

leveled all of the capital city of Managua, the Jewish community built a new synagogue. The synagogue served as the center of Jewish communal life since its dedication in 1976.

Two years after my visit to Nicaragua, I heard the Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, Miguel d'Escoto, tell a meeting at the New York headquarters of the National Conference of Christians and Jews that "there is no anti-Semitism in Nicaragua." I brought to the Foreign Minister's attention the fact that there are no Jews in his country and that the Jews of Nicaragua claimed that they were victims of anti-Semitism.

The Foreign Minister immediately introduced me to the First Secretary of the Nicaraguan Mission to the United Nations, Orlando Moncada Zapata, and designated him as liaison to ADL on this problem. This led to periodic discussions and correspondence with Nicaraguan government representatives on three issues: 1) Conditions under which Nicaraguan Jews could return to their country; 2) The status of the synagogue; 3) Review of the confiscation of Jewish-owned property.

We received no response on the first two issues. On the third, we were told that the government would review cases at our request. Three were submitted, but we received no response, as of May this year.

When the Human Rights Committee met at the United Nations this year in April, members asked about the status of the Nicaraguan Jewish community. The Nicaraguan representative, Vice-Minister of Justice Arguello, told the committee that the Governing Junta had assigned the synagogue building to the Association of Sandinist Children to be used for social purposes. He added, "Should the owners of the building request that it should again be a place of worship, the Government Junta would evaluate that request in the context of religious freedom."

This is a meaningless promise in a country without Jews.

Given the failure of the government of Nicaragua to respond to ADL's long-standing requests and the forced exile of Nicaraguan Jews, it seems unlikely that the Governing Junta will soon be faced with the question of restoring the synagogue as a place of worship.

Nicaragua cannot have Judaism without Jews, even though it has demonstrated, like Poland, the possibility of anti-Semitism without Jews.



### *Se Burlan de la Religión y del Sionismo en Nicaragua*

En una manifestación realizada por las calles de Managua, activistas de la Junta Sandinista que gobierna Nicaragua, ridiculizaron la religión cristiana y el sionismo con distintas personas

disfrazadas de diversos modos. También los Estados Unidos, como es habitual en las manifestaciones en Nicaragua, fueron atacados severamente. (Telefoto UPI)

#### ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

#### They Scoff at Religion and Zionism in Nicaragua

In a public demonstration through the streets of Managua, activist partisans of the Sandinista Junta that governs Nicaragua scoffed at the Christian religion and Zionism,

with different persons wearing diverse costumes. As is customary in Nicaraguan demonstrations, the United States were severely attacked, too. (UPI telephoto)

## NICARAGUA WITHOUT JEWS

by Morton M. Rosenthal  
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Amid the upheavals that have wracked Nicaragua since the Sandinists came to power, one internal development has escaped the attention of the world. Nicaragua today is a country without Jews, but not without anti-Semitism.

When the Sandinists toppled the Somoza regime in 1979, they succeeded in driving the entire small Jewish community -- numbering about 50 -- into exile.

The Sandinists commandeered Managua's synagogue and today Sandinist propaganda posters cover the four Stars of David at the front entrance. The interior is adorned with anti-Zionist posters. Throughout the capital, Jewish-owned property has been confiscated. Despite appeals from the Anti-Defamation League, the government of Nicaragua has refused to address these human rights violations.

Nicaraguan Jews, many of whom were born in Nicaragua, attribute their plight to their Jewishness and the unwillingness of the Sandinists to distinguish between the Nicaraguan Jewish community and the State of Israel. The Sandinists' enmity toward Israel and Nicaraguan Jews flows from two sources: their long, close relationship with the Palestine Liberation Organization and the fact that Israel sold weapons to the Somoza pre-revolutionary government.

The P.L.O.-Sandinist relationship involved P.L.O.-supplied weapons, training and funds. Sandinist guerrillas and P.L.O. terrorists have also fought side-by-side. Jorge Mandi, a Sandinist spokesman, told a reporter for the Kuwaiti newspaper Al Watan (8/7/79), "There is a long-standing blood unity between us and the Palestinian revolution....Many of the units belonging to the Sandinist movement were at Palestinian revolutionary bases in Jordan. In the early 1970's, Nicaraguan and Palestinian blood was spilled together in Amman and in other places during the 'Black September' battles."

In August, 1980, the Kuwaiti press reported that P.L.O. members had gone to Nicaragua to supervise military training. This was done in accord with an agreement reached with Yasir Arafat, who had gone to Managua in July to celebrate the first anniversary of the revolutionary government. The Sandinists paid their debt by authorizing the opening in Managua of a P.L.O. "embassy."

As far as the Israeli supply of weapons to the Somoza government is concerned, Nicaraguan Jews indignantly deny accusations they were involved in these transactions. They explain that Israel's policy of selling weapons to the Somoza government was based on a sense of gratitude for Nicaraguan support at a time of Israel's great peril in 1948. Struggling for its very existence against overwhelmingly superior Arab armies, the newly established State found virtually all sources of weaponry closed to it. President Somoza acted as a discreet middleman, procuring arms that were then transshipped to Israel.

Nicaraguan Jews also claim that because of the close P.L.O.-Sandinist relationship, Nicaraguans of Arab descent were able to remain in Nicaragua and continue their business activities, often similar to those engaged in by Jews.

In sharp contrast are blatant manifestations of anti-Semitism. Last July, Nuevo Diario, a Managua newspaper which closely adheres to the government line, published an article under the headline, "About Zionism and the Palestinian Cause." It spoke of "synagogues of Satan" and denounced Jews "who crucified Jesus Christ and...used the myth of God's chosen people to massacre the Palestinian people without mercy."

Two days later, July 17, 1982, the same paper charged that "the world's money, banking and finance are in the hands of descendants of Jews, the eternal protectors of Zionism. Consequently, controlling economic power, they control political power as now happens in the United States."

The newspaper even went as far as to claim that President Reagan's support for Israel stems from the fact that he "must have Jewish ancestry."

The clouds over the Nicaraguan Jewish community began to darken even before the Sandinist victory. Sandinist supporters painted on the synagogue walls and elsewhere slogans such as "Israel, Jews and Somoza - The Same Thing." The synagogue itself was firebombed in 1978 while the congregation was worshipping inside. The men who threw the bomb shouted "long live Sandino" as their Jeep sped away. Many Jews received threatening phone calls shortly before the Sandinist victory warning "Jews get out of here."

When the Sandinists came to power in July, 1979, the storm broke. Some members of the Jewish community were advised to leave "for their own safety." Others, who had gone abroad during the last months of the revolutionary struggle, found that they were unable to return. The Nicaraguan Jews went into "exile" mainly in the United States, Israel and other countries of Central America.

Isaac Stavisky, a textile engineer who was born in Nicaragua, said, "I was willing to return to my native country and engage in my usual activities, but I was stopped cold." It was suggested that he refrain from returning for his own safety because he and his brother-in-law were considered enemies of the revolution.

The president of the Jewish community, Abraham Gorn, was jailed after the Sandinist victory. Gorn, who was then 70 years old, was falsely accused of stealing some land and forced to sweep streets during the two weeks of his confinement.

Through the intervention of Costa Rican officials and after a Sandinist government investigation found him innocent, he was released.

Six months later, in February, 1980, without any warning whatsoever, the Sandinists came to his factory and told him it was not his and he should leave. In addition, some employees told him that the Sandinists had instructed them to bomb his car if he returned. Gorn says that the man who directed the takeover of his factory, farm and bank accounts and "then kicked me out of my home" was Carlos Arguello, currently Vice-Minister of Justice in Nicaragua.

I was in Nicaragua some months prior to the Sandinist victory and remember the anxiety that was already apparent. I was struck by the fact that this small community had strong roots in Nicaragua and saw its future there. That they had no intention of leaving was clearly evident -- after the earthquake of 1972 which