New World Agriculture and Ecology Group in Nicaragua: The Sandinista Years

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SCIENCE FOR THE PEOPLE
1980-1990:
The Nicaraguan Collaboration

Sandinistas march into Managua (1979)
NWAG in Nicaragua (1980-1990)

- Organized a collaboration program through the office of external cooperation
Nicaragua in 1980

- One of the poorest countries in Latin America
- Few universities and opportunities for higher education
- Blockade restricted materials, basic supplies, infrastructure
- Many professors left the country
- Students were teaching each other
- Intense revolutionary spirit
  - Alphabetization Campaign (illiteracy rate went from 50.3% to 12.9% in a few years)
NWAG Program in Nicaragua

- Research and Education
- Infrastructure
- Solidarity
Research and Education
NWAG sent students and professors to work in Nicaragua

- Universities (ISCA)
- CIDCA
- Ministry of Agriculture
• Our students
  – Intense discussion groups about science and the building of a revolutionary society.
  – Applied versus basic science
4 main approaches to Science in the global south (The Dialectical Biologist by Levins and Lewontin)

• Pragmatism – accept “science” and its agenda as progress

• Developmentalims – looks at progress as occurring along a single axis from less to more.
  – Conservative
  – Radical

• Dialectical – recognize the contradictions between science as growth of human knowledge and science as class product
Infrastructure

• Construction brigades to built a soils and water laboratory
• Got funds to built a Plant Pathology Laboratory and a Biological Control Laboratory
Construction of the Ben Linder Soil and Water Laboratory
Solidarity

• Dealing with the US propaganda machine
• Collaborations with activist non-interventionists in the US (the cusclin newsletter published out of our apartment)
Solidarity

• Organized a collaboration program through the office of external cooperation
  – Sent students and professors to work with Nicaraguan students
  – Constructed a soils and a biological control laboratory
• Participated in solidarity activities
  NWAG marching in front of the US Embassy in Managua, Nicaragua
Publishing articles and books and participating in demonstrations

NWAG members participating in a march in Washington DC to protest the US-backed Contra War against Nicaragua.
NWAG in Nicaragua (1980-1990)

• Continue scientific discussion and political analyses about our role as scientists in revolutionary Nicaragua

In 1990 the Sandinistas were defeated and the project changed the character of the collaboration (1990-2007)
Today

- Nicaraguan Academy of Science
- The mission of the Nicaraguan Academy of Sciences (ACN) is to encourage scientific education in order to achieve sustainable human development.