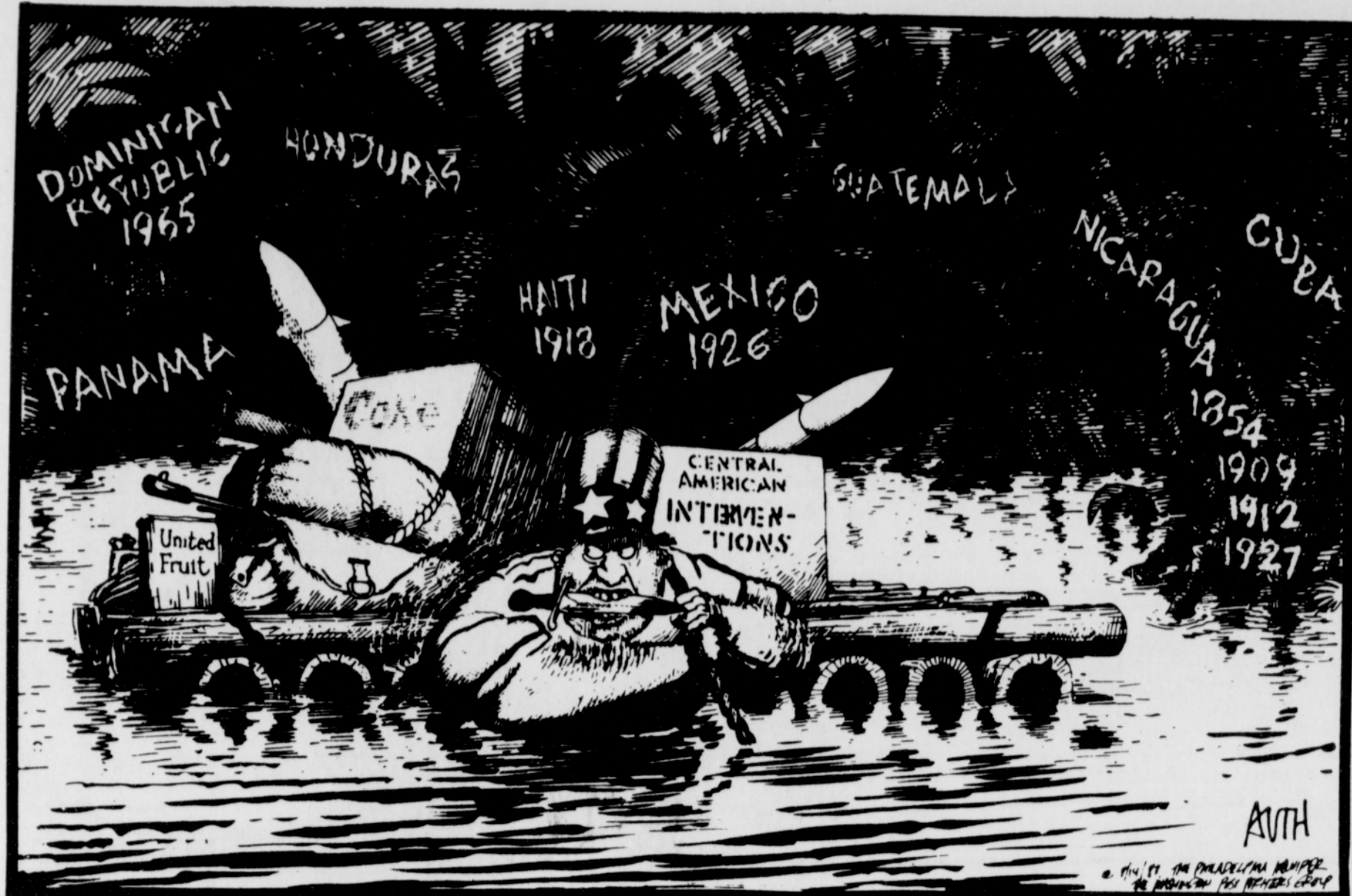




TONY AUTH

NICARAGUA'S LONG MEMORY

by David A. Horowitz

"WHY MUST THE MOST POWERFUL NATION IN THE WORLD SEE A THREAT IN LITTLE NICARAGUA? HOW IS IT THAT ONE TINY COUNTRY CAN CAUSE SUCH GREAT FEAR IN THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT? IS NICARAGUA TO BE WIPED OUT BECAUSE IT PINCHED THE TOE OF A GIANT?"

— PAULO EVARISTO, ARCHBISHOP OF SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

America's connection with Nicaragua goes back to the 1850s when an expedition of mercenaries suddenly installed American entrepreneur William A. Walker as "President" of the country. Walker organized his coup to gain exclusive transportation concessions to serve American gold seekers traveling to California across the Central American isthmus.

A few years later American steamer titan Cornelius Vanderbilt marshaled another mercenary army to defeat Walker and regain the vital concessions for himself.

Official American military forces came to Nicaragua in 1909 when Managua considered European and Japanese offers to build a route to compete with the Panama Canal. As American agribusiness and lumber corporations began to dominate the Nicaraguan economy after 1910, New York banking interests assumed control of the country's finances.

Meanwhile, the United States maintained a permanent legation of one hundred Marines to promote both security for the canal and protection against any hostile change of political power.

The first crisis in Nicaraguan-American relations occurred in 1925 when the Marines withdrew after American advisers had supervised national elections. Supporters of a disenchanted conservative candidate quickly took control of key police garrisons and manipulated their man into the national presidency in 1926. As fighting among Nicaraguan political factions spread, President Calvin Coolidge sent in American naval cruisers and two thousand Marines.

At the urging of the United States the Nicaraguan Congress appointed conservative Adolfo Diaz to the presidency. In response, Nicaraguan liberals organized a rival government that won recognition from Mexico. Incensed, Coolidge told the American people that the Mexicans were spreading communism to Nicaragua. During 1927 the President announced that he had evidence that Nicaraguan liberals had received gunboat assistance, arms and ammunition from revolutionary Mexico, but no such information ever surfaced.

As Coolidge prepared for military intervention in Nicaragua a group of American reform-

ers and progressives mounted a fierce campaign to stop him. In the Senate, Westerners such as Idaho's William E. Borah, Montana's Burton K. Wheeler and Nebraska's George W. Norris denounced the United States for "selfishness and the most sordid brand of imperialism."

The Monroe Doctrine did not give the United States the right to interfere with the sovereignty of Latin American countries, Borah, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, proclaimed. "We of all people in the world," he lectured, "ought not to undertake to impose upon the people of another nation a government which they do not want."

To discourage American intervention south of the border, State Department critics organized a National Citizens' Committee on Relations with Latin American in 1927. The coalition of veteran reformers included Senate progressives such as Wheeler, Norris and Robert M. LaFollette Jr. of Wisconsin. It also drew a variety of academicians, social workers and antiwar figures such as the philosopher

BENJAMIN LINDER

A PREDICTION OF CLOSURE HAD THREATENED SANDINO, EVER SINCE HE DARED REARRANGE HIS IMPERATIVES; AND, BEN, YOU WALKED RIGHT INTO IT, FACING IT, WITH THE HARD EDGE OF YOUR INVALUABLE SKILLS;

YOU WALKED INTO IT, AS IF YOU WERE STROLLING UNDER THE BIG-HEARTED BRANCHES OF CEIBA TREES, THE COTTON-PUFFS JOSTLING BELL-SHAPED FLOWERS, TRUMPETING HIBISCUS WELCOMING YOUR ENGINEERING.

YOU CARED, LOVED, THE WAY YOUR VEXED GOVERNMENT WAS NOT ELECTED TO, THE INDIVIDUAL MORE POWERFUL THAN THE IMPERIUM, IN MATTERS OF HEART AND WILL, BY PERSONAL TOUCH, IN LONELY, VOLUNTARY WAYS,

WHICH STAND TRUE AS MOUNTAINS AND AS CONVINCED AS MARTYRS. WE WILL NOT FORGET YOUR CARING HAND ON THE COPPER WIRE; WE WILL NOT FORGET YOUR LOVE FOR A LAND THREATENED BY A PREDICTION OF CLOSURE.

— ANDREW SALKEY



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