

Conservatives rally against Sandinistas

By RICK SANTOS
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Students rallied yesterday at noon on the steps of the Student Union Building to support United States aid to the contra rebels fighting against the Nicaraguan government.

The rally was co-sponsored by Students for America and the University of Massachusetts Republican Club. Most of the crowd of about 250 seemed indifferent to the issue of contra support yet attentive to the speakers.

While UMass Republican Club member Michael D. Ross spoke about what he called an ongoing working relationship between Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, UMass student Graham Poor interrupted saying Nicaragua had free elections to determine its government.

"Those elections were so closely watched. The Sandinistas clearly won a fair election," he said later.

Ross said, "There are many people in America today who do not want to believe there is a Soviet-Cuban connection" in America. The connection is in Nicaragua, he said.

He cited the problem of a Cuban-Soviet arms build-up in Central America. "Nicaragua is a staging ground for the eternal build-up of arms," he said.

As Ross concluded his speech, two Republican Club members acting as prison camp guards armed with toy guns dragged him away from the podium while he repeatedly screamed, "Freedom in Nicaragua." The guards were from a mock prison camp constructed of chicken wire supported by a wooden stakes. The camp, which was located in the shrubbery between the Student Union Building, the Tower Library, and Machmer Hall, was taken apart and brought to the Republican Club office after the rally

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Republican Club member Brian Darling also spoke. "Long live the Nicaraguan freedom fighters. Let me quote an American hero Oliver North. The Nicaraguan freedom fighters are real living people," he said.

At this time, a crowd member interrupted yelling, "What about peace in Nicaragua? What about no fighting in Nicaragua?"

Darling was then hauled away by the mock guards.

Republican Club President W. Matthew Whitting, who also spoke, compared the aid France gave the United States in the American Revolution with the aid he thinks the United States should give the contras. "If you like liberty and you believe in it, then you should believe in helping the contras, he said. Whitting was then dragged off by the mock guards.

Another speaker from the Republican Club, Scott Kramer, changed the subject to Soviet imperialism. "The

Soviet Union is the most imperialist nation in the world today," he said. He said some examples of Soviet imperialism have occurred in Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Vietnam, Cuba, and Nicaragua. After Kramer's speech, mock guards forced him away from the podium.

Republican Club member Tony Rudy spoke about Sandinista oppression, which he said has caused one-sixth of Nicaraguan people to flee their homeland. Rudy was escorted from the podium by the mock guards.

Another member of the Republican Club, W. Greg Rothman, criticized President Ronald Reagan for not standing up for what he believes. After the rally he said Reagan's view has been to support the contras, but recently his policies toward the contras have changed because of bad advising. Reagan could have taken advantage of the pro-Oliver North craze by asking for more contra support but did not, but, "he still cares deeply about the contras," Rothman said.

At the end of the rally, the participants raised an American flag, and sang "God Bless America."