saw the United States backing away from their responsibility to Nicaragua.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “la enorme responsabilidad de cambiar esta sucio mundillo en que vivimos, sea dejada en manos del presidente Carter únicamente.”

## Chapter Three: 1978

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With a new year came a new focus on human rights in magazines and newspapers in the United States. On the whole, fewer articles about Carter's foreign policy with regard to human rights appeared in magazines, but the issue was still a hot topic. As the situation in Nicaragua between the Sandinistas and the National Guard intensified, discontent with American actions appeared in both American and Nicaraguan papers.

In an article in the neo-conservative *Commentary*, Walter Laqueur cited "a recent Harris poll" that showed that fifty-two percent of Americans had "taken a negative view of the new administration's foreign policy."<sup>137</sup> There was a growing concern that this foreign policy was "show[ing] more consideration for America's enemies than for its allies."<sup>138</sup> Laqueur even criticized Jimmy Carter's policies for signaling "a retreat from the high idealism of the early days to an aimless and inconsistent pragmatism."<sup>139</sup> With only a year under his belt, according to Laqueur, Carter had already abandoned the ideology he had promised he would stand up for until the end of his days as president. Carter pursued a foreign policy that considered American allies, American business interests, and national security first and therefore seemed pragmatic in its execution, rather than one that concerned human rights. This was meant to keep tensions between the U.S. and its allies low in order to prevent them from turning their backs on the U.S. for harping on their human rights violations. As a writer for the neo-conservative *Commentary* magazine, Laqueur saw Carter's policies as fitting into the neo-conservative way of thinking,

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<sup>137</sup> Walter Laqueur, "The World & President Carter," *Commentary*, February 1978, 56.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*



which involved pragmatism driving foreign policy. The difference was that, in his opinion, pragmatism should be focused while Carter's pragmatism had formed aimlessly.

An editorial writer for the liberal *Nation* magazine took this a step further by writing that "conducting a consistent human rights policy" was not as easy as Carter had initially hoped.<sup>140</sup> The article's author commented on "President Carter's shifting stance on where and how we speak and act in such a way as to strengthen liberty around the world," showing how hard it was to implement a foreign policy based on human rights above anything else.<sup>141</sup> Though this writer seemed to understand one aspect of the problem, he also took into account the confusion of others because of the "bureaucratic struggle over whether specific countries should be barred by Congress from receiving foreign aid because of ill-treatment of their citizens."<sup>142</sup> Inasmuch as human rights was Carter's focal point as President, the author reminded his audience that Congress controlled the treasury, the release of funds to different countries in the form of economic or military aid, and also the laws. Congress was not following the whimsical desires of their humanitarian President. In addition to this, as mentioned above, to keep our "strategic allies," Carter could not reprimand them constantly and remove aid solely because of their human rights record, though he may have wanted to do so. Finally, the writer pointed out that the President actually needed to do just that, as he wrote, "[t]he trouble starts with the President and his obvious unwillingness to apply steadfastly the existing law covering aid and human rights violators."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Editorial, "Riders of Human Rights," *The Nation*, August 19-26, 1978, 133.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

In order to be consistent and credible in his human rights policy, Carter needed to follow through with the sanctions he was allowed according to Presidential Directive NSC-30, which stated in part, “It shall be a major objective of U.S. foreign policy to promote the observance of human rights throughout the world. The policy shall be applied globally, but with due consideration to the cultural, political and historical characteristics of each nation, and to other fundamental U.S. interests with respect to the nation in question.”<sup>144</sup> The Presidential Directive went on to state the specific conditions under which the U.S. could apply this human rights foreign policy abroad. While Walter Laqueur criticized Carter for abandoning his ideology of promoting human rights and changing to pragmatism—what made sense for the U.S. government to pursue because of national security and business interests—the editorial writer of *The Nation* article, on the other hand, criticized Carter’s human rights policy for attacking American allies more than governments who were violating the rights of their people.

By the end of 1978, intellectuals like Tad Szulc, who wrote for both *New Republic* and the *New York Times*, were sad to see what Carter had fought for so bravely “go down the drain.”<sup>145</sup> Szulc saw “[a]n insidious campaign . . . afoot in Washington to dilute and, if possible, to destroy altogether President Carter’s human rights policies in Latin America” and elsewhere. Congress and others were no longer in favor of the policy because it did not serve American interests. Szulc, however, thought that there was finally evidence showing up worldwide that the U.S. policy was “beginning to show serious results.” He thought, “human rights policy, far from

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<sup>144</sup> Jimmy Carter, Presidential Directive, “Human Rights Unclassified, PD/NSC 30,” February 17, 1978, Presidential Directives Collection, *Digital National Security Archives*, Doc no. PD01521, 1. The Presidential Directive was known by the National Security Council document number, NSC-30. The original document included both in the title.

<sup>145</sup> Tad Szulc, “The Plot Against Human Rights: Is Jimmy Carter Losing Faith?” *New Republic*, December 9, 1978, 11.

perfect or even consistent, was the only serious international expression of moral concern by the Carter administration.”<sup>146</sup>

Applying his argument to specific cases, Szulc recognized and dismissed as “the arguments of the detractors of human rights policies ... that these policies triggered the current rebellions in Nicaragua... possibly aiding leftist causes and jeopardizing United States strategic interests... [as] arrant nonsense.”<sup>147</sup> Instead, these policies, Szulc argued, “unquestionably... led the Nicaraguan dictatorship to rhetorical concessions to democratic ideals, but Washington’s verbiage is not responsible for the remaining discontents.”<sup>148</sup> The United States had done its part in condemning human rights violations and removing support from the Somoza government. At the same time, those who were still upset in Nicaragua should only have been upset with their government, and not with the foreign government that had also criticized the Somoza regime.

On 10 January 1978, the editor-in-chief of the opposition newspaper *La Prensa* Pedro Joaquín Chamorro was assassinated in his car while on his way to the office. The state of Nicaragua was one of paralysis, as described by a front-page headline the following afternoon.<sup>149</sup> The general feeling of the public was “one of repulsion and sorrow for the death of a man who dedicated his whole life to democracy in Nicaragua.”<sup>150</sup> His death was a hard hit for the opposition regardless of their political leanings. He had been their voice against Somoza and had openly defied him, mostly in print in his newspaper but also in the public political arena through

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>149</sup> “Nicaragua Se Paralizó,” *La Prensa*, January 11, 1978.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “de repulsa y pesar por la muerte de un hombre que dedico su vida entera por la democracia en Nicaragua.”

speeches in Nicaragua and abroad. Although they were very much enemies, Somoza was shocked by Chamorro's death and denied any connection whatsoever to his assassination.<sup>151</sup>

There was a popular call in Nicaragua for an investigation. Though five men were arrested and one ultimately admitted to the crime, *La Prensa* still called for justice because Chamorro's brother, the new editor-in-chief, did not believe these men had committed the crime.<sup>152</sup>

Chamorro's widow Doña Violeta Barrios Chamorro used the incident to criticize the Carter administration's ambivalent position regarding human rights. She sent Jimmy Carter a letter seven months after the murder that was also reprinted in *La Prensa* pleading for the U.S. President to stand up for human rights and press for a real investigation of the murder of her husband, which was in her opinion a blatant abuse of human rights. She wrote to him, "Nicaraguans hope and wish for a more permanent and consistent American foreign policy with the ideals of human rights."<sup>153</sup> She encouraged him to continue with his policies in Nicaragua, but furthermore, to right a deeply felt wrong. She wrote, "For this reason, I trust that you will effectively implement the commitment of your government through your embassy in our country, giving a true example of the effectiveness of your human rights policy."<sup>154</sup> Every day that justice in his murder had not been served was a reminder for the people of Nicaragua not to

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<sup>151</sup> Anastasio Somoza Debayle, "Nicaragua Reviewed," *New York Times*, March 6, 1978; Alan Riding, "Murder of Anti-Somoza Newsman Has Deepened Crisis in Nicaragua," *New York Times*, January 14, 1978.

<sup>152</sup> Alan Riding, "Somoza's Foes Honor Editor Murdered a Year Ago," *New York Times*, January 11, 1979.

<sup>153</sup> Doña Violeta Barrios Chamorro, "Carta a Carter de Doña Violeta," *La Prensa*, August 21, 1978. The Spanish is "Los nicaragüenses esperamos y deseamos una mayor y permanente consistencia de la política exterior norteamericana con el ideario de los derechos humanos."

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* The Spanish is "Por esta razón, confió en que usted hará efectivo el compromiso adquirido por su gobierno a través de su embajada en nuestro país, dando un verdadero ejemplo de la efectividad de su política sobre los derechos humanos."

give up, but to keep fighting for human rights in their country. Beginning in February 1978, these images appeared in every newspaper issued until the National Guard burned down *La Prensa* on 12 June 1979 to symbolize the opposition's defeat.<sup>155</sup>



*La Prensa*, May 5, 1979.

Wilfredo Montalván, a writer for *La Prensa*, was not in favor of Carter's human rights policy and questioned whether it was "no more than a smokescreen thrown to cover up the ugly image of Watergate."<sup>156</sup> In other words, he saw it as a superficial policy that served U.S. interests. He had seen no difference in his country with regard to the human rights situation.<sup>157</sup> He argued that the release of ten million dollars in aid money "showed a confidence in General Somoza's regime."<sup>158</sup> In Montalván's view, whatever Carter had said and done previously to

<sup>155</sup> Alan Riding, "Burning of Newspaper Is Setback for Somoza Enemies," *New York Times*, June 13, 1979.

<sup>156</sup> Wilfredo Montalván, "Nuestra Lucha, la G.N. y los Estados Unidos," *La Prensa*, February 2, 1978. The Spanish is "no fue más que una cortina de humo que lanzaron para encubrir la feo imagen que tenía con el Watergate." Information about the release of aid to Nicaragua taken from John M. Goshko, "Nicaraguan Human Rights Situation Caught in a Crossfire," *Washington Post*, February 17, 1978.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* The Spanish is "el sibarita del Decano en Washington" and "demuestran su confianza al régimen que preside el Gral. Somoza." It is difficult to know what aid Montalván is referring to.

show his displeasure with Somoza's actions was undone with the release of this money. He was not the only one writing in *La Prensa* who thought along these lines. Joaquín Absalon Pastora, another writer for *La Prensa* who over the course of a year had changed his opinion about Carter's policy in Nicaragua, wrote that human rights was just "advertising for Carter being less bad than Nixon and his peers"; as evidenced throughout the article Pastora remained unconvinced that Carter really was well-meaning in his pursuit of human rights.<sup>159</sup>

Though the U.S. had distanced itself from the Somoza government by withdrawing aid and overt support for the most part and had told Nicaragua that they would not intervene to change politics in their country, Alan Riding wrote that the belief that the U.S. was still backing Somoza and would intervene when necessary was still widely held. This "has placed the embassy here in a difficult position."<sup>160</sup> He continued, "opponents of the regime still feel the United States is playing a key role in preventing repression of protesters, and they have been journeying daily to the embassy to report new developments and seek advice."<sup>161</sup> Even though the U.S. was trying to let Nicaraguans change things for themselves, the U.S. presence had been prevalent for so long that people were still turning to Mauricio Solaún, the United States ambassador to Nicaragua, and to other U.S. officials for help. In the past, their daily reports could have been used to inform the American Congress and other U.S. officials that something

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He could either be alluding to aid that was released in the fall of 1977 to help Nicaragua's poor, which is discussed below, or to military aid that was released in the spring of 1978 for training and equipment.

<sup>159</sup> Joaquín Absalon Pastora, "Carter y Sus Derechos," *La Prensa*, February 15, 1978. The Spanish is "publicitario para convencer de q' él es menos malo q' Nixon y sus compañeros."

<sup>160</sup> Alan Riding, "U.S. Neutrality Heartens Nicaragua Rebels," *New York Times*, February 5, 1978.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

needed to be done in Nicaragua to relieve the situation. However, the United States was trying to remove U.S. officials in Nicaragua and no longer to intervene in the conflict between Somoza and his people. This meant the power that those in the American embassy had with Congress and the U.S. President was limited by how much the embassy was allowed to interfere in Nicaraguan politics.

In the United States, the conservative *Washington Post* reported that “[a] congressional hearing yesterday singled out Nicaragua as a mirror of the Carter administration’s human rights policy and found that its reflections are causing confusion and unhappiness among both liberals and conservatives.”<sup>162</sup> The policies toward Nicaragua were “too timid” for some, but for others they were “bullying a staunch, but defenseless, friend.”<sup>163</sup> Some concessions, such as release of military aid to train his soldiers but not arm them, kept Somoza friendly to the U.S. Cutting him off completely, however, would not have improved the situation in Nicaragua at all, because the U.S. would have lost its bargaining power in convincing Somoza to alleviate the oppression of his people.<sup>164</sup> In his article “Nicaraguan Human Rights Situation Caught in a Crossfire,” John M. Goshko quoted Father D’Escoto, a revered member of “Los Doce,” an anti-Somoza group made up of politicians, lawyers, and other professionals, as calling for “Washington... [to] recognize that the current unrest represents a national repudiation of Somoza and cut off all military and economic aid to his government.”<sup>165</sup> The human rights situation might not improve, but at least the U.S. would not be supporting a dictatorial regime that was opposed by its own people.

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<sup>162</sup> John M. Goshko, “Nicaraguan Human Rights Situation Caught in a Crossfire.”

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

By spring of 1978, some of the aid that had been indefinitely postponed for fiscal year 1978 was released to Nicaragua. The writer of an editorial in the liberal *New York Times* expressed his displeasure with this action: “[the] Carter Administration’s decision to resume nonmilitary assistance to Nicaragua is regrettable.”<sup>166</sup> He saw this action as undermining “the credibility of the Carter human rights policy.”<sup>167</sup> The position of the State Department was one of nonintervention in Nicaragua; but the Presidential Directive, NSC-30, released on 17 February 1978, stated that the U.S. would “promote the observance of human rights throughout the world” by whatever means were necessary.<sup>168</sup> The author of this article thought, however, that “the resumption of aid cannot but appear, both to [Somoza] and to the opposition, as a United States endorsement of his heavy-handed methods.”<sup>169</sup> This was definitely not the position that the U.S. wanted to be in, but according to a telegram from Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to the Embassy in Managua, Nicaragua and Caracas, Venezuela in May 1978, “The grants were approved because they focus directly on the poor.”<sup>170</sup> The government gave funds because the economic aid was to go to those who actually needed the help to improve the lives of the common people in Nicaragua. The editorial writer commented that the “administration appears to be rewarding

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<sup>166</sup> Editorial, “The Wrong Message to Nicaragua,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1978. The editorial policies of the *New York Times* include checking of factual evidence as well as of assertions that may contradict other *Times* articles or publications, but allow for a space where people can make the best arguments possible for a range of viewpoints.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Carter, “Human Rights Unclassified, PD/NSC 30,” February 17, 1978.

<sup>169</sup> Editorial, “The Wrong Message to Nicaragua.”

<sup>170</sup> Cyrus Vance to United States Embassy in Managua, Nicaragua, telegram, May 9 1978, Nicaragua Collection, *Digital National Security Archive*, Doc. no. NI00104, 2. These grants were for the National Women’s Development Office, Small Farm Enterprises, Rural Women Leadership, Campesino Legal Aid Services, and Mass Media Civil Rights and Laws.



backward steps.”<sup>171</sup> Though the aid was meant for the people of Nicaragua and not the government, any aid going to Nicaragua was seen as supporting the dictatorial regime of Somoza.

By June 1978, *La Prensa* writers had had enough of Carter’s rhetoric. They wanted to see change. Carter said he was strongly committed to fighting for human rights, but his record, in their opinion, had not proven that statement true for Nicaragua.<sup>172</sup> Though freedom of speech and press were no longer censored, individuals who opposed Somoza were still in danger of being arrested and tortured by the National Guard. Also, Gabriel Urcuyo, in an article in *La Prensa*, accused Jimmy Carter “before God and before the honorable conscience of the free men of the world” as well as “before [his] own conscience” of making his policies that had an “interventionist zeal.”<sup>173</sup> Although Carter was trying for nonintervention in his foreign policy, it did not appear that way to Nicaraguans.

As the discontent in Nicaragua grew, it was becoming evident that solely removing support from Somoza and cutting off aid was not going to change the regime in Nicaragua without the use of violence—without physically removing Somoza from his position of power. The people had tried strikes, which only led to a worse economic problem and more violence. Tom Fenton, a CBS reporter and journalist, wrote an article that was published in *La Prensa*,

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<sup>171</sup> Editorial, “The Wrong Message to Nicaragua.”

<sup>172</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, “The President’s News Conference,” *The American Presidency Project* (December 15, 1977) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=7016>, (accessed May 15, 2012).

<sup>173</sup> Gabriel Urcuyo M., “Gracias, Mr. Carter,” *La Prensa*, June 6, 1978. The Spanish is “Yo lo acuso ante Dios y ante la conciencia honrada de todos los hombres libres del mundo” and “... ante su propia conciencia,” and “afán intervencionista.”

“Nicaragua: An Intolerable Situation.”<sup>174</sup> He wrote, “The major losers seem to be the masses of impoverished Nicaraguans, who are caught in the crossfire between the National Guard of President Anastasio Somoza and the guerrillas of the Sandinista National Liberation Front.”<sup>175</sup> The nation he argued, “is in the grip of a growing crisis that kills its people, and its economy is paralyzed.”<sup>176</sup>

The *New York Times*'s Alan Riding realized that the U.S. seeking to ensure “that the ‘right kind’ of regime succeeds him would be to practice just the sort of intervention that has won America the enmity of Latin America in the past.”<sup>177</sup> In Riding's opinion, “to pursue a vigorous human-rights policy in Nicaragua would probably undermine General Somoza even more and might usher in a left-wing Government.”<sup>178</sup> He recognized that this was not a favorable outcome in the eyes of the United States government, who was very much anti-communist and against another Latin American country becoming sympathetic to the Soviet Union. The violence that would occur without immediate concessions to Somoza was going to be great. There were two sides of the coin for Jimmy Carter. Neither side showed a satisfactory answer for what should happen in Nicaragua, except that Somoza needed to be removed from the equation.

Luis E. Aguilar, historian of Latin America at Georgetown University, wrote an article in the *Washington Post* in mid-September about America's options with regard to the Nicaraguan

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<sup>174</sup> Tom Fenton, “Nicaragua: Una Situación Intolerable,” *La Prensa*, August 13, 1978.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “Los mayores perdedores parecen ser las masas de nicaragüenses empobrecidos, quienes se ven atrapados en el fuego cruzado entre la Guardia Nacional del Presidente Anastasio Somoza y los guerrilleros del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional.”

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “se halla sumido en una crisis creciente que mata a su pueblo y paraliza su economía. Todos convienen que la situación es intolerable, pero no hay solución a la vista.”

<sup>177</sup> Alan Riding, “National Mutiny in Nicaragua,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1978.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

situation. He suggested a third solution to the choice of Somoza or the Sandinistas so that the U.S. would no longer be supporting a dictator but also would not potentially support a new communist regime. For, he wrote, “The present situation in Nicaragua demands something more than human-rights considerations.”<sup>179</sup> The promotion of democracy, not human rights, needed to take precedence in U.S. foreign policy, because human rights would be protected if the regime were to change. “Now is the time to prepare Nicaragua for a transition to a democratic government, avoiding the dilemma of either Somoza or the Sandinistas [by] creat[ing] a third alternative before a tense political situation explodes.”<sup>180</sup> In this way, the United States government would have a say in who was coming to power and could ensure a democratic rule, instead of the despotic rule of another “Somoza or a Castro.”<sup>181</sup> Aguilar argued, “Washington can do little more than sacrifice American ideals for American interests” in order to maintain a manageable situation in Nicaragua.<sup>182</sup> Aguilar’s argument was that Fidel Castro’s rule could have been prevented because the United States could have supported someone else to replace the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista. He extended his argument to Nicaragua to show that the U.S. did not have to support one of two options. There were many options; but they did have to choose one.

If the U.S. had wanted to avoid bloodshed in the pursuit of a new leader of Nicaragua, by September 1978 it was too late. Fighting on a large scale between the Sandinistas and the National Guard had already broken out all over Nicaragua. Nonviolence was no longer an option.

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<sup>179</sup> Luis E. Aguilar, “Sandinistas or Somoza? There *Is* an Alternative,” *Washington Post*, September 12, 1978.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

Somoza had to be forced out of office because he had announced numerous times that he was going to stay until his term was over in 1981.<sup>183</sup> New tactics like those argued for by Aguilar were necessary because, as the U.S. Ambassador told Somoza in a conversation that was relayed via telegram back to Washington, “the basic problem facing his country was his continued presence in power.”<sup>184</sup> Many Nicaraguans believed that as long as Somoza was in power, it would be impossible for an election to take place where one of his supporters would not replace him so that it would still be Somocismo but without Somoza. If only Somoza would have stepped down, then a true election could have taken place for a new Nicaraguan president. John M. Goshko recognized the problem that Carter’s human rights foreign policy had caused in Nicaragua: “through the pursuit of its human-rights policy, it had helped to trigger the violence,” yet the U.S. “was restrained by the president’s non-intervention pledge from taking any direct steps to stop the fighting.”<sup>185</sup> The United States had tried mediation, but Somoza admitted in a conversation with William J. Jorden, the U.S. Ambassador to Panama, that he thought that the Sandinistas “were illegal revolutionaries and that he would not deal with them.”<sup>186</sup>

After the three weeks of widespread fighting in September 1978 had come to a halt, there were renewed discussions concerning the United States’ role in Nicaragua. An ecumenical delegation of American Christian ministers as well as other religious leaders went to Nicaragua

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<sup>183</sup> Mauricio Solaún to State Department, cable, “Nicaragua Mediation No. 121: Conversation with Somoza Secret,” November 11, 1978, Nicaragua Collection, *Digital National Security Archive*, Doc no. NI00482, 5.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>185</sup> John M. Goshko, “Nicaragua: Case of Limits on U.S. Clout Abroad,” *Washington Post*, September 30, 1978.

<sup>186</sup> Warren Christopher to United States Embassy, Nicaragua, cable, “Jorden Mission—Talk with Somoza Secret,” September 24, 1978, Nicaragua Collection, *Digital National Security Archive*, Doc. no. NI00323, 1.

to see the situation for themselves and to find out from the people how they felt about Somoza and the United States' involvement. Of those present, "Rev. Alan McCoy, president of the Major Superiors of Men representing [seven] Catholic orders; Dwain Epps, of the National Council of Churches, representing [thirty-one] Protestant denominations, and Wallace T. Collett, board chairman of the American Friends Service Committee" were three important members of this "fact-finding team."<sup>187</sup> Both the *Washington Post* and *La Prensa* documented their visit. An abbreviated version of their report and their demands of the United States Government was reprinted in *La Prensa*, about which Karen De Young noted, "the findings and recommendations coincide closely with those previously released by other American groups and also with the demands of both Nicaragua's political opposition and the Sandinista guerrillas."<sup>188</sup> Some of their requests as related in *La Prensa* were that the United States should "respect the right of Nicaraguans to self-determination now and in the future and should not intervene politically, militarily or economically"; "should not, however, use the principle of self-determination as a convenient excuse to deny their responsibility" to Nicaragua; "should take immediate steps to remove all support of Somoza"; should withdraw all military support from Nicaragua; should continue actions to refuse outside loans and aid from agencies such as IMF; should "strongly support mediation and especially a special international mediation for disputes"; and finally, should "provide relief funds in the event of such a contingency."<sup>189</sup> They saw the situation in

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<sup>187</sup> Karen De Young, "Christians Call for U.S. to Help Remove Somoza," *Washington Post*, November 9, 1978.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> "Somoza, Principal Obstáculo Para la Paz," *La Prensa*, November 17, 1978. The Spanish is "respetar el derecho de los nicaragüenses a sus propias determinaciones ahora y en el futuro, y no debe intervenir políticamente, militarmente o económicamente"; "no deben, empero, usar el principio de auto determinación nacional como una excusa conveniente para rehusar su

Nicaragua and knew that their country was responsible for it because it had supported Anastasio Somoza's father against Augusto César Sandino back in the 1930s and had occupied Nicaragua before that. These men did not think that they were asking much more than what the U.S. was already planning but urged that the government act faster.

The situation in Nicaragua called for more than just a human rights campaign. The United States needed to intervene in a more tangible way by forcing Somoza out through the mediation process with Guatemala and the Dominican Republic to allow for a plebiscite and by supporting a moderate oppositional leader who could take Somoza's place as president, as argued by Luis E. Aguilar. In so doing, the American government would also be able to stop the fighting between Nicaraguans, improve the lives of the Nicaraguan people, and bring a more democratic government to power as advocated for by the U.S. ecumenical delegation, who went to Nicaragua. To best promote human rights in Nicaragua, the State Department needed to leave aside nonintervention and make the mediation through the OAS work to the benefit of the Nicaraguan people.

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responsabilidad"; "deben tomarlos pasos inmediatos para remover todo soporte de Somoza"; "Inmediata salida del grupo norteamericano de asistencia militar de Nicaragua"; "medidas laudables a través de su participación en el Fondo Monetario Internacional y otras instituciones financieras internacionales para bloquear préstamos y créditos al régimen de Somoza"; "Fuertemente respaldamos el principio de mediación y especialmente una mediación internacional especial para las disputas"; "provea fondos de ayuda humanitaria en caso de esa contingencia."

## Chapter Four: 1979

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At the beginning of Carter's third year in office, David Hawk, a writer for the neo-conservative *New Republic*, wrote about "Human Rights at Half-Time." He argued that Carter's "primary contribution to the promotion of international human rights" was that his policies had "made human rights a front-ranking issue in international affairs."<sup>190</sup> Another contribution, Hawk claimed was that "Carter's human rights policies could lead to permanent changes in the international legal and political framework in ways that promote respect for human rights." In the long run, Hawk thought human rights could change the view on international affairs and policies so that they would always be a part of how the United States made decisions. According to Hawk, even if human rights played a small role in foreign policy, that was better than if it played no role at all. Hawk praised Carter for "a good record for avoiding the use of American power in ways destructive of human rights." Hawk understood that this foreign policy was by no means perfect, as he wrote, "Despite the inconsistencies, gaps and mistakes, there have been many cases where U.S. influence was used positively to promote civil and political rights."<sup>191</sup>

Hawk urged Carter not to give up on his commitment to human rights. He wrote, "Carter's most impressive human rights achievements have come from initiatives taken in the earlier days of his presidency." Hawk was firm in his belief that Carter could not allow these accomplishments to "fade"; Hawk encouraged Carter to "[follow] through and [follow] up on those earlier initiatives" to improve human rights situations abroad.<sup>192</sup> According to Hawk, Carter's policies had hit a wall on getting oppressive regimes to change their ways. In order to

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<sup>190</sup> David Hawk, "Human Rights at Half-Time: Totting Up the Score in President Carter's Most Noble Enterprise," *New Republic*, April 7, 1979, 22.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

promote human rights in other ways, Hawk wrote about a few areas where Carter could make headway. The first one was a reformulation of U.S. “refugee policy,” which involved redesign of the treatment and release of political prisoners and the need for “a coherent overall refugee and immigration policy.”<sup>193</sup> The second piece to work toward was a “ratification of the human rights treaties.” Carter had lobbied Congress to ratify them in February 1978, but as of Hawk’s “Half-Time” report they had not been ratified. Hawk knew these were important, and that Carter should lobby more to get both Houses to sign off on these treaties, which would further the government’s human rights foreign policy. Jimmy Carter declared before the Senate, “While the United States is a leader in the realization and protection of human rights, it is one of the few large nations that has not become a party to the three United Nations human rights treaties.”<sup>194</sup> Carter concluded his speech, by saying, “By giving its advice and consent to ratification of these treaties, the Senate will confirm our country’s traditional commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights at home and abroad.”<sup>195</sup> Unfortunately, even by the end of Carter’s four years, these treaties had yet to be signed. Finally, Hawk called for “integrat[ion] [of] its human rights concerns with its policies toward violating regimes.”<sup>196</sup> Carter had made it possible with NSC-30 to remove economic aid or military assistance, or to lay sanctions. In Hawk’s opinion, he just had to follow through by invoking this Presidential Directive.

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>194</sup> Jimmy Carter, Speech, “Human Rights Treaties Message to the Senate,” *The American Presidency Project* (February 23, 1978) <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=30399>, (accessed May 15, 2012). The treaties Carter referenced were the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Hawk, *New Republic*, April 7, 1979, 23.



Because Hawk thought the “public supports Carter’s human rights policies,” it followed that the “policy follow-through” was “not too much to ask from a president who talks of human rights as Carter does.”<sup>197</sup> If Carter’s commitment to human rights were to mean anything, he needed the action to support the rhetoric, a recurring theme in the critique of Carter’s policies. Hawk believed Carter’s foreign policy had already made such significant progress that it would affect the way U.S. foreign policy was conceptualized during the post-Carter years. Finally, Hawk thought that Carter’s “commitment to human rights is worthy of emulation by every president from now on” as long as action followed the rhetoric.<sup>198</sup>

By 1979, Nicaraguan writers of *La Prensa* had mostly turned their opinions of U.S. intervention from one of seeking support in removing Somoza to one of keeping the U.S. completely hands-off in Nicaraguan politics. They no longer wanted U.S. help because as far as they could tell, America had not done much good on the ground in Nicaragua. Somoza was still in power, and the National Guard was still antagonizing the common people—beating youths to death and torturing captured FSLN guerrilla fighters.<sup>199</sup>

The U.S. foreign policy was not seen as something that had improved Nicaraguans’ lives. They believed the United States was keeping Somoza in power because he was friendly to the U.S., both in trade and in being anti-communist, and because it suited American interests, not because the American government was fighting for the Nicaraguan people to enjoy their human

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>199</sup> Mauricio Solaún to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, telegram, “New Report of Human Rights Abuse,” February 8, 1979, Nicaragua Collection, *Digital National Security Archive*, Doc. no. NI00646, 1-2; Frank M. Tucker Jr. to U.S. State Department, telegram, “Disturbances and Human Rights Situation,” Nicaragua Collection, *Digital National Security Archive*, Doc. no. NI00661, 1-3.

rights. The author of an article entitled “SCP Protests the U.S. Intervention Policy” wrote that the Social Christian Party of Nicaragua, who were a part of the FLSN, “[called on] the American people, their progressive organizations and their leaders who are for Human Rights and for democracy, to pressure in order to discontinue the intervention policy that holds Somoza and is between a process of no intervention and of effective and sincere solidarity for the Nicaraguan people.”<sup>200</sup> The Social Christian Party knew that the Carter administration’s policy was not really one of non-intervention. According to the Party, the American people needed to remind Carter of his commitment to human rights because he had seemingly forgotten how important they were to him.

J. A. Tijerino Medrano, a writer for *La Prensa*, saw interventionism as a valid policy for international bodies such as the OAS or the UN, but not for individual nations. He saw international bodies intervening as “perfectly legal, because they are not interventionists due to previous submission to their jurisdiction.”<sup>201</sup> Nicaragua belonged to the OAS and was not subservient to it nor indebted to the organization. Another reason Medrano saw the actions of these international organizations as legal was because “they try to help us to resolve a crisis in which we live.”<sup>202</sup> In Medrano’s opinion, these international bodies had the welfare of the people

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<sup>200</sup> “PSC Protesta Política Intervencionista de E.U.,” *La Prensa*, February 17, 1979. The Spanish is “al pueblo norteamericano, a sus organizaciones progresistas y sus lideres que están por los Derechos Humanos y por la democracia, para que presionen con el objeto de que se descontinúe la política intervencionista que sostiene a Somoza y se entre a un proceso de no intervención y de solidaridad efectiva y sincera para con el pueblo nicaragüense.”

<sup>201</sup> J. A. Tijerino Medrano, “¿Intervencionismo?” *La Prensa*, January 13, 1979. The Spanish is “perfectamente legales, no intervencionistas por existir sometimientos previos a la competencia de los mismos.”

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.* The Spanish is “que traten de ayudarnos a resolver la crisis en que vivimos.”

as their primary focus; whereas a sovereign nation might have imperialistic aims that would lead them to intervene in order to maintain an oppressive situation such as in Nicaragua.

Another reason why writers for *La Prensa* wanted the U.S. to leave them alone to fight for their own freedom was that the support the U.S. “fed the Somoza dynasty for forty-odd years [had] deeply sown roots” which would be “difficult to cut out—but not impossible.”<sup>203</sup> In their eyes, the U.S. had helped the Somozas oppress the Nicaraguan people, and they would have no more of it. The author of this article realized that these roots were not as strong as they used to be and that the U.S. and Nicaragua were “at present, apparently divorced” because of the “effectiveness and credibility of the defense of human rights that has been so fervently promulgated by Carter.”<sup>204</sup> The problem he pointed out, however, was that “[his policy] left much to be desired in Nicaragua.”<sup>205</sup> They saw that the seed of interventionism was “only harvested as collective mourning, pain, misery, and hardship,” meaning that U.S. presence in Nicaragua had only made matters worse, according to this editorial writer.<sup>206</sup> Carter’s human rights policy had a long way to go to change the situation in Nicaragua because of the history between the two nations. Also, Carter’s new form of foreign policy had not made life for the common Nicaraguan much better with Somoza as President and General of the National Guard. The author of this article saw the situation in Nicaragua as one that could not, however, be

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<sup>203</sup> “La Política Internacional: Las Sanciones de Carter y Sus Implicaciones,” *La Prensa*, March 11, 1979. The Spanish “éstas por más de cuarenta y pico de años a través de la dinastía y donde se han sembrado raíces muy profundas y difíciles de cortar—pero no imposible.”

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “En el presente, aparentemente se encuentran divorciados” and “porque la efectividad y credibilidad de la defensa de los derechos humanos que con tanto fervor ha sido promulgada por el presidente Carter.”

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “en Nicaragua deja mucho que desear.”

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “cosecha sólo se recoge luto, dolor, miseria y penalidades.”

ignored. He hoped that the U.S. would not leave them to die, but that it would instead stand with them and provide a force that would fight actively for the opposition, rather than simply imposing sanctions against the Nicaraguan government in the hope that the human rights situation would improve.<sup>207</sup>

When the Group of Twelve, a moderate political force within the larger FSLN, planned to visit the United States, they stated that their visit was to “denounce before the American public the responsibility of Carter’s administration for the Nicaraguan situation for supporting the Somoza government”<sup>208</sup> They believed that “the United States insists on imposing on Nicaragua a solution that ensures their interests, both economic and political.”<sup>209</sup> In their view, the welfare of Nicaraguans was not the real reason why Carter was promoting human rights in Nicaragua. Their hope was that “the Nicaraguan people's struggle will force the Yankees to take their hands off Nicaragua and respect the solution that Nicaraguans choose.”<sup>210</sup> The United States had been involved in Nicaraguan politics too long, and the Twelve thought that after several decades they needed to leave Nicaragua alone.

The disenchantment of writers of *La Prensa* with Carter’s foreign policy was quite evident by May 1979. In an article for *La Prensa*, Hugo Astacio Cabrera wrote that “the scandal of the responsibility of the United States for having created and supported the Somoza dynasty”

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> “‘Los Doce’ Periplo en Busca de Apoyo,” *La Prensa*, April 1, 1979. The Spanish is “denunciar ante la opinión pública norteamericana la responsabilidad del gobierno de Carter en la situación de Nicaragua por estar apoyando al gobierno Somocista.”

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “Estados Unidos insiste en imponer en Nicaragua una solución que les garantice sus intereses.”

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “a la lucha del pueblo nicaragüense va a obligar a los Yanquis a sacar las manos de Nicaragua y respetar la solución que los nicaragüenses escojan.”

needed to be remedied.<sup>211</sup> The U.S. had made up for “lost prestige” with the human rights campaign, “despite its erratic application and difficulty against powerful countries.”<sup>212</sup> However, when the State Department could make a difference in the lives of Nicaraguans by intervening to protect human rights, Cabrera called it “incompatible” with “American strength or egotism” and declared that the U.S. had backed down from their commitment to “vindicating the human rights of the abused in the world.”<sup>213</sup> As a result, Cabrera thought “only [Nicaraguans] can do something for our cause and should not expect foreign aid, much less from the United States after they have mocked the people of Nicaragua.”<sup>214</sup> He exhorted his people, “Let us unite and fight together, because otherwise Nicaraguans will have a Somoza dynasty for many more years, and the third Anastasio [the current president’s son] is already ready and anxious to take the reins in his hands and the mosquitoes [National Guard] will continue working.”<sup>215</sup> The only hope for change was for Nicaraguans to work for it themselves and not rely on the United States, who, in his opinion, had created the current problems.

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<sup>211</sup> Hugo Astacio Cabrera, “¿En que Quedó la Política del Presidente Carter?” *La Prensa*, May 17, 1979. The Spanish is “el escándalo ... que los responsabiliza de haber creado y fomentado la dinastía somocista.”

<sup>212</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “prestigio perdido” and “la errática aplicación y la dificultad frente a los países poderosos.”

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “incompatible,” “sus fuerzas o que el egoísmo norteamericano,” and “reivindicar los derechos humanos vejados en el mundo.”

<sup>214</sup> Ibid. “The Spanish is “entonces que sólo nosotros podemos hacer algo por nuestra causa y que no debemos esperar nada de la ayuda extranjera, mucho menos de los Estados Unidos después de haberse burlado del pueblo de Nicaragua viniendo a servir de mampara a Somoza para detener la tormenta del mundo en su contra, con una mediación inocua.”

<sup>215</sup> Ibid. The Spanish is “Unámonos y luchemos juntos, porque de otro modo los nicaragüenses tendremos a la dinastía Somoza por muchos años más, pues ya el tercer Anastasio está listo y ansioso para tomar las riendas en sus manos y los zancudos dispuestos a seguir colaborando.”

Much was written in American newspapers about the Nicaragua situation in June and July of 1979 because of the increased levels of violence that had resulted in a second round of civil war. Unfortunately, *La Prensa*'s headquarters were destroyed on 12 June 1979, and there are no printed articles to reference their side of the story during this conflict or when the Sandinistas took control of the government (at least until 17 August 1979).

By June, it was evident that Somoza was not going to be in power as president or general of the National Guard much longer. The Sandinista guerrillas were fighting the National Guard in all the major cities in Nicaragua. Stephen S. Rosenfeld, a foreign affairs, and editorial writer for the *Washington Post*, understood that Carter did not cause this “explosion” of war in Nicaragua, but argued that his foreign policy’s “human-rights emphasis perhaps distracted policymakers from considering other elements in the mix.”<sup>216</sup> Rosenfeld did not think human rights was a real foreign policy but realized that Carter’s administration acted as if it had been. Rosenfeld considered the administration’s actions, rather, as more of an *interventionist* foreign policy than as one promoting human rights, stating that “[Carter’s] human-rights interest is a form of intervention—in this instance an ineffectual form, I might add.”<sup>217</sup> He saw the administration’s policy of nonintervention in Nicaragua as “over[riding] pragmatic considerations.”<sup>218</sup> The U.S. government should have intervened in order to remove the cruel regime because of their responsibility to Nicaragua for having established the Somozas and their oppressive rule in the first place.

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<sup>216</sup> Stephen S. Rosenfeld, “The Non-Policy Of Non-Intervention,” *Washington Post*, June 29, 1979.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

The executive editor for the *New Republic*, Morton Kondracke, saw the benefits of “Carter’s human rights crusade” in some parts of the world but also saw how it was “producing a moral and political disaster in Nicaragua.”<sup>219</sup> He would have agreed with Rosenfeld that the civil war in Nicaragua was not “entirely” America’s fault, but took the stance that the U.S. “helped set it in motion.”<sup>220</sup> The problem Kondracke saw was that “the Carter administration does not seem to know how to end [the problem].”<sup>221</sup> A valid question for Kondracke was, “What should the United States do?” Should the U.S. occupy Nicaragua to settle matters as they had done in the 1920s, which had placed the Somozas in power in the first place? To this, he answered, “Long ago, we should have been overtly—and covertly...—helping moderate democratic oppositionists to take power in the event of Somoza’s departure. We should do that now. We should formally declare—at a very high level—that we want Somoza out and will work to get him out.”<sup>222</sup> After much suffering of his people and the destruction of Nicaragua both physically and economically, Anastasio Somoza Debayle finally decided to step down before his term was up in 1981. On 7 July 1979, the *Washington Post* ran an article by Karen De Young called “Somoza Agrees to Quit, Leaves Timing to U.S.” Relief from his oppressive regime was finally in sight for the Nicaraguans. Somoza was quoted, “I am like a tied donkey fighting with a tiger.”<sup>223</sup> He had decisively lost to the Sandinistas and had left a bad taste in the mouths of Nicaraguans. He

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<sup>219</sup> Morton Kondracke, “Words for Somoza: The U.S. Interferes Abroad, But It Fears to Intervene,” *New Republic*, June 30, 1979, 11. He was also an American political commentator and journalist as well as a pundit on the McLaughlin Group.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>223</sup> Karen De Young, “Somoza Agrees to Quit, Leaves Timing to U.S.,” *Washington Post*, July 7, 1979.

realized that “Even if I win militarily... I have no future.”<sup>224</sup> However, Somoza did not step down immediately. He announced on 6 July that he would step down, but as the title of the *Washington Post* article suggested. To conclude, Morton Kondracke alluded to how “human rights policy can’t work merely by persuasion, diplomacy and good will. ... Surely the United States should not inspire others to die for its ideals, and let them die alone.”<sup>225</sup> Protection of these people was a responsibility that Carter and his administration took on when they claimed to be the champions of those who were oppressed and that they would fight for their rights, but it was not going to be easy to do so. It was going to require hard work.

Because the U.S. government seemed so concerned with communism taking over another country in the hemisphere, there were never any serious discussions with the forces in opposition to Somoza. There were a few moderate opposition groups that were not affiliated with the Sandinistas,<sup>226</sup> but the United States was unwilling to support any of them, let alone have a discussion of Nicaragua’s future—all of which the U.S. resisted in the name of nonintervention, at least according to Rosenfeld and others.

Alan Riding reported on 1 July, “political opinion is polarized, and many Nicaraguans blame Washington for the destruction of the centrist option.”<sup>227</sup> The moderate “Los Doce” group

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Kondracke, “Words for Somoza,” *New Republic*, June 29, 1979, 13.

<sup>226</sup> For example the Frente Amplio Oposición (FAO), who was part of the mediation until the U.S. denied their request for a plebiscite without Somoza and a dissolution of the National Guard. Other opposition groups were the Frente Patriótico Nacional (FPN), made up of trade unions, Sandinistas, and a front of popular organizations, and the Unión Democrática de Liberación (UDEL), made up of liberal capitalists and workers’ organizations and founded by Pedro Joaquín Chamorro.

<sup>227</sup> Alan Riding, “Unable to Force Out Somoza, U.S. Lacks Clout With Foes,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1979.



had joined the Sandinista movement in October 1977, giving the movement more legitimacy because it was not made up of just guerrilla forces and Marxists. Those at the top of Nicaraguan society joined ranks against Somoza. If the U.S. government wanted to see a peaceful transition from Somoza to another political party, Riding wrote, “Nicaraguans feel strongly that Washington should come to terms with the Sandinists’ junta rather than undermine an opposition consensus that took months to build.”<sup>228</sup> To carry his point home, Riding quoted a young Nicaraguan businessman: “Washington says it wants to end the war as soon as possible... but by resisting the junta, it is prolonging the war.”<sup>229</sup> Yet again the consensus was that normalcy and diplomacy rested on the United States, which must rectify the situation in Nicaragua after Somoza stepped down.

However, Somoza stepped down too late for the United States or any other country willing to intervene to put together a plebiscite to elect a new president of Nicaragua. The Sandinistas had won militarily and were not going to step down. Unfortunately for the U.S., they had not worked with any of the opposition forces before or during the civil war. Now, after Somoza, the Sandinistas did not want to work with the U.S. and vice versa.

Once Somoza stepped down on 17 July 1979, the Sandinista junta was all too eager to take their place as Nicaragua’s new government. Other nations recognized them as Nicaragua’s legitimate governing body, while the U.S. was not so eager to support this new government, still wary of its communist ties with Cuba and the Soviet Union and of its Marxist members. Nicaraguans were not looking for American intervention any longer because as stated in an

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

article called “Somoza’s Finale: A Victory for Freedom; A Defeat for the United States” in the neo-conservative *New Republic*:

the American government had chances to assert itself successfully in Nicaragua. But at each of those junctures it has made misjudgments which, taken together, have solidified in the minds of Nicaraguans the identification between the U.S. and Somoza, and have embittered many elements of the anti-Somoza movement, which is now taking control of the country.<sup>230</sup>

If the United States wanted Nicaraguans to have a better view of their foreign policy, then they should have reached out to the opposition as also mentioned above in chapter three so that it could “have been able to force Somoza’s resignation” instead of working with the dictator when he realized that he could no longer hold on to his presidency. In forcing his resignation, the U.S. would then have been able to “turn the running of the country over to conservative, pro-American forces.” This would have been acceptable to a majority of Nicaraguans while preventing the radical aspects of the anti-Somoza opposition from being prevalent in the government. However, the U.S. did not listen to the opposition. In 1977, “a coalition of anti-Somoza forces, led by conservative publisher [of *La Prensa*] Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, appealed to the U.S... for moral support.” Not even Chamorro was heeded in his cry; instead he and his group were called “a collection of ineffective idealists by the U.S. government.” Chamorro was a conservative in the sense that he called for a procedural form of democracy in Nicaragua, without the dictatorial family of the Somozas. Members of “Los Doce” visited Washington, but “the State Department ignored their presence and made no effort to reach out to them.” The United States government had made it very clear that it was unwilling to work with opposition

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<sup>230</sup> Somoza’s Finale: A Victory For Freedom; A Defeat For the United States. Why Should That Be So?” *New Republic*, July 21 & 28, 1979, 18.

forces before, nor would they do so once that opposition was in power.<sup>231</sup> The American Left, Right, and Middle were on the same page: the U.S. government should have reached out to the opposition leaders so that moderates would have taken over the Nicaraguan government, instead of the radical FSLN members. This was not, however, the course that the U.S. government took.

According to the writers mentioned in both chapters three and four, the promotion of human rights in American foreign policy failed the people of Nicaragua and many human rights activists. If the United States had put aside the nonintervention policy for a support of the moderate oppositional groups when civil unrest was apparent in Nicaragua due to fighting across the nation, then perhaps the destruction would not have been so severe. At least this was the argument put forth by intellectuals, as seen in this paper, regardless of their political affiliation. Human rights in general and as a foreign policy could have been legitimate and powerful; however, nonintervention was the State Department's course of action, which undermined how influential the promotion of human rights in Nicaragua could have been.

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 19.

## Conclusion

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In the months after Somoza fled the country, the Sandinistas realized in what a disastrous state Somoza had left Nicaragua. Karen DeYoung reported for the *Washington Post*, “Former President Anastasio Somoza left the country with ... an enormous debt... \$618 million.”<sup>232</sup> She went on, “his administration liquidat[ed] every asset he and his government could lay hands on, and stripped both the national treasury and overseas accounts of cash.”<sup>233</sup> The Sandinistas had absolutely nothing to work with to run a country and several loans that needed to be paid off. DeYoung continued, “Even if [Nicaraguan] fears of more government control are not realized, a revolutionary government without hard cash or credit would have difficulty meeting the demands of the masses and could turn as a result to repression of popular protest as its only option for survival.”<sup>234</sup> There were obligations that the new government had to fulfill to their people, but they were unable to do so because they had nothing to work with and would have to compromise their ideals to appease the masses and the banks needing loan payments. Finally, DeYoung wrote, “Much of [its first several months] was spent unraveling the tangled mess left by Somoza and determining just what the financial picture was.”<sup>235</sup> They were not able to fully carry out the roles of a functioning government because they had to build anew.

The legacy of the Somoza family ended in September of 1980. After Somoza fled from Nicaragua, he hid in Paraguay. He knew that if someone wanted to kill him, there was nothing he

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<sup>232</sup> Karen DeYoung, “Somoza Legacy: Plundered Economy,” *Washington Post*, November 30, 1979.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

could do about it.<sup>236</sup> He had bodyguards with him at all times. But when he was assassinated, his vehicle was riddled with bullets and his body dismembered by the anonymous assassins' machine guns.<sup>237</sup>

By this time, the revolutionaries had created an interim government made up both of Sandinistas and of people representing all political viewpoints so that every one had a voice.<sup>238</sup> The interim government confiscated any property that had been owned by Somoza and by wealthy supporters who had fled the country with him, worked on how to repay the debt that Somoza had left, dealt with class polarization, and improved the human rights situation.<sup>239</sup> There was a mess that had to be cleaned up before a new government could truly function. Different problems arose once Somoza was no longer president, but that would have to be the subject of another paper.

As important as the opinions of the educated outside of the government are, they do not usually have all the necessary information for making a decision. There were many factors that determined Carter's foreign policy in Nicaragua, such as stability of the country, fear of communism, and a commitment to nonintervention, and human rights, in that order. The problem

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<sup>236</sup> "The Somoza Killing: A Meticulous Plot: A Withering Assault Was Apparently Planned Over a Long Period and With Precise Timing," *New York Times*, September 22, 1980.

<sup>237</sup> Cynthia Gorney, "Somoza is Assassinated in Ambush in Paraguay," *Washington Post*, September 18, 1980; "The Somoza Killing," *New York Times*.

<sup>238</sup> Thomas Walker and Christine Wade, *Nicaragua: Living in the Shadow of the Eagle*, 46. The junta had a member from the Sandinistas; one of the Group of Twelve; a member from the FAO, which had included Los Doce, UDEL, and MDN in the mediation; Doña Violeta Chamorro, the widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro; a member of FPN and also one from MDN (Movimiento Democrático Nicaragüense, which was traditionally conservative). John Pike, "FSLN and the Guerrillas," <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nicaragua1.htm>, (accessed October 29, 2012).

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-7.

with nonintervention in the case of Nicaragua was the long history between the United States and Nicaragua, where the United States had a sense of responsibility, expressed both by intellectuals in the U.S. and Nicaragua as well as Carter's administration. In the minds of the writers shown in this paper, this responsibility should have led the State Department to having open lines of communication with the anti-Somoza forces to find a moderate option for taking over the Nicaraguan government. Carter and his administration should have considered this critique of their actions more closely because it could have changed the course of Nicaragua's future and could have prevented the Contra and Sandinista civil war of the 1980s.

For this paper, numerous sources were not discussed, mainly for the sake of the length of the thesis. For a future paper that would delve further into Carter's foreign policy and the views of American intellectuals, the research could be expanded to include more United States newspapers, such as the *Miami Herald*, which *La Prensa* reprinted articles from more and referenced in other articles more than it did the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*. Even the *Los Angeles Times* or *Chicago Tribune* would be useful for other geographical and political perspectives. Also, *Novedades*—the government run newspaper in Nicaragua—could add information about the sentiments of the Nicaraguan people. Other Central American newspapers may have published other Nicaraguan intellectuals' opinions because such writers could perhaps have published more easily abroad than in their own country, at least during censorship. This might provide a more rounded picture of what was presented in the public realm about Nicaragua. Chamorro and other intellectuals wrote books and journal articles expressing opinions that could not have been printed in Nicaragua, and that could also add to our knowledge about what they thought the U.S. should be doing in their country. Having a research grant to go to Nicaragua would be a next step for graduate work.

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