



Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) Annual Report January to December 2015

Highlights of 2015 included visits to the UK from Fátima Ismael of SOPPEXCCA (fair trade coffee); a celebration of solidarity with Nicaraguan women on International Women's Day; our second UK-Nicaragua solidarity day, bringing together people who went to Nicaragua in the 1980s and those who have been to Nicaragua over recent years; and our ALBA campaign presenting Latin American, socialist initiatives for eliminating poverty based on regional integration. The breadth and depth of solidarity with Nicaragua in Wales, England and Scotland was well illustrated by the wide variety of activities organised by Wales NSC, twin towns and other groups: speaker tours, fair trade events, selling Nicaraguan coffee, fundraising, delegations to Nicaragua, cultural exchanges, and project funding to name but a few.

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to our work: those who have bought sales goods, donated to appeals, sold raffle tickets, attended Spanish classes, run marathons, done translations, helped us organise events and helped our fundraising through pulling pints in muddy fields at festivals.

Nicaragua, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA) and Latin American integration

This was NSC's main campaigning focus for 2015. Through this campaign we contributed to building an understanding in the UK of Latin American socialist initiatives based on regional integration that prioritises social inclusion and the eradication of hunger and poverty. Looking at alternatives was particularly important in the context of campaigning in the UK against TTIP (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership), as well as illustrating that 'another way is possible' in terms of how trading relations between countries can be used to invest in public services and infrastructure and to combat poverty. Our campaign also highlighted the precedent for defeating so-called free trade agreements i.e. the defeat of the US attempt to set up a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).



A Nicaraguan NGO, Centro para la Economía Social, carried out extensive research on Nicaragua, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the People's Trade Treaty (TCP). We used this material to publish an eight-page briefing which we distributed through our website, social media, and to European and US solidarity organisations. We also distributed the print version to our supporters and to organisations campaigning against TTIP. Almost all the information in English on ALBA is very dense so our briefing filled an important gap in disseminating information to a wider audience. One reader commented, *"a very clear and well laid-out publication that presented a wealth of information in a very accessible format. It worked well as an information briefing for those already fairly well-informed but also for those new to the subject."*

Street seller Flor de María Avellán from the Nicaraguan Confederation of Self Employed Workers, spoke at the launch of our ALBA briefing together with Francisco Domínguez (Venezuela Solidarity Campaign), and Dave Spooner, director of the Global Labour Institute. NSC and Nicaraguan representatives spoke on ALBA at Venezuelan and Latin American events, in particular a Venezuelan solidarity event in October and the Latin America conference in November. *See Latin America conference.*

Our thanks go to the Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust for providing funding towards the cost of the briefing and to Unite for providing a free venue for the launch.

Events

The NSC events group is made up of a staff member, an office volunteer, ICS volunteers recently returned from Nicaragua and others who have been involved in NSC for some time. Although we received positive feedback from those who attended our

events and we reached some new, younger people, attendance generally was disappointingly low. This reflects the difficulties we face in finding a space to promote Nicaragua and our work. We organised the following events:

UK-Nicaragua Solidarity day: Thirty-five people attended our second UK-Nicaragua solidarity day bringing together people who went to Nicaragua in the 1980s inspired by the Sandinista Revolution, and a new wave of people who have been over the past few years primarily through trade union visits, twin towns, Raleigh International and Progressio programmes, and social enterprises that promote trading links. The event looked at the political context of the different periods, what inspired people to go to Nicaragua, what they felt they contributed, what they gained from the experience and what impact this had on their lives. Positive feedback was received from participants who appreciated the variety of contributions, the mix of people and the good atmosphere. A significant number of younger Raleigh International and Progressio International Citizenship Service volunteers helped with organising the event.

Celebrating solidarity with Nicaraguan women: Forty people attended this International Women's Day celebration at the Feminist Library. We showed a film called 'En la cama, la casa y la calle', about *telenovelas* (television dramas) made by Nicaraguan feminist organisation Puntos de Encuentro, shown TV in Nicaragua and other Latin American countries. The film explains how the dramas were made and the stories integrated into outreach programmes in schools, communities and prisons to raise awareness of violence against women. This was followed by presentations by NSC members who had been in Nicaragua in the 1980s and those who had volunteered in Nicaragua more recently.

Fairtrade, climate change and gender equality: See Fairtrade speaker tour below.

Collaboration with and support for Wales NSC, twin towns and other groups

We collaborated with and supported Wales NSC, twin towns and local groups in Bristol, Islington, Leeds, Leicester, Norwich, Oxford, Reading, Tavistock, Sheffield and Swindon, and the Nicaragua Education, Cultural and Arts Trust (NECAT) by facilitating transfers of funds, providing advice and information, promoting their work in the solidarity section of *Nicaragua Now* and in our news bulletin and providing practical support in Nicaragua for groups without representatives. In November we organised a well-attended twin towns meeting that provided a forum for an exchange of ideas and experiences, and identified areas of work where NSC could play a coordinating role in the UK and Nicaragua. The consolidation of relations with Raleigh International and Progressio was particularly important in involving new, younger activists in NSC and twin towns work. We welcomed the affiliation of a new Yorkshire based Latin America solidarity organisation called *Viva! Bradford* in 2015.

Communications

- **Publication of our magazine 'Nicaragua Now'.** We improved the quality of articles and layout and encouraged greater involvement of Wales NSC and twin towns, promoted the print and electronic version of the magazine to ensure wider coverage in the UK and Nicaragua and aimed individual articles at specific audiences.
- **Website and social media.** We improved the layout of our website, ensured regular updates of news from Nicaragua and UK-Nicaragua solidarity events and expanded our use of social media in particular to promote events.
- **We published a regular UK-Nicaragua solidarity news bulletin** to disseminate news from Nicaragua and UK – Nicaragua events.
- **We published a special briefing on Alba and Nicaragua** in the context of Latin American regional integration – see above.

Collaboration with other organisations

Fairtrade speaker tour: Fatima Ismael, Soppexcca: This speaker tour was a continuation of work on Fairtrade with Nicaraguan co-operatives and producers that NSC has been carrying out since 2002. Fatima, the general manager of SOPPEXCCA, had been invited over by the Bristol Link with Nicaragua and the Bristol Fairtrade Network to participate as a keynote speaker at a Global Fairtrade cities conference in Bristol attended by 240 delegates from 20 countries. NSC co-ordinated a speaker tour that including meetings in Cardiff with Fairtrade Wales, the Welsh Co-operative Centre,



Fatima Ismael addressing the Global Fairtrade Cities conference in Bristol in July, 2015 with Alix Hughes, Bristol Link with Nicaragua

schools and a fair trade shop, and a public meeting in Sheffield and meeting with Twin Café.

We facilitated meetings with Christian Aid (a long term funder of Soppexcca) and Bewleys, an Irish coffee company that has expanded into the British market and is planning to increase the quantity of coffee they import from Soppexcca.

At a London event with Leena Camadoo, Fairtrade Foundation, Fatima highlighted the successes and challenges facing small coffee farmers, particularly women. Although the percentage of Nicaragua's coffee sold through Fairtrade has expanded from 1% ten years ago to 20% in 2015, further expansion of this market is critical in providing small farmers with access to markets and credit. As Fátima pointed out *'Our fundamental struggle is to pull ourselves out of poverty.'* Fátima highlighted the importance of our solidarity: *'We have to continue on this path with fair trade activists and fair trade farmers working hand in hand ...many thanks for all the work you have undertaken over so many years for Nicaragua. Cooperatives of small scale farmers exist today thanks to the solidarity you have shown us and to Fairtrade.'*



Latin America Conference

The 12th Latin America conference, coordinated by the Venezuela and Cuba Solidarity Campaigns, was attended by over 600 people, the highest number yet. There were over 50 speakers, including parliamentarians, academics, activists and trade union leaders from the UK and Latin America; or NSC this was a key opportunity to raise awareness of the progressive changes happening in Nicaragua and highlight why regional integration, particularly through ALBA and CELAC' is so critical from a Nicaraguan perspective. We coordinated the participation of Valdrack Jaentschke, the Nicaragua vice-minister for foreign cooperation. He was a keynote speaker (see photo) and also took part in workshops on Nicaragua and ALBA.

Venezuela Solidarity Campaign: We work closely with other organisations that promote solidarity and/or undertake advocacy related to other Latin American countries. With the dramatic escalation of US aggression against Venezuela we collaborated with the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VSC) in supporting the region-wide condemnation of this aggression. We carried this out through publicising VSC events, postings and articles, providing speakers for VSC events, and encouraging our members and supporters to sign up to VSC actions relating to building support in the UK.

Participation in 19th July celebrations and solidarity meeting in Managua: The delegation from NSC to the *Encuentro* consisted of Helen Yuill and James Poke; David McKnight attended on behalf of Wales NSC and there were delegates from other organisations in Europe, Latin America and the US. The events included visits to social projects, the celebration of the 36th anniversary of the revolution and the *Encuentro* itself. Highlights were our participation in the 36th anniversary of the Revolution (attended by an estimated 200,000 people), the opportunity to visit government social programmes, and the opportunity to meet and exchange experiences with solidarity activists with Nicaragua from around the world.

Providing information for researchers: There is an increasing interest among academics in the history of the insurrection, the Sandinista Revolution and international solidarity in the context of the Cold War. We have provided information to a PhD student at LSE writing her thesis on UK, German and Dutch policy on Nicaragua in the 1980s and solidarity movements in the respective countries. Other researchers are focusing on the literacy crusade and the history of twinnings/sister cities in the UK, Germany and the US.

Fundraising and Sales

The total raised through fundraising and sales was £29,928, a drop from that of 2014 (£34,179), one of the highest results for many years. This included £2,462 from leasing out two desks in our office. A further £7,833 was made through Gift Aid.

The main reason for the drop in fundraising income was that we only found two runners for the London marathon, a real waste of places. We had seven runners in the half-marathon, improved still further on our Spanish class income and did very well in the festival season providing bar staff for the Workers Beer Company. Unfortunately WBC no longer has the contract for Reading and Leeds



festivals so our income from this source is going to be lower from now on.

- Sales made £5,024, very similar to 2014. The *Gift for Nicaragua* on the catalogue was popular; £800 was raised for medical supplies for a hospital in Managua (see photo) supported by Unison West Midlands & the George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust.

Membership

All members received regular mailings including the magazine *Nicaragua Now*. We also email our Solidarity News to all members who have given us their email address and the Nicanet News to those who request this service.

- Income from affiliations and related donations was £28,067, as against £25,456 in 2014. Much depends on whether there are any particularly large donations during the year. In 2012 quite a few members raised their standing orders which will be of lasting benefit. We are continuing efforts to ensure greater income stability through standing orders and at the end of 2015 76% of individual members were paying their membership fees in this way which is excellent.
- For the last 3 years the number of individual members has remained almost the same; a few are not renewing their membership and a few become new members. There were 9 new members compared with 4 last year and 25 in 2010. The fact that we no longer send study tours has had a negative effect; also there is so much information available online that fewer people want to pay to join an organisation.

Membership	Dec 10	Dec 11	Dec 12	Dec 13	Dec 14	Dec 15
Individuals	505	470	465	451	450	449
Wales NSC, twin towns and other groups	17	16	16	15	14	14 3 more groups receive mailings but are not paid-up members
Trade Unions: national, branches and regions, trades councils	92	76	82	79	123	131
Overseas subscriptions (libraries)		4	4	4	1	1
All groups	109	96	102	98	138	146
TOTAL	614	566	567	549	588	595

NB. All trade union work is carried out through the separately constituted Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group (NSCAG). Further details on trade union affiliations are provided in the NSCAG annual report.

Staffing and Governance

NSC Staff: *London Office:* Stella Embliss, Helen Yuill, Susie Steven. *Representative in Nicaragua:* Liz Light

NSCAG staff: Louise Richards.

Note that all staff are employed on a part-time basis.

Board of Trustees: NSC is governed by a Board of Directors/Trustees which develops NSC's overall strategy and monitors activities and outcomes. 2015 Board members: Carmen Barreda, Dave Cosgrave, John Drewery, Rita Drobner, Gill Holmes, Bob Hardie, Marie Kingston, James Poke, Andy Waterworth

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