

On Demonstrating Against U.S. Policy In Nicaragua

What would lead five inhabitants of Northwestern Connecticut to protest U.S. policies in distant Central America by sitting down in Rep. Nancy Johnson's office and staying until arrested?

Many people see such actions as "against" the United States and therefore "for" the Soviet Union — but I have been an active supporter of the Polish Solidarity movement and have written against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. I have even been attacked in the *Daily World*, organ of the Communist Party, U.S.A., as "rabidly anti-Soviet."

The Nazi holocaust, the threat of nuclear holocaust, and the war in Vietnam led me, like many others, to reflect on the consequences of unfettered national sovereignty and unrestricted government power. International law prohibits aggressive wars, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, but there are few effective institutional means of implementing that prohibition. I conclude, therefore, that the first responsibility for opposing such crimes lies with the people of the countries that commit them.

The United States government is currently conducting an aggressive war against Nicaragua by means of its proxies, the Contras, whom it has organized and is now supplying for that purpose.

One phase of this criminal policy was the CIA's mining of Nicaraguan harbors. When the U.S. role in that mining was exposed, the International Court of Justice (an institution empowered to serve as the highest interpreter of international law under treaties signed by the U.S.) ordered the U.S. to cease, and further ordered that:

"The right to sovereignty and to political independence possessed by the Republic of Nicaragua . . . should be fully respected and should not in any way be jeopardized by any military and paramilitary activities which are prohibited by the principles of international law." When the U.S. State Department challenged the Court's jurisdiction in this case, the Court overwhelmingly rejected its claim.

U.S. aid to the Contras constitutes "military and paramilitary activities" which jeopardize Nicaragua's "right to sovereignty and to political independence." But the Court has virtually no power to make the U.S. cease.

As citizens of the United States, I believe it is we who now have the duty to make our country stop aiding the Contra war against Nicaragua. For, as the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal declared, "Anyone with knowledge of illegal activity and an opportunity to do something is a potential crimi-

nal under international law unless the person takes affirmative measures to prevent the commission of the crimes."

Of course, this does not mean that everyone must go to jail. "Affirmative measures to prevent the commission of the crimes" can include protesting U.S. policies through legal demonstrations or through civil disobedience; providing sanctuary for Central American refugees; and holding those who support Contra aid and other acts of war against Nicaragua accountable through the political process.

When I asked myself what responsibility I had to prevent my government from committing crimes in Central America and what "affirmative measures to prevent the commission of the crimes" I could take, my answer landed me in the New Britain jail. I now ask you, whoever you are, to ask yourself these same questions.

Some may say, what about the illegal acts of other countries? I answer, by opposing U.S. war against Nicaragua we can express our solidarity with all those who are the victims of superpower domination and aggression, whether in Poland or in South Korea, whether in Afghanistan or in Central America.

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