

Editorial

Contra aid supports war and bloodshed

The Reagan administration is resorting to half-truths and distortions in its latest campaign to provide military assistance to rebels seeking to overthrow the Nicaraguan government. Unless Congress rejects the request, the United States will come closer to direct military involvement in the conflict.

The president is expected to send Congress within two weeks a proposal for \$100 million in assistance to the rebels—\$70 million in military aid and \$30 million in non-lethal aid, such as uniforms, medicine and food. Congress presently bars the administration from providing lethal assistance to the guerrillas, commonly known as Contras.

But supporters of the rebels, including the president, prefer to call them "freedom fighters." They also label the Managua government "Marxist," and stress the "massive influx" of Soviet and Cuban weapons said to be shipped to Nicaragua. These factors, and the supposed undemocratic nature of the Sandinistas, make up the administration's case for supporting the Contras.

Whatever kernel of truth may lie in these latest accusations, it cannot justify U.S. support for the forcible overthrow of an elected government. The portrayal of the Contras in glowing terms — Reagan once called them the moral equivalent of our founding fathers — also serves to mask their true nature. In fact, the rebels' conduct has been marked by increasing human rights abuses and a noticeable lack of political initiative.

Wednesday, the Washington Office on Latin America released a study detailing the "systematic" abuse of civilians by the Contras over the past year. Two other respected, private human rights organizations, Amnesty International and Americas Watch, have previously charged the rebels with such violations. Amnesty last week reported that the Contras commit torture and murder.

Significantly, all three groups have noted that the Nicaraguan government has also violated the rules of war. For instance, of the 139 cases of human rights abuses cited in the new report, 21 were attributed to the Sandinista army. While not as common as Contra atrocities, these acts represent the growing polarization and militarization of Nicaraguan society.

More than one-half of Nicaragua's gross national product is now spent for military use. The national economy is in a shambles, with many basic consumer goods rationed or in short supply. Responsibility for this phenomenon must lie with the Reagan administration and supporters of the overthrow of Nicaragua.

The United States is financing a division among Nicaraguans. In addition to aiding the Contras, the administration has blocked loans from international lending agencies to Nicaragua and has effectively ended trade through an embargo.

For Nicaraguans, the only tangible result of U.S. policy has been bloodshed, and economic and social disruption. And until the United States recognizes the legitimacy of the Nicaraguan government and stops funding the Contras, Nicaragua will become further impoverished and torn by war. And in the likely event the Sandinista's prevail, they will be forced to further restrict press and political freedoms, while spending more to defend their country.

U.S. concerns have been addressed by Nicaragua in the past. The Nicaraguan government has repeatedly pledged to prohibit any foreign military bases, reduce the size of the armed forces and remove all Cuban and Soviet military advisers. But these desirable goals cannot occur without the good faith of the United States. An end to support of the Contras would be an admirable first step.

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Letters

Sexist opinion

This is in response to Michelle Loew's letter attacking our collective "stupidity" regarding the motive behind Sports Illustrated's "Bathing Suit Issue." I hope that many women, as well as men, see the essentially sexist opinion on her part that all (particularly men) who read Sports Illustrated are stupid.

I can take or leave the "men's" magazines she addresses. However, Playgirl sells its share of beefcake. Also, the U of O bookstore is currently advertising (under "SEX") a Man-of-the-Month poster-calendar. I wonder which gender this will appeal to? Note a bit of hypocrisy?

No one forces anyone to pose for or purchase any magazine... such is free will. Nor are the models — either sex — "exploited." They are paid for their "services," and I doubt that much guilt accompanies the check to the bank.

I will be glad when people of both sexes get off their moralistic soap boxes and address those issues which truly concern equality, survival of the human race and the like. Better still, it would be a refreshing start to eradicate anti-male or

female attitudes.

Sexism, as Ms. Loew clearly exposes, is, unfortunately, a two-way street.

John Workman
Senior

Editor's note: The Man-of-the-Month poster-calendar is being advertised and sold by a group that has no connection to the University Bookstore.

No sympathy

Rob Young, I find your reply (ODE, Feb. 13) to Audrey Weiss on women's choice fascinating. Do you really believe that women deviously claim to be using contraception, when in fact they hope to become pregnant and strike it rich with a paternity suit? You can free yourself of this paranoia in a very simple way — take responsibility for contraception yourself.

I agree that men sometimes get cheated in paternity and custody cases, but this has nothing to do with women's right to abortion, which is what Ms. Weiss was writing about. When children are concerned, society's attitude is that men should bear exclusive financial responsibility. You ought to address this attitude, which oppresses both men and women (though not equally).

Mr. Young, you and I can never fully appreciate how it feels to be pregnant with a child one cannot afford to bear, or how it feels to be a single mother caught between caring for her child or working to support it. I have no pity for you

and other men who believe that women's efforts to overcome male domination are causing all men to become gay or misogynistic.

Mark Derby
Sophomore

Weak excuse

Of course the CIA will recruit students even if the CIA can't use Career Planning and Placement. Of course college students can make decisions for themselves. Those are not the issues.

The issues raised are: Should an agency that admits to numerous violations of national and international law be allowed to use University facilities? Should an agency that has violated, and some say continues to violate, its own charter be regarded as legitimate?

Universities are some of the institutions that define what we as a people will accept. By treating the CIA as if it were just another government agency, the University is defining the CIA as legitimate.

The CIA did not come to campus to express its opinions, present the facts as it sees them or to win support for its cause. The CIA came here to buy labor. It's doubtful they cared about much more than the personal qualifications of the applicants. They did their business at an undisclosed location to avoid confrontation. How is that engaging in the "free exchange of ideas"?

It is not a violation of free speech to ask the University to decide if the illegal activities of an agency disqualify that agency from University facilities. The CIA has admitted to these crimes. Actually disqualifying an agency known to have repeatedly violated laws is not a violation of free speech.

Universities need to decide what they will and won't endorse. Free speech should not be an excuse for refusing to decide right from wrong.

Shasta Hatter
War Resistance and
Draft Information Center
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