



## Nicaragua's KGB Party

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The U.S. is not the only country that will go to the polls in November. Nicaragua does, too, and Daniel Ortega is running for president. Nicaraguans know Ortega as a FSLN *comandante* in designer glasses, a member of the Marxist Sandinista *junta* that oppressed and looted their country. According to his former sponsors, there's much more to the man and his supposedly independent movement today. One thing that hasn't changed, though, is that he still beloved by the American Left, which wants him to win almost as much as it wants Nancy Pelosi to be Speaker of the House.

Since the American Left yawned when the Venona papers showed that Alger Hiss, the Rosenbergs, and other of their heroes were indeed traitors, the fact that Daniel Ortega, his brother Humberto, and many of their FSLN comrades are mentioned in recently revealed KGB files will

probably cause no agonizing re-evaluation. Yet these important but neglected revelations show why the prospect of a new Ortega regime should concern American policy makers. That is especially true with the emergence of anti-American bullhorn Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, who supports Ortega and would like his burgeoning left-wing axis to include a Nicaragua headed by the candidate of the *Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional*.

The FSLN began with Carlos Fonseca Amado, author of *A Nicaraguan in Moscow* and a trusted KGB agent, codenamed GIDROLOG, "Hydrologist." That information emerges from KGB files smuggled to the West by Vasili Mitrokhin, the official tasked with moving the KGB's foreign files to a new location. The Mitrokhin archive, published with co-author Christopher Andrew of Cambridge, is the most

complete intelligence find from any source. The recently published second volume, *The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World*, sheds light on key events, including [KGB manipulation of Chile's Salvador Allende](#), and control of the FSLN, which figured prominently in Soviet strategy.

A keystone of that strategy in the Americas involved Cuba, code-named AVANPOST or "bridge-head." In the designs of KGB chairman Aleksandr Shelepin, Nicaragua was to have become a second bridgehead working alongside the Cubans. In 1959, the FSLN's Tomas Borge and a group of Sandinistas arrived in Havana for meetings with Fidel Castro. Files reveal that the KGB also recruited Nicaraguan exile Edelberto Torres Espinosa, code-name PIMEN, a surgeon and friend of Carlos Fonseca. Torres' KGB case officers V.P. Nefedov and V.V. Kostikov regarded him as a valuable and reliable agent. An agent, under KGB rules, means one who takes orders and carries out assignments.

In 1961, Shelepin told Nikita Khrushchev about these agents, along with one codenamed LOT who remains unidentified, and allocated funding for them. What the KGB had in mind for the FSLN was a "sabotage-terrorism group" headed by Manuel Ramon de Jesus Andara y Ubeda, an expatriate Nicaraguan surgeon working in Mexico. His codename was PRIM, and he selected candidates for training.

Andara y Ubeda's guerrillas formed the basis for a *diversionnyye razvedyvatelnyye gruppy*, or DRG, a sabotage

and intelligence group given the codename ISKRA, "Spark," which was also the name of Lenin's newspaper. The files reveal that the KGB showed great interest in using the FSLN for sabotage in the southern United States. In 1966, the KGB placed Andara y Ubeda's group on the U.S.-Mexican border, with bases in Ciudad Juarez, Tijuana, and Ensenada. The targets included American military bases, missile sites, radar installations, and the oil pipeline from El Paso, Texas, to Costa Mesa, California. Files reveal that agents selected three sites for landings, with dead drops to store mines and explosives. The KGB also ran a support group, codenamed SATURN, which according to the Mitrokhin archive "was tasked with using the movements of migrant workers (*braceros*) to conceal the transfer of agents and munitions across the border."

Under the same ISKRA codename, the KGB also trained the Nicaraguan guerrillas who seized the National Congress in August 1978. Vladimir Kryuchkov head of the FCD, the KGB's foreign intelligence directorate, was briefed on operations. The guerrillas flew to Havana, where Castro met with Tomas Borge, Humberto Ortega and Daniel Ortega. Cuba's *Departamento America* (DA) helped them set up a base in Costa Rica, vital in their ousting of strongman Anastasio Somoza in 1979.

DA boss Julian Lopez Diaz conveniently became Cuba's ambassador to Nicaragua. The first Soviet official on the scene was Nikolai Sergeyevich Leonov, the

geyevich Leonov, the KGB's leading Latin American expert, who had been deployed to Mexico in 1953 and who became deputy head of the FCD, in charge of KGB operations in North and South America.

According to the files, Daniel Ortega told Leonov the FSLN strategy was to "tear Nicaragua from the capitalist orbit." Leonov told his bosses that the Ortegas would transform the FSLN into a Marxist-Leninist party, which would allow other centrist and "bourgeois" parties only because they did not threaten Sandinista power and served as a facade for the outside world. The FSLN, Leonov reported, would also lead class struggle across Central America.

To that end, the Sandinistas approached Moscow for military aid. According to the files, they wanted to act while Jimmy Carter was still president. In 1981, Humberto Ortega and Soviet defense minister Dimitri Ustinov signed an arms treaty. Everything went through Cuba, and according to the Mitrokhin archive, more Soviet arms arrived in Cuba that year than at any time since the 1962 missile crisis. In 1983, when Daniel Ortega visited Moscow, the Soviets agreed to send a squadron of MiG-21 fighters.

*The KGB and the Battle for the Third World* also reveals that the KGB and Cuba's DA played a significant role in fueling protest in the United States over what the Left called the "U.S. war in Central America." The Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), a

disinformation operation launched by Salvadoran Communists Farid and Skafik Handal, publicized a State Department paper forged by the KGB's FCD service. Those taken in by it included Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times*. Also during the 1980s the KGB launched the disinformation campaign that rich Americans were plundering the bodies of Latin American children for organ transplants. This was publicized through International Association of Democratic Lawyers, a Soviet front, and was getting play long after disproved as KGB propaganda.

Under FSLN rule, Nicaragua became, in the words of writer Paul Berman, the world center of the New Left. This was the place the aparatchiks hung out once Vietnam was safely in Stalinist hands. The FSLN anthem referred to "the yanqui, enemy of mankind." But the Nicaraguan people, who couldn't slip away to Berkeley and San Francisco, did not share the American Left's enthusiasm for the FSLN vanguard and voted them out of power in 1990. The victory of Violeta Chamorro stunned National Public Radio, among many others. Before leaving power the Sandinistas looted the country on a scale unmatched by Somoza.

Now Daniel Ortega wants to run the place again. His Soviet bagmen and trainers are no longer on the scene. Fidel Castro is still around but his regime no longer commands respect as a model. But Ortega has found a new sponsor is pushing for a fight with the yanqui enemy of mankind.

Hugo Chavez, who has also been meddling in Peru, is supporting Ortega with more than rhetoric. In April, he signed a deal with Nicaraguan mayors of Ortega's FSLN party to sell them Venezuelan oil on at special rates.

Stephan Kinzer, who covered Central America for the *New York Times* during the 1980s, cites polls showing that 69 percent of Nicaraguans would not vote for Daniel Ortega

under any conditions. But Ortega deploys a political base that makes him a "formidable candidate." Ortega, writes Kinzer, "has already shown his power over the court system by arranging for pro-Sandinista judges to absolve him of charges that he sexually abused his stepdaughter for years." The candidate "now wants to use that power to shape the November election result."