

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE
COMMISSION ON FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS
IN NICARAGUA

May 9, 1989

MR. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION:

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO OFFER A FEW
COMMENTS TODAY, AND -- EVEN MORE -- THANK YOU
FOR UNDERTAKING THIS IMPORTANT TASK.

FREEDOM IS OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE, AND A VERY
IMPORTANT PART OF OUR INTERNATIONAL
RESPONSIBILITY. WE -- THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
-- WE ARE THE LEADER OF THE FREE WORLD. THAT IS
NOT JUST RHETORIC. IT IS VERY HARD REALITY.

AND FREEDOM REMAINS THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF
OUR TIME, FROM AFGHANISTAN TO ANGOLA; FROM
POLAND TO PANAMA.

BUT NOWHERE IS THE ISSUE OF FREEDOM MORE CLEARLY DRAWN THAN IN NICARAGUA. A DECADE AGO, THE SANDINISTAS SEIZED POWER IN NICARAGUA, CALLING THEMSELVES LIBERATORS. NOW THEY CLING TO THAT POWER THROUGH FORCE OF ARMS, THE BENEFICENCE OF THEIR COMMUNIST COMRADES IN MOSCOW AND HAVANA, AND THEIR RUTHLESS USE OF THE INSTRUMENTS OF STATE POWER.

I DON'T KNOW ANY SENSIBLE PERSON WHO BELIEVES
ANY LONGER THAT THE SANDINISTAS ARE LIBERATORS,
OR -- LEFT TO THEIR OWN IMPULSES -- WOULD EVER
MAKE OF THEIR COUNTRY ANYTHING BUT A COMMUNIST,
TOTALITARIAN STATE. THEIR RECORD IS SO CLEAR, AND
SO DISMAL, THAT NO OTHER REASONABLE CONCLUSION
CAN BE DRAWN.

THE ONLY QUESTION IN MY MIND IS: CAN SUFFICIENT
PRESSURE -- FROM WITHIN, OR WITHOUT -- BE
MUSTERED, TO FORCE THE SANDINISTAS TO DO WHAT,
CLEARLY, THEY DON'T WANT TO DO, AND WILL RESIST
DOING, GIVING FREEDOM TO THEIR OWN PEOPLE?

I DON'T WANT TO FLY UNDER ANY FALSE FLAGS HERE
TODAY. IN MY VIEW, BY FAR THE BEST WAY TO KEEP
PRESSURE ON THE SANDINISTAS WOULD HAVE BEEN TO
CONTINUE EFFECTIVE AID TO THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS.
BUT, REALISTICALLY, THAT IS NOT AN OPTION FOR THE
IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

AND I AM NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT THERE ARE ENOUGH
REMAINING POINTS OF LEVERAGE TO PUT REAL HEAT ON
MANAGUA TO LIVE UP TO ITS OWN COMMITMENTS, AND
ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CITIZENS OF NICARAGUA. I
HOPE I AM WRONG.

I HOPE THAT THE BIPARTISAN ACCORD WHICH WE
RECENTLY REACHED ON CENTRAL AMERICA WILL SEND A
STRONG ENOUGH MESSAGE TO THE SANDINISTAS, THAT
THEY WILL SEE AS A CREDIBLE POSSIBILITY THAT THEIR
CONTINUING ASSAULTS ON AMERICAN INTERESTS,

THEIR PEACEFUL NEIGHBORS, AND NICARAGUAN
DEMOCRACY WILL LEAD TO A STRONG AMERICAN
COUNTER-REACTION.

I HOPE THAT A COMBINATION OF OUR CONTINUING
ECONOMIC SANCTIONS, THE POLITICAL AND MORAL
SUASION OF THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN STATES,
AND WHATEVER INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE CAN BE
BROUGHT TO BEAR WILL CONVINCING THE SANDINISTAS
THAT -- TO GET ALONG IN THE WORLD -- THEY WILL NEED
TO GO ALONG WITH THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CIVILIZED,
DEMOCRATIC CONDUCT WHICH WE SHOULD DEMAND OF
ALL NATIONS.

I HOPE THAT OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET
UNION DEVELOP IN A MANNER THAT WILL TRULY LEAD
MOSCOW TO MORE RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR IN CENTRAL
AMERICA, SO THAT THE WIDE-OPEN SPIGOT OF ARMS AND
AID FLOWING INTO MANAGUA WILL BE SHUT OFF.

I HOPE ALL OF THAT HAPPENS.

I HOPE SO. BUT, CANDIDLY, I AM NOT VERY
OPTIMISTIC. THE RECORD SO FAR -- AS MANIFEST, FOR
EXAMPLE, IN THE SHAM OF A NEW ELECTION LAW
RECENTLY PROMULGATED BY THE COMMANDANTES -- IS
HARDLY ENCOURAGING.

BUT -- THANKS IN PART TO THE IMPORTANT WORK OF
THIS COMMISSION -- WE SHALL SEE. WE SHALL BE ABLE
TO SEE, AND UNDERSTAND, AND JUDGE FOR OURSELVES.

AND WHAT IF MY LACK OF OPTIMISM TURNS OUT TO
BE WELL-FOUNDED? WHAT IF THE SANDINISTAS FAIL
AGAIN, AS THEY HAVE SO OFTEN BEFORE, TO LIVE UP TO
THEIR OWN WORD?

WHAT IF NEXT FEBRUARY COMES AND GOES, AND
THERE IS NO FREE ELECTION, PERHAPS NOT EVEN ANY
ELECTION? WHAT IF THE SANDINISTAS "WIN" THE
ELECTION THROUGH FRAUD, OR LOSE THE ELECTION BUT
REFUSE TO YIELD POWER -- AS ONE OF THE LESS
CAUTIOUS COMMANDANTES ONCE SAID PUBLICLY WAS
AN OPTION VERY MUCH OPEN TO THEM?

WHAT THEN?

LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I THINK THE AMERICAN
RESPONSE SHOULD BE.

I HOPE THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL CALL UPON THE
CONGRESS, AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, TO MAKE A
CLEAR AND FIRM COMMITMENT THAT WE WILL SETTLE
FOR NO FINAL GOAL LESS THAN TRUE DEMOCRACY IN
NICARAGUA.

I HOPE THAT WE WILL ARTICULATE AND IMPLEMENT A
POLICY THAT WILL APPLY DIRECT AND EFFECTIVE
PRESSURE ON THE SANDINISTAS, INCLUDING THROUGH
THE RESUMPTION OF SIGNIFICANT MILITARY AID TO A
REVITALIZED DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE; PRESSURE THAT
WILL BE SUSTAINED UNTIL THE SANDINISTAS ACCEDE TO
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRUE DEMOCRACY, OR ARE
SWEPT AWAY BY THE FORCE OF THEIR OWN PEOPLE.

I HOPE THAT WE WILL SAY TO THE SOVIET UNION,
AND MEAN IT WHEN WE SAY IT: THIS IS NOT YOUR
HEMISPHERE, AND WE WILL NOT TOLERATE YOUR
MASSIVE INJECTION OF ARMS AND ADVISORY PERSONNEL
INTO OUR BACKYARD; AND IF IT CONTINUES, YOU WILL
FIND THAT THE BENEFITS YOU HOPE TO DERIVE FROM
IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES WILL
JUST NOT BE THERE.

I HOPE THAT WE WILL SAY TO OUR ALLIES, IN PLACES
LIKE WESTERN EUROPE: WE EXPECT A CERTAIN
STANDARD OF CONDUCT FROM OUR FRIENDS, AND A
CERTAIN REAL COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY FROM
FELLOW NATIONS THAT SHARE OUR DEMOCRATIC FORM
OF GOVERNMENT; AND WE EXPECT YOUR POLICIES
TOWARD THE SANDINISTA REGIME TO BE CONSISTENT
WITH OUR INTERESTS, AND YOUR OWN IDEALS.

AND, FINALLY, I HOPE WE WILL SAY TO ANY WHO
CONTINUE TO MAKE EXCUSES FOR THE SANDINISTAS;
WHO CONTINUE TO SAY, "GIVE THEM ONE MORE
CHANCE;" WHO CONTINUE TO URGE US TO GIVE THEIR
TOOTHLESS, PIE-IN-THE-SKY PEACE PROCESS "ONE MORE
CHANCE;" I HOPE WE WILL SAY TO ALL OF THEM -- YOU'VE
HAD YOUR CHANCE. NOW IT IS TIME TO GIVE THE FORCES
OF FREEDOM A CHANCE, AND THE PEOPLE OF
NICARAGUA A CHANCE, TO WORK THEIR WILL.