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On Nicaraguan Government's Prohibitions Applied To U.S. Aid

by Deborah Tyroler

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Before ending its 1988 session in October, the US Congress approved a bill that included \$2 million for Nicaraguan domestic opposition groups. Also in October, the Nicaraguan National Assembly approved a bill prohibiting the receipt of US government monies. An FSLN member of the Assembly, Rev. Sixto Ulloa, said the ban was justified because US money sent to opposition groups is "for the destabilization of Nicaragua." Earlier, President Daniel Ortega had announced a decision to reject \$17.7 million that Congress appropriated six months ago for the treatment of wounded Nicaraguan children. He said the money was "stained in blood" because it was being sent by the same government that has financed the contras for several years. At present, it appears that much of the \$17.7 million will be spent at refugee camps in Honduras and Costa Rica. In the past, US money has been openly sent to the opposition newspaper La Prensa, and to a variety of other anti-Sandinista political, business and labor organizations. Receiving such aid is now illegal, both under the law approved last month and under a decree issued by Minister for Foreign Cooperation Henry Ruiz. A shipment of 18 vehicles for Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, paid for by the US Agency for International Development, is now being held at Nicaraguan Customs. (See article below.) Church organizations, as well as anti-Sandinista trade unions and most opposition groups, will still be allowed to receive aid from countries other than the US, subject to government approval. Under a recently passed electoral law, political parties may not receive donations from any country. On Nov. 6, Mauricio Diaz Davila of the Popular Social Christian Party, said that covert US aid to civilian opposition groups in Nicaragua might increase as a result of the new ban on open contributions. "Some people will use informal and illegal channels," he said. "There is every indication that is happening now." (Basic data from New York Times, 11/07/88)

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