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Nicaragua

“The world needs to be aware that human rights are being trampled on in Nicaragua”

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In recent years, Daniel Ortega's regime has continued its authoritarian escalation, ultimately betraying the ideals of the Sandinista revolution. As part of the youth camp of the Fourth International, Jeunes anticapitalistes (JAC - Belgium) spoke with Katherine Ramírez, a Nicaraguan exiled in Costa Rica and activist of the Articulación de Movimientos Sociales. Interview for JAC by David Lhotellier.

DL: In the 1970s, Nicaragua was the scene of the Sandinista revolution, which was a source of inspiration for revolutionaries around the world. More than forty years later, how would you describe this period?

KR: The Sandinista popular revolution had what it took to be an inspiring moment for all leftists and all popular movements. At the time, it meant first of all the end of the dictatorship, and therefore the possibility of profound changes in the country. But obviously, no one imagined that the next dictator would come from their own ranks. However, the revolution brought ideas that remain alive even today. It was able to bring the population together around a dream, that of putting an end to the dictatorship and living free. But ideas are one thing, practices another: seen from today, it is quite clear that many activists of the Sandinista Front were in it through opportunism, hoping to take advantage of the fall of the dictatorship to win power and economic advantages. And, parasited by personal interests, this movement which had opened the door to radical change finally closed it, leading to a dictatorship even harsher than that of Somoza. For the Nicaraguan people, it is therefore a key moment in their history that has been stolen from them.

DL: The Sandinista revolution meant first of all the end of the dictatorship, and therefore the possibility of profound changes in the country. But obviously, no one imagined that the next dictator would come from their own ranks. No hesitation on your part, then, to describe this regime as a dictatorship?

KR: None. From his first term in office, in the aftermath of the revolution, Ortega carried out a series of reforms tailor-made for him and those close to him. After elections that he lost, he returned to power in 2006, thanks to the pact he made with the liberals; and from there, he patiently, through gradual reforms, organized the merger of institutions, until arriving at a regime in which a single man controls the entire state apparatus... and large companies, which today form the new Nicaraguan bourgeoisie that the regime has taken responsibility for establishing in recent years. According to research by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), after the April 2018 uprising, Ortega had more than 300 people murdered. This date is generally understood as the breaking point, the moment when the regime assumed its authoritarian nature: over the five years that have passed since then, it has deployed the full range of repression against its opponents, against dissident political organizations, against human rights defenders. A range that included arbitrary detentions and torture. Under these conditions, there cannot be free and democratic elections. The presidential elections of 2021, then the municipal elections of 2022, had only the vague appearance of being so.

DL: Like many Nicaraguans , you yourself had to leave the country. What is life like for someone who has had to flee this violence?

KR: Political persecution and exile have destroyed many interpersonal ties, to the point of tearing the social fabric. Fleeing repression means abandoning your country, your family, your job, and facing a gigantic amount of challenges and uncertainties, in a country where you don't know if you will find housing, a job, the possibility of studying, or quite simply rebuilding a new life... or resuming the life that we were unable to continue in Nicaragua.

DL: Ortega's policy is also this huge canal project in Nicaragua...

KR: Yes. It has now been ten years since Ortega passed the law allowing the digging of this canal, which should ultimately connect the Pacific and the Atlantic, as the Panama Canal already does. This is another facet of the regime's authoritarianism, one that specifically attacks various communities, mainly rural. A significant peasant movement sought to oppose this project, and through it, the regime itself; but it suffered extremely violent persecution. Well before the turn of 2018, in fact. Already at that time, this project highlighted the hyper-centralization of power, which was able to impose this law even though the population was very largely opposed to it. But for now, the project remains at a standstill [1].

DL: Who is resisting today in Nicaragua?

KR: Social movement organizations are forced to operate in exile, but they retain a social base in the country. The population is resisting, including people who have stayed away from political spaces; but, as a result of state violence, this resistance has become more silent. Today, it mainly revolves around popular, clandestine journalism, to denounce the arbitrariness of the dictatorship. People struggle by relaying information to independent, foreign-based media; and they can thus accomplish their mission, which has become unrealizable within the borders.

DL: And outside the country? What can international solidarity do?

KR: From anywhere, we can carry out actions on a global scale. Denounce Ortega to international organizations. Call on human rights organizations. Drive support campaigns. The world must realize that human rights are being trampled on in Nicaragua.

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*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Gauche Anticapitaliste](#).*

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[1] Work began in 2014, but the Chinese billionaire Wang Jing, who owned the company carrying out the work, went bankrupt the following year. Up to now, no one else has offered to take over the work.