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NICARAGUAN DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL.

file

September 13, 1983

The Editor
The Washington Post
1150 15th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20071

Dear Sir:

Your article entitled "Nicaraguan Jews Reject Anti-Semitism Charges" (8/29/83, by Edward Cody) on the conditions of the Jewish community in Nicaragua, compells us to make some comments.

Our country has been a multiracial society, founded on the tradition of tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Our history has not recorded the persecution of individuals or groups on grounds of religious beliefs or ethnic origins.

Jews have immigrated into Nicaragua since the 19th century. Some have changed their religion to become Christians; others have kept the faith of their ancestors. However, all of them, as Nicaraguans, have participated actively in our nation's life.

However, the long relationship between the PLO and the Sandinistas -- documented since 1969, with Sandinistas training in PLO camps at Tyre, Algiers; fighting beside PLO soldiers in Jordan during the Black September battles in 1970; and collaborating with the PLO in plane hijackings during that year -- brought two new elements into Nicaraguan society with the Sandinista seizure of power on July 19, 1979: the anti-Semitism of the Sandinista movement as a direct consequence of their relationship with the PLO, and the special role of the PLO within the new government.

One of the first acts of the Sandinista government was the desecration of the country's only synagogue and the sacred symbols of the Jewish religion, followed by expropriations, humiliation, and finally the forced exile of the Jewish community. A very few remained, but the absolute majority had to find refuge abroad.

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The Editor
The Washington Post
Page two

A year later, on July 19, 1980, PLO leader Yassir Arafat travelled to Managua and, together with Interior Minister Tomas Borge, proclaimed the identity of their revolutionary cause. This identity included Sandinista recognition of PLO representation at the ambassadorial level.

The Nicaraguan government's intention, expressed through their Ambassador in Washington (Washington Post, 9/1/83), of returning the synagogue to the Jewish community, appears to be a grotesque gesture to a community already exiled by that government, to a community that was rightfully an integral part of our society, to individuals who for the first time have been denied their rights, their freedom, their religion because of their ethnic origins and religious faith.

We denounce the offer made by the Sandinista government for the duplicity of its intentions toward a community object of arbitrary persecution and victim of a new Diaspora.

Sincerely,


Bosco Matamoros
Executive Director

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