

OAS rallies for contra funding; House to vote today

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Under overcast skies and a constant drizzle, more than 200 students attended a rally yesterday on the Student Union steps to support monetary aid to the Nicaraguan contras.

Members of the rally, sponsored by the Organization of American Studies, called on Congress to give aid to the contras and to oppose Soviet expansionism in Central America.

The US House of Representatives will vote on the \$36 million aid package today.

"Do you support communist dictatorship or Ronald Reagan?" asked Michael D. Ross, one of the main speakers at the rally and president of the OAS. "Congress will be held accountable for the fate of the contras," said Ross. Ross urged students to call their representatives and ask them to vote for more contra aid.

Bill Spadea, a guest speaker and president of Young Americans for Freedom at Boston University, warned students about

further Soviet influence in Central America.

"We are obligated as the most powerful nation in the world to help the contras," said Spadea. "Congress is deciding the fate all over the world to escape from the Soviet empire."

Matthew Whiting, president of the UMass Republican Club, compared the contras to the soldiers who fought in the American Revolution. Calling the contras "freedom fighters," Whiting said the contras are fighting for democracy in Nicaragua. He suggested that the contras should adopt slogans from the American Revolution, then proclaimed, "Give me liberty or give me death!"

George Uribe, a representative from the United Nicaraguan Opposition group, was another guest speaker. Uribe warned the crowd about a communist takeover in Central America and the threat this posed for America's national security. Uribe called the ruling Sandinista government in Nicaragua "surrogates of the Soviet Union."

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Photo by Courtney K. Birch

Michael D. Ross (behind podium) debates Michael Kolbrenner yesterday at the contra-funding rally in front of the Student Union.

Soviet Union."

Several members of the OAS and their supporters held signs during the rally. "Ortega no! Support the freedom movement" read one sign. Another had the slogan, "End Sandinista terrorism in Central America."

At one point during the rally, several contra-aid opponents heckled Ross and disagreed with his views on Soviet expansionism.

One person asked Ross which country is more of a threat, Cuba or Nicaragua. Ross replied that it would be Nicaragua because it is geographically and strategically important. "Managua to L.A. in half an hour," said Ross.

"Turkey to Moscow in 45 minutes!" shouted back one person.

The vote on contra aid in the House today and the Senate on Feb. 4 is considered crucial to the future of President Reagan's Central American policy.

If Congress votes for the aid, part of the money will be held in escrow to allow for democratic reforms by the Sandinista government.

Spadea was optimistic about the vote. "I think that congress will vote overwhelmingly for the aid. It is about 90 percent humanitarian aid."

Ross challenged the liberals on campus to debate him on any issue, including contra aid. Ross called for a formal time and place to debate what he called liberal misinformation.

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