

Reports coming out of Nicaragua in recent days paint a picture of unrelieved horror and of human suffering unusual even for a people that have known so much of both. Whether from the upheavals of nature or from the oppression of an entrenched dictatorial rule, the Nicaraguan people have long been acquainted with sorrow. But recent events have immeasurably compounded their misery.

However soon a peace may be achieved and political stability come to Nicaragua, the social and economic ravages of these days will be felt for years to come. And no amount of time can repair the loss felt by so many families whose members have been killed in the tragic conflict.

The historic role of the United States in helping to establish and maintain in power the repressive regime that has shown its worst face during these past bloody weeks is well known. That our government has, after intense citizen pressure, significantly withdrawn such support, is most welcome.

If the atrocities widely reported by our own media are verified, a new situation has been created for U.S.-Nicaragua relations. In view of these developments, new and forceful initiatives on the part of the U.S. government are needed to indicate its revulsion at these actions and its strong support for those in Nicaragua and in other Latin American republics seeking to end the killing and to move toward a just political resolution of the conflict.

Such initiatives, both substantive and symbolic, which would signal U.S. protest and its intention to play a constructive role, include the following:

- *strong support for international mediation efforts;
- *withdrawal of the U.S. military mission;
- *temporary recall of the U.S. ambassador for consultation.

In addition, reports of mercenary recruitment in the United States should be thoroughly investigated by the Justice Department and any such violation of applicable U.S. laws vigorously prosecuted. Reports of continuing arms sales to the Nicaraguan government by allies of the U.S. should be investigated and, if verified, protested by our government. Finally, the U.S. government should make clear its intention to support only mediation efforts that include all relevant sectors of the opposition in Nicaragua.

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