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U.S. STAKES IN NICARAGUA

There was bad news and good news about the House vote to deny military aid to Nicaragua. The bad news was that the House voted against the Reagan request to send that pitiful $14 million to help the Freedom Fighters. The good news was that this impelled Secretary of State George Shultz to talk about the Communist threat.

Indeed, they are really Communists in Nicaragua. The Tip O'Neill majority that voted No was quickly embarrassed when, hours later, the Sandinista dictator Daniel Ortega rushed to Moscow to hug Mikhail Gorbachev and receive pledges of Soviet military aid.

The Sandinista dictatorship does what Communist dictatorships always do. It created a secret police system to control the people, assisted by Soviet, East German, and Cuban Communists. It punishes freedom of speech, press and assembly by officially-sanctioned harassment, imprisonment or death.

The Sandinistas go after their political opposition with typical Communist brutality. They recently jailed ten members of the Social Christian Party and are treating them as the Communists have treated political prisoners in other countries from Russia to Cuba.

They are held in small, dark cells and served meals at irregular intervals in order to disorient them. In order to coerce their prisoners into confessing to crimes they did not commit, the Sandinistas arrested the relatives of the prisoners.

Jose Gonzales, a former vice president of the Social Democratic Party, told Pope John Paul II there were about 8,000 political prisoners in 1981, and that they were the victims of repression and torture. Gonzales finally left Nicaragua and now lives in exile.

Under a "scorched earth" policy copied from Cambodia, the Sandinistas have ordered and are carrying out the forced relocation of tens of thousands of peasants. In the past two months, some 20,000 peasants have been moved from their homes to relocation camps, and the Sandinistas admit this is part of a resettlement project involving 65,000 people.

Peasants and journalists tell of entire villages, homes, stores, and churches being burnt to the ground. They tell of animals slaughtered, crops and villages burned.

The cutting edge of the Sandinistas' atrocities is their treatment of the Miskito Indians. The Miskitos supported the Sandinistas against the previous ruler, Somoza, but that didn't save them from becoming victims of Communist brutality after they resisted Marxist indoctrination.

The Miskitos were then labelled "bourgeois" and "enemies of the people." The Sandinistas began to arrest the Miskito Indian leaders, torture and murder them.

Eyewitnesses have told about massacres, Indians buried alive, 10,000 force-marched to relocation camps, their villages burned down, bombed and shelled. Tens of thousands of Miskitos have fled the Nicaragua where they've lived for more than a thousand years.

Liberal friends of the Sandinistas have propagated the myth that they enjoy popular support in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas sustain their support by such methods as confiscating ration cards for non-attendance at Sandinista meetings. Talk of inflation is branded a counter-revolutionary plot.

One would think that the Sandinistas would have a big job trying to improve conditions in Nicaragua. But, like typical Communists, they are intensely engaged in spreading their Communist revolution beyond their borders.

The Sandinistas provide arms, training, and a headquarters to the Communist guerrillas who are attempting to overthrow the democratically-elected Duarte government of El Salvador. The Sandinistas also support anti-democratic movements in Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala.

In Southeast Asia, the "falling dominoes" theory became a bitter reality. After the fall of South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia fell, too. That's the Nicaragua/Vietnam parallel.

More than a quarter million refugees have already fled Nicaragua since the Sandinistas took control. Unless the Freedom Fighters take back their country from the Communists, Nicaragua will send us more millions of refugees, and the "falling dominoes" in Central America will massively escalate the number.

The refugees from Southeast Asia, and even from Cuba, had to come by boat. But the refugees from Central America can just walk north across the Rio Grande. The pragmatists are saying that President Reagan spent too many political chips on his attempt to get that $14 million. It is more likely that the Congressmen will rue their vote to allow the Communists to solidify their control of a once-friendly country in Central America.