

Will there be Positive Changes Resulting from the US Elections?

by Janet Jagan - Nov. 11 2006

Two important events happened over the last few days. These are the presidential elections in Nicaragua and the mid-term elections in the USA.

In Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega was returned with a strong vote to the Presidency of his country. Sixteen years ago he was voted out of office, but returned through a victorious re-election this week.

The USA has had its hands in the affairs of this small Central American nation for over a century. Nicaragua, in the early history of the Americas, was occupied by the US military, and through the years, seemed unable to keep its hands off that nation's internal affairs.

A brutal war against the Sandinistas, the revolutionary group led by Daniel Ortega, was promoted and financed by the USA through what was known as the "contras" – those against the Sandinista revolution that had arisen to fight against the brutal Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza.

The US succeeded in destroying the infrastructure and economy of Nicaragua to smash one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. The northern power also succeeded, in the 16 years since deposing Ortega as president, in preventing him from gaining office again. However, on this occasion, US influence declined and Ortega has won in free and fair elections, despite clear warnings by the Bush regime that aid would be stopped if he were returned to office. The people were not to be intimidated and gave Ortega enough votes to put him in office without a second run (a candidate has to get over 40% of the votes to prevent a second vote).

Ortega was out of office for 16 years because of US intervention. Cheddi Jagan was out of office for 28 years because of US intervention. Both eventually were returned to office on the strong support of the people. Guyana had the support of former US President Jimmy Carter in its efforts to restore fair voting practices. Mr Carter has made a public call for the US to give Ortega "a chance."

In the USA, the Bush administration lost heavily in the mid-term elections. The House of Representatives (one of the two chambers of Congress) was won by the Democrats, who had lost control over a decade ago. The Senate has been won by a close majority by the Democrats. Thus, there has been a complete change in the control of congress from the Republicans to the Democrats. This control had given the Bush administration, through Republican control of both houses of Congress, free avenues to carry out many actions and policies that have been ultimately detrimental to the citizens of the USA. In particular, the war in Iraq has been unacceptable to the majority of Americans and was the main issue in these mid-term elections. The lies spoken by the president and his advisers as to the reasons for invading Iraq and the manner in which the war has been conducted were critical issues in these elections. It was said that the elections would be a referendum on Bush, whose popularity has plummeted since his decision to invade and occupy Iraq. It is interesting to note that in these elections the sum of \$2.2 billion has been spent; the highest in any US elections.

One of the developments arising out of the shift from Republicans' to Democrats' control of the House of Representatives is the removal of Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, one of the chief advocates of the invasion of Iraq. Rumsfeld is now one of the casualties of the election.

The other important development is that for the first time in American history a woman, Nancy Pelosi will become Speaker of the House. This is the highest position any woman has achieved in the USA. Ms Pelosi is an outspoken critic of the war in Iraq and it is expected that these changes in the balance of power between the Democrats and Republicans will bring a change in the political landscape of the USA, hopefully for the better.

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