

# Ex-contra leader denounces former allies as terrorists

By Teresa A. Parsons

As a leader of the Nicaraguan contras, Edgar Chamorro was a man immersed in deception.

"My story is the story of somebody who was lying, who believed in lies," he said. "When I saw (that) what the United States was doing was creating propaganda, I realized I would end up destroying myself."

A former publicist and member of the contras' Political Directorate, Chamorro, 56, now lives in Washington and works with the Commission on U.S. and Latin American Relations. In hopes of repairing the damage his lies have done, he also travels throughout the country, speaking to groups like the 300 people who gathered at the Unitarian Church in Rochester Sunday evening, September 13.

"I am doing my best to change whatever I did wrong by speaking out," he said. "I used to get angry, but not any more. Now I think it is very, very sad. So much waste; so many lies."

A former Jesuit priest, Chamorro studied at Marquette and Harvard universities in the 1970s before returning to Nicaragua to serve as chairman of humanities at the University of Central America in Managua. In 1978, under the government of Anastasio Somoza, he was named a minority representative to the Nicaraguan mission to the United Nations. Shortly thereafter, Somoza's government was overthrown and Chamorro left the United Nations post to settle in Miami, Florida.

Along with other exiled Nicaraguans, he began lobbying Congress to oppose the newly established Sandinista government. In 1981, CIA agents reportedly approached Chamorro's group to enlist their support in "containing" the Nicaraguan revolution.

Already the CIA had gathered some 500 of Somoza's former National Guardsmen in Honduras. Together with Chamorro's and other exiled groups, they became known as the FDM or contras — what Chamorro described as a CIA-created Hollywood fantasy. "The CIA had first to build an image that this force was a good, powerful and effective force, that it was capable of delivering whatever it was supposed to deliver," he said. "The packaging of the contras as freedom fighters was a Hollywood product."

In reality, Chamorro charged, the contras are terrorists trained by former officers of the Argentinian military junta. "What you've got are ex-Somocistas, Argentinian and CIA officers," he said. "You put together these three elements; you mix them, you shake them very well, and from that, what do you expect? Democracy?"

At the direction of his CIA advisers, Chamorro said, he helped to create the contras' image as independent, democratically oriented, freedom fighters by lying to the press and to Congress when they asked who financed and supported the contras. "At the beginning, I just denied what the contras were doing. I believed the official line," he recalled. "One of the big things I learned is that the CIA is engaged in deception. It was a sad and not-very-honorable lesson."

"The biggest lie is self-deception, to end up believing yourself," he added.

But Witness for Peace delegates and mem-



Edgar Chamorro

bers of other peace organizations kept describing to Chamorro such contra tactics as torture, mutilation and political assassination. He finally decided in 1984 to visit the contra camps and determine for himself whether the allegations were true.

Contra fighters confirmed many of the stories he had heard, and readily admitted that their standard policy was to kill all prisoners. "They believe the only way to deal with socialists is to kill them," he said. "They celebrate democracy by eliminating the opposition."

Chamorro then left the contra directorate. Although he still opposes some of the Sandinistas' policies, he is planning an exploratory visit to Nicaragua later this month to determine whether he will apply for amnesty and return to his country. "I am very concerned. I believe I can do something to change events," he said. "Things right now are not going very well."

In spite of the peace initiative signed by five Central American leaders last month, Chamorro is not optimistic about chances for peace in Central America. He likened the Reagan administration's efforts to undermine the peace initiative to a giant stumbling throughout the region, trying to crush small countries' attempts at attaining independence. "It's quite arrogant of the United States to say that's not the way, that the way is through the contras," he said. "The United States is a country that should know better ... (but) nations are like people; some are grown-up and some are not."

Chamorro urged his audience Sunday night to oppose the allocation of further contra funding, on which Congress is expected to vote in October. "This next vote is going to be very important," he said. "Nicaragua has been bleeding for far too long."

Sponsors of Chamorro's visit to Rochester, including the Central and Latin American Task Force of the Unitarian Church, the Grey Panthers of Greater Rochester, the Rochester Committee on Latin America and Witness for Peace, are planning a rally against contra aid on Tuesday, September 29, from 4:30-6 p.m. at the Federal Building in downtown Rochester.

# Anti-abortion protestors guilty of violating hospital's injunction

A state supreme court judge has found two anti-abortion protestors guilty of violating a court order restraining them from entering Genesee Hospital or the hospital grounds.

Judge Myron E. Tillman pronounced Project Life Director David E. Long and Father Anthony Mugavero guilty of contempt on Monday, September 14, in connection with incidents on June 20 and July 11, when both men were alleged to have violated the order.

Although Long and Father Mugavero could have faced fines up to \$250, Judge Tillman imposed no penalties on the defendants in light of their assertions that the order was vague, and that they created no disruption in either case.

The judge also called Monday for negotiations to reach some kind of agreement between hospital officials and protestors.

The restraining order, which Genesee Hospital officials obtained in February, 1987, stated that anti-abortion protests could continue so long as demonstrators remained on public property.

Opponents of abortion have organized weekly demonstrations at Genesee Hospital for more than three years. Long and other Project Life members joined the protests

more than a year ago. He and Father Mugavero, associate pastor at St. Theodore's Parish in Gates, have also offered sidewalk counseling on Saturday mornings to women entering the doctors' office building, where abortions are performed.

Although he was found guilty, Long considered the results of Monday's hearing a victory, since Judge Tillman proposed that hospital officials grant anti-abortion protestors a designated counseling site on hospital property.

Calling the proposal "a precedent-setting decision," Long observed that it would be "a tremendous encouragement to the pro-life movement nationally, since (a similar decision) has never happened at this level of the judicial system before."

Hospital officials were pleased that Judge Tillman upheld the injunction, but consider a counseling zone on hospital property to be "out of the question," according to spokeswoman Jean Haskins-Dalmath.

"Our lawyer is more than willing to talk with their lawyers and to do whatever we can to resolve the situation," she said. "We have attempted to do that many times, but (those efforts) haven't been very fruitful."

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