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Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 69, Folder 7, Nicaragua, Undated.

NICARAGUA - "THE JEWISH QUESTION"

A considerable amount of attention has been focused in the general and Anglo-Jewish press on the situation of the miniscule Jewish community in Nicaragua under the present Sandanista regime. As constructed primarily by the ADL, the issues have been conceptualized in these terms:

1) The ADL has charged the Sandanista regime with being anti-Semitic owing to its "confiscation" of the Jewish community's synagogue in Managua.

2) Several hundred Nicaraguan Jews fled the country with the overthrow of the Somoza regime by the Sandanistas. In many cases their property was expropriated. These actions were also characterized as "anti-Jewish" by the ADL spokesmen.

3) The Sandanistas have had a close association with the PLO prior to and since their ascendancy to power. That alliance is interpreted by Sandanista sources as having been a response to the fact that the Somoza regime had close ties with the Israel government, including military aid provided by Israel to the Somoza forces. (The ADL has publicly declared that the PLO-Sandanista connection is the operative reason for the confiscatory actions taken by the revolutionary forces against the Nicaraguan Jewish community. The ADL recently stimulated a press conference at the White House at which President Reagan condemned the PLO-Sandanista bond, and the "anti-Semitic" attitudes and behavior of the present regime.)

BACKGROUND: AJC has maintained quiet contact with the Nicaraguan ambassador to the United States, as well as with Nicaraguan Jews who have remained as well as with those who left;

These are some of our present tentative conclusions:

1) Most of the Jews who fled Nicaragua did so less because of any manifest anti-Semitism than as a result of being middle-class and upper-class people who feared the economic consequences of revolutionaries bent on nationalizing the economy. Thousands of Christians also fled for the same "class" reasons. In many cases, this situation is not unlike that of other Jewish communities in similar socio-economic circumstances who fled the Allende regime in Chile.

2) There was a special revolutionary antagonism to these few Jews who were active supporters of the Somoza regime.

3) The synagogue in Managua was owned as "the private property" of two Nicaraguan Jews, and it was confiscated as such. It turns out that Mr. Gorn and Mr. Stavitsky - who owned the synagogue - are charged with being middlemen who arranged the arms deals between Israel and the Somoza regime. Gorn and Stavitsky both claim that the Sandanistas are anti-Semitic and play down their arms involvement with Israel and Somoza.

4) The PLO-Sandanista connection is tight and poses a real problem in geo-political relationships. To the degree that the PLO officials in Nicaragua push the "Zionism is racism" line, there could be a real issue in such anti-Zionist polemic feeds an anti-Jewish atmosphere.

NOTE: The Nicaraguan Jews we have contacted make a distinction between anti-Semitism which they generally deny, and the anti-Israeli policies which they affirm as the stance of the Sandanistas.