

Opinion

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The Democratic party, the House of Representatives and the American body politic has been engaged in a protracted and divisive debate over our Nicaraguan policy. Too many on both sides have staked out positions in accordance with partisan interests, not with Nicaraguan realities. The result has been a policy vacuum at home and a widening civil war in Nicaragua. If Democrats continue simply to obstruct and score procedural points our party will be further weakened and divided, and the Nicaraguan people will be condemned to the cycle of war and tyranny that has scarred their country for 150 years.

The United States has a historical responsibility and debt to the Nicaraguan people. We backed a corrupt and oppressive dictatorship for 40 years because that seemed the path of least resistance. Now for some, the path of least resistance is to allow the Sandanistas to consolidate an equally, if not more, corrupt and oppressive dictatorship that is a threat to its neighbors and, with Soviet backing, a long-range threat to our own security. I support a political settlement in Nicaragua. The great mistake of the Sandanistas was to assume that they themselves made the revolution by military means rather than the Nicaraguan people by their political uprising against Somoza. The only hope for Nicaraguans is a process of national reconciliation as requested by the Contadora group. A policy which seeks to overthrow the Sandanistas will only insure further bloodshed and civil war.

Many have feared that the Reagan Administration policy

is set on a course which will end in a U.S. invasion with all its dire consequences, for U.S.-Latin American relations, for the Nicaraguan people, and for our own domestic tranquility. Yet not long ago the same fears were raised with respect to El Salvador. They have been proven unjustified. Wrong also were those who argued that the United States could not break with the extreme right and defend human rights when faced with the Marxist revolutionary threat. Democrats and Republicans working together in Congress helped shape a bi-partisan consensus that put the U.S. on the side of Democracy and helped weaken both extremes, setting El Salvador on the road to a political settlement.

As a member of the House Intelligence Committee, I have followed events in Nicaragua closely and worked with colleagues in both parties to steer our policy there onto a responsible, sustainable course. Now we have taken the additional step of introducing new, bi-partisan legislation which will be voted on in the House this week. *have introduced*

My colleagues and I began writing this amendment--not after Daniel Ortega went to Moscow--but on the night of April 24, when the House turned down every proposal on Nicaragua, including the Republican version offered by Minority Leader Bob Michel and the Democratic alternative co-sponsored by Congressmen Michael Barnes and Lee Hamilton.

Our bi-partisan proposal incorporates parts of both the original Hamilton-Barnes and Michel amendments, while adding significant new elements. Our purpose in offering this legislation is to unite Congress--and the Administration--behind a policy towards Nicaragua that has clear goals and just purposes and is worthy of the American people's support.

Our legislation prescribes the same goal for U.S. policy in Nicaragua as we seek in El Salvador: negotiations, national reconciliation, and democracy. Specifically, our amendment provides for:

\*Cease-Fire and Negotiations: It reiterates

that U.S. foreign policy in Nicaragua is not a military overthrow of the government, but a cease-fire and negotiations among the parties to the conflict, mediated by the Nicaraguan Conference of Bishops, that will permit genuine democracy and self-determination for the Nicaraguan people.

\*Suspension of Maneuvers and Economic Boycott:

The President is urged to suspend military maneuvers and lift the trade embargo, if the Nicaraguan government agrees to a cease-fire, a dialogue with the democratic resistance, and to suspend the state of emergency.

\*Resumption of Bi-Lateral Negotiations:

Our bill also calls on the President to resume bi-lateral negotiations with the Nicaraguan government to encourage a Church-mediated dialogue and a Contadora agreement.

\*Support for Contadora: Provides \$2 million to assist the Contadora nations in implementing the Contadora Document of Objectives, including costs of peacekeeping, verification, and monitoring systems.

\*Humanitarian Aid: Our bill provides \$27 million in strictly defined humanitarian assistance to the democratic resistance in three installments through March 31, 1986. Humanitarian assistance is defined in the bill as "food, clothing, medicine and other humanitarian assistance", but it specifically prohibits "vehicles, weapons, weapons systems, ammunition, or other equipment or materials which can be used to inflict serious bodily harm or death".

\*Prohibition on CIA: Humanitarian assistance may be directed to the democratic resistance through a government agency of the President's designation, but specifically not through the CIA

or Department of Defense.

\* Human Rights: The president is required to submit to the House and Senate Intelligence Committees, a report on "alleged human rights violations by the Nicaraguan democratic resistance and the government of Nicaragua" including a statement of who was responsible.

Our legislation also continues the Boland amendment restrictions on military and para-military activity with one exception: it permits our government to "exchange information" with the Nicaraguan democratic resistance for the purposes outlined by the legislation. And should negotiations fail--or not take place--our bill permits the President to submit a new request to Congress, to be handled under expedited procedures, for additional aid to the resistance forces. Perhaps more importantly, if internal Nicaraguan negotiations were to succeed and a Contadora agreement is reached, our bill allows an expedited procedure where the President may request funds to further assist the Central American peace process, including aid for Nicaragua.

Our proposal puts the United States on the side of a negotiated settlement and democracy, and against abuses of human rights by the Sandinistas and the armed resistance. It calls on the President to pursue every possible diplomatic and economic initiative to support the chance for negotiations among the Nicaraguans and the efforts of the Contadora Group. It also provides real incentives--both carrots and sticks--to lead the government of Nicaragua to the negotiating table.

What our proposal refuses to do--and what the United States should not do--is walk away and abandon the brave men and women of the democratic center in Nicaragua--the trade unionists, Church people, businessmen and women, campesinos and ordinary citizens who are struggling both from within and from exile, for the democratic freedoms for which they waged

a valiant revolution in 1979.

For we Americans, above all, should understand the power of the idea of democracy and never underestimate its appeal to people in other nations. Surely that is the lesson in recent years of El Salvador and of Argentina under its new President, Raul Alfonsin, and in the 1970s of Portugal and Spain. And that is the lesson of a previous generation who supported democracy successfully in post-war-western Europe with a bi-partisan foreign policy through aid to Greece and Turkey and the Marshall Plan. The best and proudest chapters in American foreign policy have been when we united as a nation behind a principled and bi-partisan policy in defense of democratic values. That is our challenge in Central America. I believe both Democrats and Republicans are equal to the task.