

## ARTÍCULOS

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### VIETNAM IN LATIN AMERICA! THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION IN THE AUSTRIAN PRESS.

Laurin Blecha  
University of Vienna  
[laurin.blecha@gmail.com](mailto:laurin.blecha@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** This paper analyses selected topics of the Nicaraguan Revolution in the Austrian press, namely the occupation of the National Palace in Managua in 1978, the triumph of the revolution on July 19, 1979 and the visits by two members of the conservative Austrian People's Party in Nicaragua in 1984. For this purpose, the paper uses articles and reports of the following Austrian newspapers: the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, *Die Presse*, *Kleine Zeitung*, *Kurier*, *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Salzburger Nachrichten* and the *Wiener Zeitung*. Given that, the objective of the paper is to show discursive strategies in the Austrian newspapers concerning the Nicaraguan Revolution. The results of this research demonstrates that in general all newspapers lacked of sophisticated own research about Nicaragua and the region. Their dependency on the global news agencies led to false reports, misinterpretations and drew an unbalanced picture of the events and policies concerning Nicaragua and Central America.

**Keywords:** Nicaragua, revolution, Austrian press, Austrian-Nicaraguan relations, Cold War.

**Título:** ¡VIETNAM EN AMÉRICA LATINA! LA REVOLUCIÓN POPULAR SANDINISTA EN LA PRENSA AUSTRIACA.

**Resumen:** El texto analiza tres temáticas de la revolución de Nicaragua en la prensa austriaca: la ocupación del Palacio Nacional en Managua en el año 1978, el triunfo de la revolución en el 19 de julio de 1979 y la visita de dos miembros del Partido Popular Austríaco en Nicaragua en el año 1984. Para ello utilizan artículos y noticias de los siguientes periódicos austriacos: *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, *Die Presse*, *Kleine Zeitung*, *Kurier*, *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Salzburger Nachrichten* y *Wiener Zeitung*. El objetivo del presente trabajo es mostrar los discursos sobre la revolución popular sandinista en la prensa austriaca. Los resultados de esta investigación muestran en los periódicos analizados una falta de investigación independiente sobre Nicaragua y la región. Su dependencia de las agencias de noticias globales llevó a informes falsos, malas interpretaciones y dibujó una imagen desequilibrada de los eventos y las políticas relativas a Nicaragua y Centroamérica.

**Palabras clave:** Nicaragua, revolución, prensa-austriaca, relaciones Austria-Nicaragua, Guerra Fría.

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## 1. Introduction

By taking a closer look at the political map of Latin America at the end of the 1970s we see that most of the countries were ruled by dictatorships: In the southern part of the American continent Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay were under the control of (technocratic) military dictatorships, and in Central America and the Caribbean Basin Joaquín Balaguer (Dominican Republic), Jean-Claude Duvalier (Haiti) and Anastasio Somoza Debayle (Nicaragua) had established dictatorial family regimes. Therefore was the successful liberation struggle of the Nicaraguan population and the (military) victory of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional-FSLN*) over the Somoza-regime in July 1979 perceived as a turning point in Latin America. Considering the new power relations after the downfall of the regime of the Somoza-clan and the symbolic impact of the revolution, Nicaragua marked what the US-historian Hal Brands called the “jumping-off point for the most intense phase of Latin America’s Cold War”<sup>1</sup>.

The FSLN as a former guerilla organization which had started to fight already in the 1960s against the Somoza-clan and then after the successful revolution in July 1979 became a political party formulated the goals revolution, which included among other things an agrarian reform, a mixed economy or an independent foreign policy agenda<sup>2</sup>. However, the revolutionary government had to face historically grown power structures inside Nicaragua as well as the *realpolitik* in the context of the Global Cold War. Especially after Ronald Reagan became US-president in 1981 and counterrevolutionary forces started to operate against the FSLN-government Nicaragua became a “hot-spot” of the Cold War<sup>3</sup>. In the drive to reshape the Nicaraguan society the FSLN itself often acted ambiguous concerning her own postulate to acknowledge a heterogeneous and plural society. Especially the conflict between the FSLN-government and the ethnic minorities at the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua demonstrate how the FSLN applied nationalist policies and acted against their own principles<sup>4</sup>.

Nevertheless, the importance of the revolution for the whole region remains undisputed. Nicaragua became a constant and controversial issue in the 1980s not only in foreign policy strategies of the United States or the Soviet Union as *the* global hegemons. Also small or secondary states<sup>5</sup> like Austria engaged in different policies

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<sup>1</sup> BRANDS, Hal. *Latin Americas Cold War*. Cambridge, Massachusetts-London: Harvard University Press 2010, p.188.

<sup>2</sup> For the historical program of the FSLN, see: DIRECCIÓN NACIONAL DEL FSLN (comp.). *Proclamas y Programas del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*. Managua: Vanguardia, 1989, pp. 1-9.

<sup>3</sup> See: WESTAD, Odd Arne. *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge [et. al.]: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 331-348.

<sup>4</sup> See: HOOKER, Juliet. “Beloved Enemies”: Race and Official Mestizo Nationalism in Nicaragua. *Latin American Research Review*. Oct. 2005, vol. 40, n. 3, pp. 14-39.

<sup>5</sup> About European small states as well as non-state actors and their different forms of cooperation with Latin America during the Cold War, see: MANKE, Albert; BŘEZINOVÁ, Kateřina and BLECHA, Laurin. Einleitung. Kleinstaaten und sekundäre Akteure im Kalten Krieg aus der Perspektive der europäischen Lateinamerikaforschung. In: MANKE, Albert and BŘEZINOVÁ, Kateřina. *Kleinstaaten und sekundäre Akteure im Kalten Krieg. Kulturelle, politische, militärische und wirtschaftliche Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Europa und Lateinamerika*. Transcript: Bielefeld, 2016 (in print).

in Nicaragua<sup>6</sup>. Especially the Austrian Solidarity Movement with Nicaraguan played an important role during the 1980s by maintaining Central American and its people on the political agenda of the Austrian governments as well as in the Austrian public<sup>7</sup>.

But reactions to and interpretations of the revolution varied; “a second Cuba”<sup>8</sup> or a “new Vietnam”<sup>9</sup> were common interpretations and headlines in the Austrian newspapers while members of the solidarity movement and the civil society tried to establish alternative reports about Nicaragua and Central America in general<sup>10</sup>.

This paper aims to provide a short insight to the major elements of the public discourse about the Nicaraguan Revolution and shows how has the revolution and its developments have been interpreted in the Austrian press. First the paper summarizes Austria's entanglements in Nicaragua in the 1980s. Second the paper concentrates on three events (or topics) of the Nicaraguan Revolution: a) The occupation of the National Palace in Managua by the FSLN in August 1978, b) the triumph of the revolution on July 19, 1979 and c) the visit of two members of the conservative Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei-ÖVP*) in Nicaragua (and other Latin American countries) in February 1984. The analysis includes the following Austrian newspapers: the boulevard and/or liberal-conservative newspapers *Die Presse*, *Kleine Zeitung*, *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Kurier* and *Salzburger Nachrichten*; the government newspaper *Wiener Zeitung*, and *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, the newspaper of the Socialist Party of Austria (*Sozialistische Partei Österreichs-SPÖ*<sup>11</sup>). Due to methodological reasons the paper relies mainly on newspapers, knowing that for a complete picture of the public media consumption Radio and particularly television sources have to be consulted. Nevertheless additionally documents of the *Bruno Kreisky Archiv* and the *Karl von Vogelsang Archiv* were used<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Other “secondary states” and actors involved in the Nicaraguan revolution were for example Argentina and the GDR. See: ARMONY, Ariel C. Transnationalizing the Dirty War. Argentina in Central America. In: JOSEPH, Gilbert M. and SPENSER, Daniela (eds.). *In from the Cold. Latin Americas new encounter with the Cold War*. Durham [et.al.]: Duke University Press, 2008, pp. 134-168. For the GDR, see: HARZER, Erika and VOLKS, Willi (eds.). *Aufbruch nach Nicaragua. Deutsch-deutsche Solidarität im Systemwettstreit*. Berlin: Links, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> See: KANAMÜLLER, Ursula. *Solidaritätsarbeit. Nutzlose Anstrengung? Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Lernens in politischem Handeln am Beispiel der österreichischen Solidaritätsbewegung für Nicaragua 1979-1989*. München-Wien: Profil Verlag, 1992. FRANZ, Margit. Austria's Solidarity with Sandinista Nicaragua, 1979-1990. In: EISTERER, Klaus and BISCHOF, Günther (eds.). *Transatlantic Relations: Austria and Latin America in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Innsbruck-Wien-Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2003, pp. 239-255.

<sup>8</sup> See: Schreiben, Österreichische Botschaft Mexiko; ZI. 3-POL/80, Wird Nicaragua ein zweites Kuba? (11.02.1980), Stiftung Bruno Kreisky Archiv (SBKA), Vienna; Bruno Kreisky Archiv: Bestand VII.1. Außenpolitik, Länderboxen, Nicaragua: Box 1, Mappe Nicaragua 1980.

<sup>9</sup> *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, No. 169, June 22, 1979, HOFFMANN-OSTENHOF, Georg. Vietnam in Lateinamerika? p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> STOFF, Alexander. *Die sandinistische Revolution in Nicaragua im Spiegel der entwicklungspolitischen Presse in Österreich – eine Diskursanalyse*. Diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> The SPÖ was renamed in Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*) in 1991.

<sup>12</sup> Key foreign policy documents in the Austrian States Archives (*Österreichisches Staatsarchiv*) concerning Nicaragua in the 1980s were just recently opened to the public and the Author is currently consulting the files.

## 2. Austria's engagements in Nicaragua 1978-1990. A short overview

Until the revolution in 1979 bilateral relations between Austria and Nicaragua were modest as was the media coverage. Only certain "events" such as the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro in January 1978 who was the chief-editor of *La Prensa* – the only allowed opposition newspaper under the Somoza regime – and chairman of the liberal-conservative opposition party, the Democratic Union of Liberation (*Unión Democrática de Liberación-UDEL*) as well as the occupation of the National Palace in August 1978 found their way to the Austrian public.

As the terror and the repression of the regime against the Nicaraguan population during the year 1978 increased, the regime of Anastasio Somoza Debayle started to disintegrate. This took place mainly due to the facts that on the one hand the FSLN united major parts of the Nicaraguan population behind their cause which came hand in hand with the reunification of the FSLN in December 1978. Until then the FSLN was spilt up in three wings each of them emphasizing different strategies and ideological frameworks to overthrow the Somoza-dictatorship<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand the Somoza-regime lost its international support especially after US-president Jimmy Carter signaled that Somoza had to step down and the US-government stopped the (financial) support for the regime<sup>14</sup>.

As a consequence of the terror and war against the FSLN as well as the civilian population, thousands of Nicaraguans fled to neighboring countries, like Costa Rica, Honduras or El Salvador. In this context, a group of Austrian physicians called Working Group Critical Medicine (*Arbeitsgruppe Kritische Medizin*) was sent to Costa Rica and Honduras to collect information about the (health) conditions in the refugee-camps<sup>15</sup>. They were supported by then Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreisky of the SPÖ, who became a key figure in the initial phase of the official Nicaraguan-Austrian relations<sup>16</sup>.

Kreisky very soon realized that the revolution could be the start of a period of democratization at least in Central America and rejected simple interpretations like the one of a "second Cuba". In an interview in August 1979 Kreisky said: "Nicaragua is a tiny state and the example of Nicaragua should show that in Latin America the alternatives are not only either military dictatorship or communist dictatorship à la

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<sup>13</sup> See: NOLAN, David. *The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaragua Revolution*. Institute of Interamerican Studies, University of Miami, 1984, pp. 32-105.

<sup>14</sup> WESTAD, Odd Arne. *The Global Cold War...*, op. cit., pp. 340-341. See also: KINLOCH, Frances Tijerino. *Historia de Nicaragua*. Managua: IHNCA-UCA, 2012, pp. 298-299.

<sup>15</sup> See: Bericht von Dr. Werner Vogt, Dr. Judith Blecha und Dr. Claudio Weber (31.10.1978), SBKA, Bruno Kreisky Archiv: Bestand VII.1. Außenpolitik, Länderboxen, Nicaragua: Box 1.

<sup>16</sup> Kreisky served as Undersecretary of State from 1953 to 1959, as Foreign Minister from 1959 to 1966 and Austrian chancellor from 1970 to 1983. He emphasized already early in his political career the necessity of active development policies for the so called "Third World". Later as chancellor he proposed the concept of a "Marshall Plan for the Third World" which nevertheless failed in the context of the late Cold War. For Kreisky's foreign policy, see: RÖHRLICH, Elisabeth. *Kreiskys Außenpolitik. Zwischen österreichischer Identität und internationalem Programm*. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2009. The author is aware of problematic definitions like First, Second or Third World as well as concepts like "development". However, as they were used during the observed time period they are used in this paper out of the specific timeframe.

Cuba. Many were desperate after the defeat in Chile. The example of Nicaragua could show that it is still possible to develop a social democracy in this continent”<sup>17</sup>.

On the basis of the report by the Working Group Critical Medicine Kreisky informed (amongst others) then US-Vice President Walter Mondale about the conditions in the refugee camps<sup>18</sup>. In the wake of the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Nicaragua and the report of the Working Group, the Austrian Solidarity Committee with Nicaragua (*Österreichisches Solidaritätskomitee mit Nicaragua-ÖSKN*) was founded in November 1978. Members of the Executive Committee were chancellor Kreisky, Leopold Ungar from the Austrian Caritas and Alfred Stoer, of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (*Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund-ÖGB*).

Nevertheless, in the first session of the Solidarity Committee Kreisky announced the conceptual line for cooperation between the Austrian Government and Nicaragua. He pointed out that “the Austrian Federal Government could only participate in humanitarian actions, not in political [ones]”<sup>19</sup>. Kreisky’s caution can be explained on the one hand by the fact that he and the Austrian Government did not want to jeopardize the relations with the US-government, by avoiding offensive political statements. But on the other hand we see that this pragmatic attitude characterized the Austrian foreign policy in the postwar period towards the countries of the Global South. Although the State Treaty of 1955 declared Austria’s permanent neutrality in practice has been employed as an “active neutrality policy” (*aktive Neutralitätspolitik*). This meant not only that Austria participated in international organizations like the United Nations (UN) focusing therefore on issues of the Third World countries but always also in order “to enforce their own interests in a multilateral framework and at the same time to strengthen it’s own position within the political system”, as the Austrian historian Gerald Hödl notes<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand Vienna acted traditionally with a certain Western orientation, a general anti-communist stance and a solidary attitude towards other European countries<sup>21</sup>.

In the case of Nicaragua the neutrality policy meant that key figures of the FSLN visited several times Austria with the goal to legitimize the new government in Managua. A good example are the visits of Ernesto Cardenal. The later Nicaraguan Minister of Culture (1979-1987) visited several times Austria usually within the context of cultural events<sup>22</sup>. Generally speaking the area of cultural policy proved to be one of the most constant topics of Austro-Nicaraguan cooperation, as the project *Casa de los Tres Mundos* (House of three worlds) in Granada illustrates. It was

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<sup>17</sup> *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, No. 231, August 23, 1979, TRAXLER, Günter and HOFFMANN-OSTENHOF, Georg. AZ-Interview mit Kreisky vor Eröffnung der UNO-City zu weltpolitischen Fragen. “Große Sorge um Entwicklung in Persien”, p. 3

<sup>18</sup> See: Brief von Kreisky an Mondale (20.11.1978), SBKA, Bruno Kreisky Archiv: Bestand VII.1. Außenpolitik, Länderboxen, Nicaragua: Box 1, pp. 1-2.

<sup>19</sup> Protokoll der konstituierenden Sitzung des “Solidaritätskomitees für Nicaragua” am 20.11.1978, SBKA, Bruno Kreisky Archiv: Bestand VII.1. Außenpolitik, Länderboxen Nicaragua, Box 1.

<sup>20</sup> HÖDL, Gerald. *Österreich und die Dritte Welt. Außen- und Entwicklungspolitik der Zweiten Republik bis zum EU-Beitritt 1995*. Wien: Promedia-Verlag, 2004, p. 69.

<sup>21</sup> HÖDL, Gerald. *Österreich und die Dritte Welt...*, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> See for example: *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, No. 32, December 2, 1979, KIRCHHOFF, Brigitte. Musik und Bücher als neue Waffen, p. 3.

launched in 1987 by Cardenal and the Austrian actor Dietmar Schönherr and remains until today as a intercultural meeting point where for example Austrian citizens can pass their civil service.

After the downfall of the Somoza-regime and the beginning of the revolutionary government led by the FSLN the cooperation between Nicaragua and Austria officially started. The focus of Austria's development aid was mainly financial and material support for infrastructure projects and the formation of new health and social services. One of these projects was for example the hospital La Esperanza, located at the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast. Each year donations were collected and doubled by the Austrian government until 1982 (the so-called *Spendenverdoppelungsaktion*)<sup>23</sup>. Other projects included the collection of school materials (books, paper, pens, etc.) as well as the assistance at infrastructure projects (e.g. electricity-plants). These initiatives must be seen in the context of the reconstruction of Nicaragua starting from July 1979. In some of the projects Austria remained involved during the whole 1980s<sup>24</sup>.

The Austrian Solidarity Committee with Nicaragua was involved in most of these initiatives and also presented own projects. The people involved in the Solidarity Committee had different (social) backgrounds: Many had gained experience in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, for example in the peace, anti-nuclear or ecology movements. Some had affiliations with the SPÖ or its partner organizations, like the Austrian Trade Union Federation, the Socialist Youth Austria (*Sozialistische Jugend-SJ*), the Socialist Students of Austria (*Verband Sozialistischer StudentInnen in Österreich-VSStÖ*) or the Socialist International (SI). But also persons close to communist groups and organizations, like the Austrian Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs-KPÖ*) participated in the solidarity movement for Nicaragua as well as members of progressive Catholic organizations<sup>25</sup>.

Another important factor was the experience and work of the Chile Solidarity Front (*Chile-Solidaritätsfront*) founded in July 1974 in the context of the military coup against the government of Salvador Allende<sup>26</sup>. The difference between the Nicaraguan solidarity movement and the one with Chile was that the former one lasted longer. Herbert Berger emphasizes the Chilean solidarity group was ideologically far more fragmented than those with Nicaragua similar to the opposition in Chile itself. Thus, in the Austrian Solidarity Committee with Nicaragua not only people who had a Socialist, Communist or Marxist backgrounds participated, but also persons who came from progressive parts of the Catholic Church and its organizations (like the Caritas)<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> The Austrian historian Oliver Rathkolb describes the "generosity" of the Austrians – especially when it comes to money donations – not related to a "true sense of solidarity, but rather [...] as the result of traditional Catholic 'poor relief', perfectly addressed through organizations like the Carita [or] the Red cross." RATHKOLB, Oliver. *Die paradoxe Republik. Österreich 1945 bis 2005*. Wien: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2005, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> FRANZ, Margit. *Austria's Solidarity with Sandinista Nicaragua...*, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>25</sup> FRANZ, Margit. *Austria's Solidarity with Sandinista Nicaragua...*, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> See: BERGER, Herbert. The Austro-Chilean Solidarity Front 1973-1990. In: EISTERER, Klaus and BISCHOF, Günther (eds.). *Transatlantic Relations: Austria and Latin America in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Innsbruck-Wien-Bozen: Studien Verlag, 2003, pp. 225-238.

<sup>27</sup> BERGER, Herbert. *The Austro-Chilean Solidarity Front...*, op. cit., p. 228.

It should also be mentioned that the solidarity movement with Nicaragua was not only an Austrian phenomenon as the other articles in this volume demonstrate<sup>28</sup>. If we analyze it as a transnational movement, it allows us to gain a better understanding of the motivations of the activists as well as the social framework in which the movements operated. One important moment for all of the solidarity movements for sure was when various counterrevolutionary forces – the so called *Contras* – started to operate against the FSLN-government (around 1981). The *Contras* were a heterogeneous formation of paramilitary forces of former members of the Somoza National Guard, foreign mercenaries, members of various indigenous groups and persons disappointed by the FSLN. What they all united was their rejection of the FSLN policies. The solidarity movements worldwide followed with great concern the strengthening of the *Contras*, and the financial and military support by the United States<sup>29</sup>.

In a study of the anti-Contra campaign (in the US) the historian Roger Peace describes three phases which appear to be useful for a transnational perspective on the solidarity movements: In a first phase which already began before the downfall of the Somoza-regime, internationally known Nicaraguan personalities (for example Ernesto Cardenal) used their already established networks for example in the US, Europe and Latin America, and created a basis for future cooperation. They acted as a kind of “ambassadors”, told “the history of the Sandinistas” and presented their plans of an “other Nicaragua” in counties abroad. Numerous publications of solidarity groups and movements published in various languages interviews of this key figures of the FSLN<sup>30</sup>. The second phase lasted until the peak of the Contra war (around 1983) and during this time period the international relationships to the different partners were institutionalized. A prominent role played the Nicaraguan Ministry of Foreign Affairs administrated by then minister Miguel d'Escoto Brockman as well as the the Department of International Relations of the FSLN (*Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales*). In a third phase, according to Peace, the international solidarity movements were used as a kind of “protective shield” against the aggressive foreign policy of the US-government lead by Ronald Reagan and the presumption of a military invasion of US-troops in Nicaragua. This is not to be understood that the FSLN used the solidarity movements an its members as “human shields”, but rather the presence of international observers, such as delegations of the Socialist International or so-called “development workers” (*EntwicklungshelferInnen*), reduced (in a certain way) the fights between the *Contras* and the FSLN army<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Additionally see: CHRISTIAENS, Kim. Between diplomacy and solidarity: Western European support networks for Sandinista Nicaragua. *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*. Sep. 2014, v. 21, n. 4, pp. 617-634. HANSEN, Jan; HELM, Christian and REICHHERZER, Frank. *Making Sense of the Americas: How Protest Related to America in the 1980s and Beyond*. Frankfurt-New York: Campus Verlag, 2015. PERLA JR., Héctor. Heirs of Sandino. The Nicaraguan Revolution and the U.S.-Nicaragua Solidarity Movement. *Latin American Perspectives*. Nov. 2009, v. 36, n. 6, pp. 80-100. GRIGSYBY, William. 25 años después de aquel 19 de julio. Memorias apasionadas de una historia de solidaridad. *Envío (Digital)*. Jul. 2004, n. 268 [accessed on April 4, 2016], available at <<http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/2166>>.

<sup>29</sup> KINLOCH, Frances Tijerino. *Historia de Nicaragua...*, op. cit., pp. 321-330.

<sup>30</sup> See for example: INFORMATIONSBÜRO NICARAGUA (ed.). *Nicaragua-ein Volk im Familienbesitz*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979.

<sup>31</sup> PEACE, Roger. *A Call to Conscience. The Anti-Contra War Campaign*. Amherst-Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012, pp. 153-158.

The years 1982/83 brought significant changes for Austria: The SPÖ lost its absolute majority in the 1983 parliamentary elections and had to find a coalition-partner thus the “Kreisky era” came to an end. After seventeen years of one-party government the SPÖ decided to form a small coalition with the right-wing Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs-FPÖ*). For the dominant figures inside the SPÖ – and especially for Kreisky, who continued to be an important person in the party – the coalition with the FPÖ was the “the least of three evils”, compared to a coalition with the ÖVP or the role in opposition<sup>32</sup>.

Kreisky’s successor as chancellor, Fred Sinowatz, continued the established relations with Nicaragua and supported the FSLN government. However, the government began to reduce their financial aid slowly starting around 1984 and also made less political statements. Domestic political turmoil (the 1985 “Wine Scandal” or the 1986 “Waldheim-case”) demanded much attention. Also the already mentioned new course of US-president Ronald Reagan required modifications in the Austrian foreign policy. Due to the SPÖ’s involvements and political assistance in prior years, the US-government demanded that Vienna had to subordinate itself to the “geopolitical strategy” of the US, which led to disagreements in the diplomatic relations between the two countries<sup>33</sup>.

The official development aid by the Austrian government during these years became more professionalized and complex. The objective of Austrian development aid was to enable the access to basic needs such as food and water and to secure them permanently. But also agendas like environment protection or women’s rights represented guidelines the of the Austrian development policy. Programmatically, the focus was on agricultural projects as well as in the field of education<sup>34</sup>.

Nevertheless, in the mid 1980s the left-wing within the SPÖ lost its influence continuously. Influential party members of the SPÖ made no clear statement in favor of the FSLN and its policies and “defined their position repeatedly as ‘critical solidarity’”<sup>35</sup>. The SPÖ had dominated foreign policy towards Nicaragua, while the ÖVP and its members criticized the “leftist foreign policy”. Since the mid-1980s the ÖVP entered foreign policy again, and also concentrated its initiatives on the Central American region.

In this context the solidarity movement was enriched by another facet: Altogether three work/harvest brigades lead by Austrian activists came to Nicaragua in order to participate in various projects. It turns out that this during this time – as already discussed above – this coincided with the idea to use the transnational solidarity movement as a “shield” against the aggressions of the Reagan administration. As

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<sup>32</sup> PELINKA, Anton. *Die Kleine Koalition. SPÖ-FPÖ 1983-1986*. Wien-Köln-Granz: Böhlau Verlag, 1993, p. 13. Kreisky had considered since the 1970’s the FPÖ as a future coalition partner, in the case of the loss of absolute majority. He wanted to construct a social-liberal coalition, similar to the SPD-FDP-coalition (SPD-*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*; Social Democratic Party of Germany / FDP-*Freiheitliche Partei Deutschlands*; Free Democratic Party) in West Germany, in order to avoid a coalition with the ÖVP.

<sup>33</sup> HÖDL, Gerald. *Österreich und die Dritte Welt...*, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>34</sup> HÖDL, Gerald. *Österreich und die Dritte Welt...*, op. cit., pp. 247-255.

<sup>35</sup> HÖDL, Gerald. *Österreich und die Dritte Welt...*, op. cit., p. 258.

already mentioned, the brigades are not to be understood as “human shields”, because they were not sent to areas where there was heavy fighting between the Sandinista-army and the Contra forces.

The first brigade came to Nicaragua in January 1984 and was called *Jura Soyfer*, named after the Austrian writer Jura Soyfer, who died in the concentration camp Buchenwald. In February 1984 the Brigade *Februar 1934* followed who's name was a reference to the Austrian civil war of the mid-1930s. The third one was the *Anton Dobritzhofer-Spanien 1936* brigade named after an Austrian who fought alongside an International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. The Anton Dobritzhofer-Spanien 1936 came to Nicaragua in March 1985. The brigades signaled not only the continuation of the Austrian solidarity movement with Nicaragua, but also that active political statements and actions were equally important for the Solidarity Committee as the official government development aid.

The brigades Jura Soyfer and Februar 1934 were stationed in the south of the country while the Anton Dobritzhofer-Spanien 1936 which was organized by the Austrian-Cuban society was based in western Nicaragua. The work of activists included construction work, their assistance at an oil palm project at the Río San Juan (border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica) as well as their support during the cotton and coffee harvest<sup>36</sup>.

A direct effect of the presence and the work of the brigades in Nicaragua was the establishment of the so called twin towns or sister cities (*Städtepartnerschaften*). Some of them persist until today and represent the most common form of municipal development cooperation between Austria and Nicaragua. The aim of this cooperation was (and is) that citizens of both cities get involved in different projects in order to establish personal and cultural relations<sup>37</sup>. Until today this concept of municipal development cooperation exist between the cities of Ansfelden-Condega, Wels-Chichigalpa, Linz-San Carlos, Rohrbach-Bonanza and Salzburg-León. Key areas of this communal partnerships are education, infrastructure and health as well as the publicity about the individual projects in Nicaragua which takes place mainly in Austria. Alexandra Humer who has written a study on the cooperation between Wels and Chichigalpa comes to the conclusion that the municipal development cooperation although it does not stand out in quantitative terms, the cooperation instead remains stable during a long time period (sometimes since the mid 1980s). This can be explained through the fact that the very base of this type of development cooperation – the personal relationships – proves to be the most important factor to grant a certain degree of continuity between the cities and its involved communities<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Worth mentioning in this context is the documentary *Einmal mehr als nur reden* (More than just talking) by the Austrian director Anna Katharina Wohlgenannt from 2010. In this former members of the *Februar 34* brigade talk about their experiences in Nicaragua. The documentary also includes original material filmed by the brigade members in 1984.

<sup>37</sup> See: HUMER, Alexandra. *Solidarität mit Nicaragua? Städtepartnerschaften als Beispiel kommunaler EZA in Österreich und ihre Rolle in der OEZA*. Wien: Südwind Verlag, 2013, p. 54.

<sup>38</sup> HUMER, Alexandra. *Solidarität mit Nicaragua?...*, op. cit., p. 120.

Given these points at the end of the 1980s the Austrian development cooperation regarding Nicaragua can be characterized by its heterogeneity. Georg Grünberg notes that the “project-oriented cooperation between state institutions and local NGO’s”<sup>39</sup> was an important feature of Austria’s development cooperation in Nicaragua. In this context the solidarity movement played an important role to maintain the Austrian-Nicaraguan relations in the 1980s and beyond.

### 3. The occupation of the National Palace in 1978

The occupation of the National Palace in Managua took place on the 22nd until the 24th of August in 1978. Since the assassination of Pedro Chamorro in January 1978 Nicaragua was again on the first pages of the newspapers. *Die Presse* was the first one to report: “On Tuesday a group of around 20 armed men have attacked the National Palace in the Nicaraguan capital Managua and taken the majority of the senators as hostages”<sup>40</sup>.

An interpretation which is to be found quite often in the newspapers was that the members of the FSLN were named as “terrorists”<sup>41</sup>, “intruders”<sup>42</sup>, “irregular troops”<sup>43</sup> or “sandinist extremists”<sup>44</sup>. Only the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* called them in a more neutral manner as a “commando”<sup>45</sup> of the FSLN. The collective labeling of the FSLN members as terrorists was crucial, because according to this interpretation the Austrian readers could interpret the Somoza-regime as politically legitimated. Without any further information, how Somoza and his allies gained as well as maintained control over country – which was mainly through the military and the National Guard – the Austrian reader is left with the statement that the FSLN is a terrorist organization. It also neglected the fact that since the early 1970s members of the popular church and liberation theologians like Ernesto and Fernando Cardenal established grass root movements especially in poor and marginalized neighborhoods in the Nicaraguan cities, cooperated with the FSLN<sup>46</sup> but at the same time criticizing the violent methods of the FSLN to overthrow Somoza and his regime<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> GRÜNBERG, Georg. Zentralamerika als Empfängerregion: Armutsbekämpfung und Erhaltung der Umwelt. In: FIALHO-GOMES, Bea de Abreu; MARAL-HANAL, Irmis and SCHICHO, Walter (eds.). *Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Akteure, Handlungsmuster und Interessen*. Wien: Mandelbaum, 2006, pp. 271-288; here: p. 271.

<sup>40</sup> *Die Presse*, No. 9125, August 23, 1978, AFP and Reuters. Parlament Nicaraguas in der Gewalt von Terroristen, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Salzburger Nachrichten*, No. 196, August 25, 1978, DPA, Reuters and AP. Nicaraguas Regierung gab nach. Terroristen flogen mit Geiseln ab, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> *Kurier*, No 243, August 24, 1978, REDAKTION KURIER. 20 Männer halten Regierung als Geisel. Überfall auf Regierungssitz in Nicaragua, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> *Die Presse*, No. 9126, August 24, 1978, Reuters and AFP. Nikaraguas Terroristen halten noch vierzig Abgeordnete fest, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 200, August 30, 1978, APA, DPA and Reuters. Somoza gerät in Schwanken. Teile der Nationalgarde Nikaraguas putschten gegen Regierung. Generalstreik geht unbefristet weiter, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, No. 233, August 24, 1978, AP and Reuters. Nikaragua: Gibt Somoza nach? p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> See: KINLOCH, Frances Tijerino. *Historia de Nicaragua...*, op. cit., pp. 298-299. WILLIAMS, Philip J. *The Catholic Church and Politics in Nicaragua and Costa Rica*. Houndmills [et al.]: Macmillan, 1989, p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> CARDENAL, Fernando. *Junto a mi pueblo, con su revolución. Memorias*. Madrid: Editorial Trotta,

The conservative and boulevard newspapers emphasized a “communist threat” and predicted a “second Cuba”, although several high members of the FSLN stated, that they did not want to create a second Cuba<sup>48</sup>. Nevertheless, *Die Presse* wrote the following: “Apart from the Soviet and Czechoslovak origin of the weapons of the Nicaraguan guerrilla, the ideological pattern of the propaganda against the Somoza-government shows, that the Kremlin is the puppet master of the group [the FSLN; note: LB]. It [is clear] that Moscow has been prepared for years a takeover in Nicaragua, such as in Cuba almost twenty years before. The danger of a communist government takeover in Nicaragua is real and threateningly”<sup>49</sup>.

In a word, the media coverage in boulevard newspapers did not emphasize the backgrounds of the ongoing conflict in Nicaragua. Some phrases even produced more questions than answers, like a short notice about the FSLN in the *Kurier*: “The invaders belong to an underground movement that seeks to overthrow the regime for a long time”<sup>50</sup>. It seemed also far more interesting to report about the “prominent hostages”, like the Minister of the Interior or several relatives of Anastasio Somoza<sup>51</sup>. The *Kurier* wrote that “until (now) the twenty invaders apparently did not think about releasing their prominent hostages – including a nephew and a cousin of the president – without receiving any compensation”<sup>52</sup>. Also false information was published, like a small notice in the *Kurier*, where Edén Pastora, who led the attack on the National Palace, became “the leader of the guerillas”<sup>53</sup>. An example of exaggeration is example of the number of hostages in the National Palace which also represents the lack of research done by the newspapers: the numbers ranged from 1600 in *Die Presse*<sup>54</sup> to 3000 in the *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, who also proclaimed the occupation as the “largest terrorist attack ever”<sup>55</sup>.

This episode shows that at the very beginning of the end of the Somoza-regime, the Austrian newspapers in general concentrated more on eye-catching headlines and “sensational” reports. There was a lack of profound background information, about Nicaragua’s political history as well as a dominant discourse about the Marxist orientation of the FSLN, which became be a constant feature in the 1980s and

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2009, pp. 37-42.

<sup>48</sup> *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, No. 308, November 7, 1978, REDAKTION ARBEITER-ZEITUNG. Der mahrende Ruf des Mystikers. Ernesto Cardenal kämpft gegen die Diktatur Somozas, p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Die Presse*, No. 9144, September 14, 1978, MAX, Alphonse. Guerilleros in der Sowjetbotschaft. Nikaragua, Kubas Tor zum Kontinent? p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> *Kurier*, No. 243, August 24, 1978, REDAKTION KURIER. 20 Männer halten Regierung als Geisel. Überfall auf Regierungssitz in Nicaragua, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> See: *Kurier*, No. 243, August 24, 1978, REDAKTION KURIER. 20 Männer halten Regierung als Geisel. Überfall auf Regierungssitz in Nicaragua, p. 1. *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 196, August 25, 1978, AFP, DPA and Reuters. Regierung gab nach. Geiseldrama von Nikaragua ist beendet. Terroristen konnten das Land verlassen, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Kurier*, No. 243, August 24, 1978, REDAKTION KURIER. 20 Männer halten Regierung als Geisel. Überfall auf Regierungssitz in Nicaragua, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> *Kurier*, No. 336, August 26, 1978, REDAKTION KURIER. Jubel für Guerillas. Ende der Geiselaktion in Nicaragua, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Die Presse*, No. 9127, August 25, 1978, AP and APA. Nikaraguas Regierung gab nach. Bevölkerung jubelte Terroristen zu, p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, August 24, 1978, REDAKTION NEUE KRONEN ZEITUNG. Die größte Terroraktion aller Zeiten, p. 3.

should be seen in the ideological framework of the Global Cold War.

#### 4. The Nicaraguan Revolution on 19th July 1979

The resignation of Somoza on the 17th July 1979 and the following two days – the one-day-presidency of Francisco Urcuyo Maliaños (a henchman of the regime) and the victorious entry of the FSLN forces into Managua on 19th July, was present in all newspapers analyzed for this paper.

In contrast to the events in 1978 the media coverage of July 1979 are characterized on the one hand by more background information but on the other hand by skepticism and criticism of the Sandinistas and the future of Nicaragua. The *Wiener Zeitung*, the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and the *Kurier* printed articles about how the Somoza-family got into power and the contemporary history of Nicaragua, especially starting from the guerilla-war of Augusto César Sandino in the 1930s. Also the articles tell the reader about the enrichment of the Somoza-family, the terror of the National Guard, the assassination of Chamorro, and that the system of the Somozas as the decisive element which has created the miserable conditions in Nicaragua<sup>56</sup>.

Although, the government newspaper *Wiener Zeitung* wrote of a “disciplined power change”<sup>57</sup> positive comments in general were rare. Hermann Wlczek of the *Wiener Zeitung* for example asked about the future in Nicaragua with the FSLN as the dominant political actor. No one should “shed any tears” for the old regime, he wrote. “He [Anastasio Somoza; note: L.B.] is directly responsible for the chaotic conditions. (...) Anyway, one does not observe Nicaragua without any concern. The (...) confrontation has led to the fact that the moderate opposition, which seem most likely capable to introduce a democratic state, was pushed aside. The expected victory of the Sandinistas will bring them to power, and with all due sympathy for their struggle for freedom, it seems possible that you replace one evil with another. One involuntarily thinks about Cuba. But it would be unfair to condemn the Sandinistas before they come into power”<sup>58</sup>.

He carries on with the explanation, that Latin America is a region where democracy is weak and a drift of Nicaragua “in an extreme left future (...) therefore easily could become the final straw” in this conflictual region<sup>59</sup>. In a similar way, Gerhard Hirschmann of the *Kleine Zeitung* anticipated “an unpredictable and dangerous future”<sup>60</sup> for Nicaragua. Also the socialist newspaper *Arbeiter-Zeitung* wrote of “a very high cost”<sup>61</sup>, regarding the victory of the FSLN against the National Guard. “Ten thousand deaths and a ruined country, which is not a good starting point

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<sup>56</sup> See: *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 163, July 18, 1979. REDAKTION WIENER ZEITUNG. “Kreuzfahrer” Somoza gegen Kommunismus, p. 3. *Salzburger Nachrichten*, No. 164, July 18, 1979, CERHA, Birgit. “Meine Farm hieß Nicaragua”, p. 3. *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 164, July 19, 1979, DPA. Somozas Erbe: Ruin Nikaraguas, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 166, July 21, 1979, AFP and AP. Triumphzug für Sandinisten, p. 1

<sup>58</sup> *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 161, July 15, 1979, WLCZEK, Hermann. Vor dem Umsturz, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> *Wiener Zeitung*, No. 161, July 15, 1979, WLCZEK, Hermann. Vor dem Umsturz, p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Kleine Zeitung*, No. 163, July 18, 1979, HIRSCHMANN, Gerhard. Das Ende Somozas, p. 3

<sup>61</sup> *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, July 18, 1979, KATSCHER, Friedrich. Mistkübelchens Ende, p. 3.

to make it better<sup>62</sup>. According to this interpretations the FSLN and their struggle for liberation – without any doubt was violent – was the reason for the misery of the people, ignoring the historical process of the Somoza-regime and its terror especially during the last years before 1979.

But there were also positive reports. For example Fritz René Allemann of the *Salzburger Nachrichten* wrote about the new ministers of the provisional government (the *Junta*). The representatives were very different and had “even opposing policies”. They are “well proven, internationally known as competent and regarded as moderately professionals”<sup>63</sup> Also Gordon Mott of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* wrote positively about the “political heterogeneity” of the Junta<sup>64</sup>.

Anyway, in the boulevard media sensational reports and to a certain point wrong information dominated again. The *Kleine Zeitung* and the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* concentrated on Somozas Exile in Florida, where he lives in a “beautiful white villa, set in beautiful area under the palm trees of Miami Beach”<sup>65</sup>. In the *Kurier* Moises Hassan became the “head of the Sandinistas”, although he was a member of the Junta<sup>66</sup>. And the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* called the conservative Junta-member Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (widow of Pedro Chamorro) a “leading member of the leftist Sandinista Liberation Front”<sup>67</sup> who she never was. Again, characteristic for the boulevard newspapers were the short reports, which normally lasted one or two days, until a new and more exciting topic came up.

## 5. The travels of Mock and Busek to Nicaragua

At the beginning of the year 1984 the two ÖVP politicians Alois Mock and Erhard Busek went on a ‘fact finding’ mission to Latin America. Mock visited in his function as chairman of the ÖVP and president of the International Democratic Union (IDU) – the conservative counterpart to the Socialist International (SI) – Panama, Colombia, Nicaragua, El Salvador and the United States. Busek, then vice mayor of Vienna, went with a group of the Christian Solidarity Trade Union to Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala<sup>68</sup>.

As mentioned above the left-wing inside the SPÖ lost continuously its influence within and outside the party especially when it came to foreign relations, and in this context the ÖVP tried to ‘catch up’ and formulate a new foreign policy agenda, also

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<sup>62</sup> *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, July 18, 1979, KATSCHER, Friedrich. Mistkübelchens Ende, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Salzburger Nachrichten*, No. 164, July 18, 1979, ALLEMANN, Fritz René. Die Kapitulation Diktator Somozas, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, No. 202, July 25, 1979, MOTT, Gordon. Sandinistenjunta politisch heterogen, p. 3.

<sup>65</sup> See: *Kleine Zeitung*, No. 165, July 20, 1979, REDAKTION KLEINE ZEITUNG. Nicaragua: Nach Drohung der USA. Nacht an die Junta, p. 4. *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, July 18, 1979, REDAKTION NEUE KRONEN ZEITUNG: Somoza floh nach Rücktritt in USA, p. 3.

<sup>66</sup> *Kurier*, No. 196, July 19, 1979, REDAKTION KURIER. Jubel in Nicaragua-aber neuer Kampf beginnt, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> See: *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, July 20, 1979, REDAKTION NEUE KRONEN ZEITUNG. Frau stürze Diktator, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> See: *Salzburger Nachrichten*, February 9, 1984, SN-dick. USA könnten in Nicaragua eingreifen, p. 2. *Die Presse*, February 9, 1984, a.u. and h.s. Mock und Busek in Lateinamerika. Diskussion um Nikaragua-Hilfsprojekte, p. 3.

towards Latin America. The ÖVP under their new chairman Mock searched for international allies and networks, mainly through the IDU (founded in 1983). The IDU had close ties with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands-CDU*) and its 'sister party' the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (*Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern-CSU*) as well as with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (*Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*), the political party foundation of the CDU. International policy was coordinated and designed together especially when it came to the 'hot' area Latin America and especially Central America. In a letter of Bruno Heck, president of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, to Mock the former speaks of the "consolidation of the expansion" of the IDU in Latin America, but is also concerned that the engagements of the IDU may harm the already established bilateral relations to Latin American countries. The document show that it was difficult for the IDU to find partners in Latin America who shared more or less the same political agendas<sup>69</sup>.

On the arrival and return of Mock and Busek at the Vienna airport the media presence was unusually high due to the fact that not only the two conservative politicians came back from Latin America, but also the Februar 1934 brigade. As already mentioned, Nicaragua had become a controversial subject between the SPÖ and ÖVP and both sides fiercely augmented polemic against each other and the next days we can observe this struggle in the press reports: The ÖVP and the conservative newspapers accused the members of the Februar 1934 brigade of "left-romanticism"<sup>70</sup> and criticized the SPÖ for their foreign policy agenda. Erhard Busek said after his return that "for the left-wing within the SPÖ, foreign policy is a replacement for the too little radical domestic policy"<sup>71</sup>. Considering Nicaragua, his commentaries were ambivalent: On the one hand, he stressed that solidarity with the Nicaraguans was equally important, as the development aid<sup>72</sup>. On the other hand, he said that "the choice of the language [of the FSLN; note L.B.] is dangerously close to what we know from National Socialism"<sup>73</sup>. Alois Mock reaffirmed his support of the presidential candidate José Napoleón Duarte of the Christian Democratic Party of El Salvador (*Partido Demócrata Cristiano-PDC*). Mock also indicated understanding for the security concerns of the United States against the "authoritarian tendencies" in Nicaragua<sup>74</sup>.

Reactions from the 'left' came quickly: The chief editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* Manfred Scheuch wrote that "even the Christian Democrats [could] one day discover, what the church here [in Austria; note LB] and there [Nicaragua; note: LB] for a long time already know: That especially the exploited people of this region need our solidarity. As for instance the young brigade members demonstrate"<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> Brief von Bruno Heck an Alois Mock, 28.8.1984, Karl von Vogelsang-Institut (KvVI), Vienna; Mappe: IDU (Anfänge), p. 1-2.

<sup>70</sup> *Kleine Zeitung*, No. 33, February 9, 1984, VORHOFER, Kurt. Was Alois Mock nach Hause bringt, p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> *Die Presse*, February 9, 1984, a.u. and h.s. Mock und Busek in Lateinamerika. Diskussion um Nikaragua-Hilfsprojekte, p. 3.

<sup>72</sup> See: *Wiener Zeitung*, February 9, 1984. E.G. Gewisse US-Maßnahmen möglich, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Wiener Zeitung*, February 17, 1984, W.J. Momentaufnahmen von einer Mittelamerikareise, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> See: *Wiener Zeitung*, February 9, 1984. E.G. Gewisse US-Maßnahmen möglich, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, No. 32, February 9, 1984, SCHEUCH, Manfred. Man spricht davon. Reisen bildet, p. 1.

The journey of Mock shows that the ÖVP tried to catch up in foreign policy and invested more time and effort in this area. One comment about Mock's trip to Latin America demonstrates this clearly: "The chairman of the ÖVP moves on the stage of world politics in the most natural way. (...) Insofar Mock often sounds unclear speaking of domestic issues, his statements on issues of the East-West relations are clear. He is a 'Westerner', but that means not a naive pro-Americanism and disregard for the interests of neutral Austria. Moreover this means; commitment to that world order, which we share with the United States and other Western democracies. Lately, when fashionable anti-Americanism mixes with tendencies of a left-romantic social change in this country, it is particularly important that the spokesmen of big parties stay on ground and also represented this in public"<sup>76</sup>.

## 6. Conclusion

While Nicaragua was almost not present in the Austrian press before 1978/1979 this changed rapidly with the (military) achievements of the FSLN and the downfall of the Somoza-dictatorship in July 1979. Due to the facts that the Austrian government engaged in active policies in Nicaragua as well as a part of the Austrian population explained their solidarity for the Nicaraguan people (and the FSLN) the Central American country became an important issue in the Austrian public.

As one reads the media coverage a few things can be observed: First, there is little information about the Nicaragua's history, the political system, the economy or the ethnic composition of its population. Furthermore in nearly all of the analyzed newspapers there is a lack of reports or statements about how it came to the current situation in Nicaragua. Second, the East-West dichotomy is distributed widely by using images and phrases, like "the second Cuba", "the new Vietnam" or "Nicarakuba". Third, there are few comments, articles or reports from correspondents in Latin America. Only the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* gives the Austrian reader sometimes more background information about Nicaraguan policy and the entanglements of Central America in the Global Cold War<sup>77</sup>.

One major factor is that the majority of the newspapers relied on the information of the big global news agencies, like the Agence France-Press (AFP), Associated Press (AP), Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA), United Press International (UPI) or Reuters. As Walter Sturm, Roland Angerer and Hans Bachinger already in 1985 emphasized that the four big global news agencies (AFP, AP, Reuters and UPI) "have the potential to collect, to select and to create the news of worldwide events as well as to distribute them"<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> *Kleine Zeitung*, No. 33, February 9, 1984, VORHOFER, Kurt. Was Alois Mock nach Hause bringt, p. 4

<sup>77</sup> See for example: *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, No. 256, September 16, 1978, OLSCHESKI, Malte. Späte Rache für Mestizengeneral. Wer war Cesar Sandino, und was wollen seine Erben?, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> STURM, Walter; ANGERER, Roland and BACHINGER, Hans. Lateinamerika in der Tagespresse. Eine ideologiekritische Fallstudie. In: LUGER, Kurt (ed.). *Die Dritte Welt in den Massenmedien*. Salzburg: Eigenverlag, 1985, p. 44.

Nevertheless, the Austrian newspapers reported different about Nicaragua and the revolution. In general it can be said that the government paper *Wiener Zeitung* and the SPÖ party newspaper *Arbeiter-Zeitung* mainly reported positive about Nicaragua, although the comments in the *Wiener Zeitung* were more critical considering the policy of the FSLN. The editors of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* were in general in favor of the FSLN while in short news-sections described the events in Nicaragua in a more neutral manner. The conservative newspapers *Die Presse* and the *Salzburger Nachrichten* in general drew a negative picture of the politics of the FSLN. The boulevard newspapers – *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, *Kleine Zeitung* and *Kurier* – carried out sensational journalism, which was characterized by a lack of background information, misinformation and exaggerations.

What all newspaper combined was the lack of sophisticated own research due to the fact that they did not have continuously correspondents in Latin America or Nicaragua. The dependency of the Austrian newspapers on global news agencies led to misinterpretations and often drew an unbalanced picture of the events and developments in Nicaragua.

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