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Nicaraguan Leader Makes U.S. Tour

By Joanne Omang
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LOS ANGELES, Oct. 8—Daniel Ortega, leader of Nicaragua's revolutionary leftist junta, took a most unrevolutionary campaign swing around the United States last week, trying to counter what he called the Reagan administration's "disinformation" effort against his government.

The trip here, laced with celebrities and full of media interviews and speeches, coincides with the vote expected Tuesday in Congress on funding Reagan's proposed aid to rebels fighting Ortega's government.

The barnstorming tour, which received mixed reviews, proved at least one thing: Ortega does not have the instincts of a U.S. politician.

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In his routine speech Ortega repeatedly made the same basic charges:

■ The United States, pressing its covert war against Nicaragua without congressional approval, plans to escalate border fighting to a point where neighboring El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica ask for direct U.S. military intervention. Only U.S. citizen protests can stop a wider war in Central America.

State Department officials called this scenario "nonsense."

■ The Nicaraguan presidential elections will be held Nov. 4; negotiations with opposition leader Arturo Cruz have ended because Cruz could not deliver the business side of his coalition.

Still, seven parties critical of the Sandinistas will take part and international observers, he maintained, will testify that it is free and fair. Reagan then will find it much harder to intervene against a duly elected government.

U.S. officials say that election plans are a farce and that Cruz is being excluded because he represents the only serious opposition.

■ The real U.S. worry is not Soviet influence in Central America but that Nicaragua's survival might encourage other Latin American nations to become nationalistic and independent. "The United States was invading Nicaragua long before there was a Soviet Union," Ortega said.

U.S. officials say Cuban and Soviet advisers are directing Nicaragua's course and pose a direct threat to U.S. interests.

■ The Reagan administration lies about the Nicaraguan reality, which is that no priests, journalists or critics have been killed at government hands and that a market economy continues.

Critics say Nicaragua persecutes church leaders, censors the press and harasses its critics while its economy is collapsing from mismanagement.

■ The region's best hope for peace is the Contadora treaty proposed by Venezuela, Mexico, Panama and Colombia, which Nicaragua has accepted and the Reagan administration refuses to endorse.

The administration wants changes in the treaty to strengthen verification procedures.

At the final Los Angeles event, a fund-raiser for the Committee of Concern under a huge tent on the lush lawn of actors Robert Foxworth and Elizabeth Montgomery, Ortega was clearly as tired as his translator, making the same point three times.

But he invited the audience to visit Nicaragua and see for themselves. "Our revolution is not perfect, but we're trying to construct a better society," he said.

Raising a fist he added, to cheers: "If the United States commits the error of invading us, we know we will struggle with you at our side. Viva the people of the United States! Viva a free Nicaragua!"

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