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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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June 7, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR WILLIAM J. CASEY, DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

FROM: FAITH R. WHITTLESEY, ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR PUBLIC LIAISON *FRO*

SUBJECT: Transcript on Central America

Please find enclosed a transcript of a briefing held on May 4th by our Outreach Working Group on Central America. The subject of the briefing was "Religious Persecution in Nicaragua," and one of the four eye witnesses from Nicaragua was a Sandinista torture victim. This document contains extremely dramatic and moving evidence of the nature of the Sandinista regime. We are making every effort to circulate it widely.

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UNEDITED
TRANSCRIPT

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 4, 1984

OUTREACH WORKING GROUP ON CENTRAL AMERICA

"RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN NICARAGUA"

FAITH RYAN WHITTLESEY
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR PUBLIC LIAISON
CHAIRMAN

9:30 - 12:00 P.M., Room 450 OEOB

A G E N D A

I. Introductory Remarks:

Faith Ryan Whittlesey
Assistant to the President
for Public Liaison

II. Geraldine O'Leary Macias
Former Maryknoll Nun

III. Prudencio de Jesus Baltodano
Pentecostal Preacher, Farmer,
Victim of Sandinista Torture

IV. Wycliffe Diego
Co-Founder of ALPROMISU
Political Coordinator of MISURA

V. Humberto Belli
Former Editorial Page Editor of La Prensa
Founder of the Puebla Institute

MRS. FAITH RYAN WHITTLESEY: On behalf of the President, we welcome you to this White House complex and the 53rd meeting of our White House Outreach Working Group on Central America. We have been having these meetings for almost a year to provide more information to the American people about the President's policies in Central America and the facts upon which those policies are based. The subject of the meeting for today is religious persecution in Nicaragua, and we have a group of eyewitnesses who will speak to us on that subject.

History has shown us that Communist regimes inevitably seek to either eradicate the Church or to subvert it. Ideologically the Church's existence is repugnant to them. Allegiance to God prevents total allegiance to and subjugation by the state, which according to Marx, is the vehicle for the secular transformation of man into God. The communists cannot tolerate this limitation on their absolute power. Thus, in the Soviet Union all but a tiny percentage of churches have been closed and religious affiliation routinely brings the loss of precious privileges and sometimes brings more serious persecution.

In Nicaragua, the self-admitted Marxist-Leninist leaders of the government are following the same path. Any traveler will tell you it is difficult to choose a route without having a destination in mind. For the Marxist-Leninist leaders of Nicaragua the destination has been clear since their training days in Cuba. They desire a totalitarian state in which no organization will challenge their supreme authority.

Standing in the way of this goal are the deep-seated religious convictions of the Nicaraguan people. Since they cannot simply outlaw the churches without sacrificing what international support still exists for their revolution, the Sandinista leadership is following a two-track policy of persecution and subversion.

A Sandinista document, called the "72-hour Document", outlined the strategy to be used as the regime consolidated its power. That document was published by the regime in October of 1979, and it stated that the Catholic Church was to be treated cordially and I quote: "Following a cautious policy designed to neutralize conservative elements, develop close ties to sympathetic elements, and stimulate the revolutionary sectors." Protestants, they said, and I quote, "have to be watched closely, restricted, and expelled if detected in any untoward acts."

In the intervening four and a half years, the Sandinistas have been true to their word. Believers have been harassed, arrested, and even tortured. This violates not only international standards of decency and behavior, but the Sandinistas' own law. Article 19 of the Statute on the Rights and Guarantees of Nicaraguans provides that..."Even in cases of emergency"...freedom of thought and religion cannot be suspended. But this is, unfortunately, equivalent to the guarantees of religious freedom in the Soviet

constitution, which through its Marxist prism translates into persecution and suppression.

Today, as you have seen on your program, we have four eye-witnesses to religious persecution in Nicaragua. We are grateful to have members of the media here because this story has gone largely unreported. I need only refer to the Good Friday demonstration of 100,000 people in Managua against the Sandinista regime. The people were chanting, "We are Christians not Marxists" and "Free Nicaragua". This dramatic event was reported only by ABC's Peter Collins and his narrative is available for you on the table.

No other network touched the story. No wire service, news photos, no print media stories appeared. Also, in Nicaragua on Easter Sunday the Roman Catholic bishops issued a pastoral letter--a copy of which appears in your folder--decrying what they characterized as materialistic ideology. Tomas Borge, the Sandinista's interior minister, responded by calling that pastoral letter a criminal act; indeed worse than anything Jeane Kirkpatrick has done... (A copy of the pastoral letter is in your folder also.)

You will, I hope, read carefully, that which I mentioned is in your packets. We have also included in your packets a copy of the White House Digest, which is material we provide for interested people who attend our Outreach meetings, and the two that I have included in this packet are entitled, "Persecution of Religious Groups in Nicaragua" and "The Nicaragua Repression of the Native Miskito Indians".

You will also find in your packets an interview with Miguel Bolanos, who is a Sandinista defector, on the subversion and the tactics of that subversion of the Church of Nicaragua.

Our program will begin with each of these speakers giving a short 15 minute presentation and then we will open the floor for your questions. I will moderate and for those speakers who need interpreters, Stephanie Von Rickensburg, who is on your right, and Donald Barnes, who is here from the State Department on your left will translate for Mr. Diego and Mr. Baltodano.

The first speaker is Mrs. Geraldine O'Leary Macias. Mrs. Macias was born in Minnesota. She joined the Maryknoll Order in the United States in 1964. As a Maryknoll nun she went to work in Central America in 1969 and served in Panama for 3 years before going to Nicaragua in 1973. After leaving the Maryknoll order, which she did with the permission of the Church, Mrs. Macias remained in Nicaragua and went to work for Protestant social services. In 1974 she married Edgard Macias, who later became Vice Minister of Labor for the Sandinista regime. When she and her husband became the subject of an intensive defamation campaign by the Sandinistas and received death threats, they fled Nicaragua for the United States.

Mrs. Macias has recently contributed a chapter to Ethics and Public Policy Center's just-released book, Crisis and Opportunity: United States Policy in Central America. And I would also point out to you that Mrs. Macias has written this book of essays called, "Only Another Tyranny", which is available for any of you who may be interested if you contact Mrs. Macias. Geraldine, Welcome to our White House Outreach group...

GERALDINE MACIAS: Thank you. I think she gave you a lot of facts about where I came from or what I was in the last, say 15 years; as a Maryknoll sister, and then working for Protestant Social Services.

But I'd like to talk today about what I am now, and first of all I am a refugee; one of the thousands who have left Nicaragua in the last four years. My husband is a Nicaraguan. I have watched him in the last year and a half lose contact with his family, his elderly parents; struggle with the English language, which he never planned to learn before; send in resumes--hundreds of times and be refused because he cannot speak English.

I have watched him lose his culture, lose contact with his language and suffer the fact of being a political refugee, and basically it's because he's two things: A Christian and a politician. Now, specifically we left Nicaragua in '82 because, of course, there were these threats to eliminate my husband. We were informed of this by a security policeman and also informed shortly after that by a friend of ours who saw the arrest order.

Ironically though, this was confirmed for us here in the United States by the security policeman who organized the whole campaign against us. I don't think it's too many times that someone who is set up for elimination and meets the person who set him up and receives his apology. This happened to us when Miguel Bolanos informed us that he was told to do this elimination campaign and the security police to watch our house, to put in the media lies about my husband. Miguel Bolanos came to apologize.

Now that was the first reason why we left. The second reason, I think, pertains to you people. Because my husband had been arrested under Somoza and had received death threats under Somoza also -- so many people have said to us: "Why under Somoza would he stay in the country and under the Sandinistas would he leave?" And he said: "That belongs to the churches and human rights groups in the world to answer. Because under Somoza I felt that if I went to jail there would be an international clamor. If I died, I would die as a martyr. At least something would be left to my children. But in 1982, when I received death threats and there was an arrest order to me, I felt sure that if I was put in prison, international groups would not clamor for my release, international groups would not protest against the Sandinistas. These groups that had been so supportive against Somoza now are silent or covering up for the Sandinista government. Therefore, I felt, 'Why die and have my

children be told that I was a counter-revolutionary?' It would be better to be alive and struggling from outside."

When you talk about the FSLN and the Sandinistas, I would like to make it clear that there are lots of Sandinistas who are not FSLN, The Sandinista Liberation Front. The original Sandinista coalition was more than 20 groups, amongst which were labor union congresses, labor union groups, community groups, and political parties.

The FSLN made it impossible for any group to use the word Sandinista shortly after revolution, because they wanted to identify themselves as the revolution. I do not agree. There were too many of us that spent years -- people like my husband -- other people who spent even longer than him fighting against the Somoza government; seeking change for Nicaragua, who could consider themselves Sandinista revolutionaries and they were never Marxists, nor members of the FSLN.

Today, there are people leaving Nicaragua. People like ourselves who are forced to leave -- people who see the only choice is either to be silent or to leave their country. I have had the privilege of translating for some of these people here in this area and also in the Midwest, where I am from, and the tragedy I find for many of them are from 18 to 25 year olds.

These are young people who are leaving their country because they have been members of the Sandinista Army and do not want to continue. And they do not want to continue because indoctrination is only Marxist-Leninist and is very anti-church. Others are leaving because of the Conscription Law--they have no choice. I find it very ironic that groups here in the United States that support pacifism do not support it in Nicaragua.

These people are leaving in droves, coming to the United States, many times without their families and trying to survive here. My own experience is that it's very difficult to get help not only from church groups and the same human rights groups many times have told us that they wouldn't help Nicaragua refugees because they are coming from a "progressive" government and there is no reason to leave. Others have told me that the FSLN doesn't kill people. Well, it's very hard to bring the bodies up here to show them. Fortunately, we have a few people like Prudencio, who survived the attempt to murder him.

Also, many people look at Nicaragua and talk about popular support. Well, when I was still there in '82, and I was director of a small private organization, I weekly had people coming to me, wanting to leave their government positions to work for me in any way at all--as a chauffeur, as a secretary--because they were being forced to belong to the militias and the militias were being sent to the frontiers to do the fighting while the Sandinista Army was being kept in the quartels.

These people told me that the militia training was very inadequate, that they weren't given sufficient arms when they went to the borders, and they weren't given sufficient arms when they went to the borders, and they weren't convinced about that they were fighting for. To me there has been a slaughter of Nicaraguans; people forced to go and defend the Sandinista political party as the bishops have said in the pastoral letters.

People going into the militias and armies are not defending Nicaragua, they are defending a Marxist-Leninist party. Not only that, many of them find out that the persons in charge of their units are foreigners. Many times Cubans. And the Cubans have taken over, not only the many forces fighting (especially in the South), but also the security police and even the community organizations. There is a lot of protest in Nicaragua, a lot of unrest.

I think most of you are aware of the group called ARDE/MISURA in the South of Nicaragua, which in May of 1983 had 500 people when they first started to fight. In December of last year they had 8,600, and the latest report is they are growing to 10,000 by the end of next month. Why are all these people joining to fight against the Sandinistas if they are popular government? There has been repression, there has been persecution, mostly against the politicians to begin with, then gradually against the church people and I look at the people who deny this as being very short-sighted and ostriches with their heads in the sand.

Eventually, it will get to all of them who try to be outspoken, who try to defend human rights in Nicaragua. I find that our best friends are the Central American countries around us: Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, El Salvador; they understand that the problem is not just of those Nicaraguans and after 10 years there, my children were born there, I feel at least half Nicaraguan.

The problem is Central America. Because Nicaragua has destroyed, has betrayed a revolution--has destroyed and betrayed the hopes of many people that were giving their lives, risking their lives for fundamental change. The Sandinistas have made 'revolution' a bad word, when for us it was originally a very good concept. And they have threatened our neighboring countries; threatened the neighboring citizens with violence, with terrorism, and attempts in other countries to impose Marxism-Leninism as they have done in Nicaragua.

Once again, I'd like to say one of the reasons we are here is because there was no one outside to give us the protection of protests, when my husband was threatened with arrest. There is no one outside yet for many people who will say to you if you are still in Nicaragua--"if you speak out, we will support you. If you take a risk, we're there to defend you." And as long as there's not international pressure on Nicaragua, we have to keep on leaving and you have to keep on supporting us. Thank you.

MRS. WHITTLESEY: Thank you, Geraldine.

Persecution of Protestant groups has been even more direct and brutal because of their smaller size. They have been more vulnerable to these kinds of attacks. We have with us today Prudencio Baltodano. Mr. Baltodano was a Pentacostal preacher and farmer in El Tendido near the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. He is a witness to the repression in his homeland and has suffered himself from Sandinista torture.

He now lives in Costa Rica and is in Washington taking his case to the Congress, the Organization of American States, and the American People. Mr. Baltodano's story for us today will be interpreted by the lady from the State Department who has kindly consented to help. A copy of Mr. Baltodano's testimony is also in your packets. I neglected to mention that.

PRUDENCIO BALTODANO: I would like to greet you all in the name of Christ Jesus. And in the hope that Christ Jesus will bring hope to the people of Nicaragua and to the world. Because Christ is the only one who can do that--who can bring peace to the world and I would like to invite all believers to work for peace in Nicaragua and in the world.

I guess a lot of you know me. I'm getting to be pretty well known in Washington, but for all of those who don't know me yet, here I am.

This is what happened to me. This is my case: I was at home with my wife and with my children. In the place where I live is called El Tendido Punta Gorda, in the province of Southern Zelaya. One morning at the beginning of February, I was surprised by witnessing a combat in this area between Sandinista troops and a group who turned out to be from ARDE.

This was such a harsh combat that we had the impression that the mountains were falling in on us. So we decided we would have to leave home and we went into the mountains, about 2 kilometers. We spent that day, that night and the next day in the mountains and about 2 p.m. in the next afternoon, we were surprised by the gunfire from the Sandinista forces. We were immediately tied --bound by the Sandinista. When I say 'we', what I mean is I was accompanied by one other man, Christanto Jaime. When we fled, we were joined by some neighbors. There were about 40 women and children, but just one other man and myself.

One of the ladies that was caught started to cry and the soldiers said: "What are you crying about?" And she said, "I know that the soldiers are going to kill my son." The soldier said: "No, we are no bad people. It is the Contras who are the bad ones."

At that time the soldiers told the women to go home and not to worry and they went back down across the river. They took us to the third farm. We crossed through two farms and came to the third one belonging to a man named Miguel Fernandez. They took us to a little opening and told us to take off our clothes. They took off our clothes and replaced our own clothes with military clothes. At that point they began to knock us to the ground and began hitting us to different parts of our bodies until we were practically unconscious.

Then the soldiers asked us: "Have you ever seen the famous Sombreristas - the Little Hats?" We said that we have never heard of the "Little Hats" and this group of soldiers said: "Well, for your information we are those famous "Little Hats."

Then they began asking us questions -- "What is your name?" My friend said: "My name is Chrisanto Jaime." and they said: "What is your name and I said Prudencio Baltodano," and the soldiers said: "Oh, you're the one." He said to me that I was on their list. "You are an evangelical pastor, preacher. You are one of the ones that go around convincing the peasants to join the Contras."

This was an accusation that was not based in fact, not true. I was not trying to convince anyone to join with the Contras. The only kind of conquest that I was attempting to make was to conquer people to convince them to come over to God and Christ and certainly not over to the Contras. The soldiers said to me: "Pastors and preachers are our enemies. We do not believe in God. In case you're interested, and for your information, we are Communist." Then he introduced me to one of his colleagues and said: "This is God."

Then he said to me: "Start to pray and see if your God will save you." Then he ordered another soldier to take me up to a hill. They took me into a wooded area about 10 meters (30 feet) away. One guy said to another: "Tie him up." So they tied my hands behind my back to a tree. When the one had finished tying my hands to the tree, he hit me with the butt of his weapon. Still I have the scar over here.

Then he took a bayonet out of his belt and he hit me in the jaw with it. The soldier tried to put the bayonet on the end of his rifle, but he was not able to get it in, so he threw the rifle down and took the bayonet, took me by the hair and cut one ear off and then the other, as you can see. The one that had been doing this said to one of his colleagues: "Shall I go ahead and shoot him?" The other one said: "No, it's not worth wasting a bullet on a so-and-so like that. Let him die suffering. Anyway, it won't take him long to bleed to death. That's because I cut his jugular vein."

It was at that point that I fainted and didn't hear anymore voices or anything else. That was sort of the end of it because

although I was feeling a great deal of pain at that point, I fainted and didn't feel anything. This all happened around 3 in the afternoon. When I recovered consciousness, it was about 5 pm. I was still at the same tree and there was a puddle of coagulated blood there. I began to try to move and try to see if I could get loose, as I was of course still tied to the tree. And with God's help I was able to loose those bonds. I walked a bit; I saw a truck and I changed my mind and went back to the jungle, the woods. I walked through one night and the next day and I fainted again.

It was then I realized I had worms both in my ear and in the wound I had in my forehead. Then the next day I started out very early and finally got back -- walking from 5 in the morning to 4 that afternoon. I finally reached the property of the man named Chrisanto Jaime. I found him there in his garden. He took care of my wound, treated the worms, the infection in both my ear and forehead. At that point two men came along looking for a family who turned out to be member of ARDE. Upon seeing me there they said: "What are you doing? How can you stay there without any treatment -- you will die. Let us take you to where you can be helped." I said that I couldn't; that if I would walk, I would faint.

As I think you can all realize, this is not an isolated case. This is one of many which has occurred in Nicaragua and even in this same area of mine, El Tendido.. I know of one case of a man named Miguel Flores who was a pastor of the Central American Evangelical Mission. I worked with him as the first deacon of his church. He was taken, tied up, his nose cut off, his eyes put out, his face was cut up, his ears were cut off, and he was tied and shackled.

This was not the only case. More people have died. Mostly me, although there were some women. There was a total of 59 in all.

Going back to when I was being helped by the people from ARDE, they said that they would give me a day to see if I felt any better. They came back the next day and took me out to a place called La Gloria. They told me that my family had been evacuated from El Tendido also and taken to La Gloria. In Tendido all the houses were burned, they were all reduced to ashes by the Sandinistas.

From La Gloria we walked to the San Juan river. This took 14 days of walking through the jungle. There, at the San Juan river, there were some reporters from Costa Rica -- San Jose, interviewed me and some doctors arrived and took me to San Jose, Costa Rica. Those doctors asked me whether I could go to the United States to testify and I said yes I would be willing. I had made a promist to God to testify before God and man to what had happened to me.
THANK YOU.

MRS. WHITTLESEY: Thank you Mr. Baltodano and also Stephanie Von Rickensburg for the excellent translation.

The East Coast region of Nicaragua has long been physically, historically, and culturally isolated from the country's mainstream. The population is primarily Indian, mostly Miskito, and Black. These groups are traditionally religious -- Moravian, Roman Catholic, and Church of God. Conservative in manner and keenly proud of their ethnic uniqueness. They were allowed relative autonomy even under former Nicaraguan dictator, Anastasio Somoza.

Despite Miskito support for the Sandinistas against Somoza, the Nicaraguan government in 1979 embarked on a program to, as they call it, rescue the Atlantic Coast. Cuban and Nicaraguan personnel began to flood into the area. The net effect of this program, according to the human rights group, Freedom House, is to: "Deprive them of their social and cultural identity, and identity based on a communal lifestyle, a democratically based selection of leadership, and a passable way of life centered on their churches."

Almost immediately the Indians' long cherished autonomy began to fade away. Their traditional and freely elected leaders were replaced with Sandinista appointed authorities. MANY WERE Cuban, most were strangers. The lives of the Indians were redrawn along Marxist lines.

From the outset, the triumphant Sandinistas experienced difficulties bringing the Indians under their domination. Demonstrations, some turning violent, broke out along the East Coast as Indians and Blacks protested the presence of Cuban security force advisors and teachers in 1980.

Beginning in 1981, thousands of Indians were evacuated from communities in an attempt to move the entire Indian population to areas under close governmental control. The reason given for this was the danger of attacks by anti-Sandinista forces; however, the evacuations began before Contra activity along the border with Honduras began in earnest.

Briefly stated, the Sandinistas have implemented a policy of Indian ethnocide. One-fourth of the coast's 165,000 Indians are either in relocation camps or refugee camps. One-half of Miskito and Sumo villages have been destroyed.

One thousand Indian civilians are in prison, missing, or dead. Indian rights to self-government, land and resources have been abolished. Subsistence cultivation -- fishing and hunting -- are strictly controlled to the point of non-existence in many areas and access to staple foods are so limited that hunger is an everyday problem and starvation a real possibility.

Many villages have had no medicine or doctors for over two years. Freedom of movement is denied or severely restricted, and in many areas, canoes, the people's major means of transport, have been confiscated or their use prohibited.

More than 35 communities have suffered massive Sandinista military invasions, during which innocent civilians are subjected to arbitrary arrests, killings, interrogations, tortures, rapes, theft, and destruction of property. The Sandinistas tried to force the people to divulge the location of the Indian secret base camps and to terrorize the villagers so that they will not support or join the military resistance.

The Miskitos have not accepted this situation. And with us this morning we have one of the leaders of the Indian group, Wycliffe Diego. He is co-founder of Alpromiso, an Indian organization formed in 1973 to protect Indian autonomy and tribal land from the Somoza regime. After the Sandinistas came to power, he coordinated Misurasata, a creation of the Sandinista government to foster cooperation between the Indians and the regime.

Mr. Diego is now the coordinator of the political commission of Misura, an organization comprising the Miskito, Suma, and Rama Indian tribes in opposition to the Sandinista regime. Will you kindly welcome to our podium today, Mr. Wycliffe Diego. Mr. Diego will be assisted by Donald Barnes from the State Department.

MR. DIEGO: First of all, I would like to greet all of you on behalf of our organization of the Miskitos, Sumos, and Ramas and Drumans. At the present time, this current junction of world history -- not enough is known about the Communist system throughout the world. It's not something that would surprise you, but we're always trying to bring out more information about this problem of Communists in Nicaragua.

The Moravian church came into Nicaragua on the 17th of March in 1849. Sixty percent of the Moravian church population was composed of Miskitos, Blacks, Ramas, and Sumos Indians. Twenty-five percent of this same population are Roman Catholic. The rest belong either to the Church of God or are Baptists, Anglicans, Adventists, or belong to some other denomination.

When the Moravian missionaries came to Nicaragua in 1849, they came bearing the Word of God, bearing the message to the people -- the message of love. They not only brought with them the Word of God, but they also brought with them the means of educating the people and medical care. The roots of the Moravian church are in Germany.

The father was called Juan Busch. The Moravian church has been in existence for over 500 years. In 1937, the Moravian church in Nicaragua built a Bible Institute in Bilwaskarma and several pastors graduated from the Institute. And the total number of pastors that the Moravian church has in my country is 127. The Moravian church has a total of 128 individual churches along the Atlantic coast.

They had two large schools, one in Bluefields and one in Puerto Cabezas. They built two large hospitals, one in Puerto

Cabezas and one in Bilwaskarma. They also built several small clinics, smaller communities. In 1964, Tomas Borge came into the Rio Coco area; he went into the Moravian church in Raiti. He came in like a sheep, speaking well of church work, and the Indians believed the word spoken by Tomas Borge. And in the beginning of 1964 the Indians gave their support to the revolution.

Because the Indians have been suffering for several years, under the oppression of the government of Nicaragua, and the Indians have been awaiting a vision to attain progress in the future. But then after the 1979 revolution, for the first two months, the representatives of the Sandinista government worked hand in hand with the Indians.

In 1981, The Sandinistas burned 5,000 dwellings in Rio Coco, and 69 communities. They burned 57 churches. They are at the present time using several of these churches as local headquarters.

The Bilwaskarma, which is such a large institute, is now a barracks. The same thing happened with the rest of the churches. They killed 3 Moravian pastors, Olfilario Yutan, Mario Peralta, and Pudi Simons. They arrested eight pastors: Maurice Vidaurr, Efrain Omier, Santos Cleban, Yurintin Toledo, Sanalio Patron, Abel Flores, Serminio Nicho, Iginio Morazan, Pedro Bello, Angel Bello, Adrian Pasquier, and Finida Wilson. In December of 1983, they announced their famous amnesty, but this did not help these pastors at all. They tortured them in several ways. And they also killed two Roman Catholic pastors -- Roberto Peralta and Fernando Justiniano.

A total of twenty-six Moravian pastors have fled to Honduras refugee camps. Among the twenty-six Miskitos and Sumos include: Silvio Diaz, Mullins Tilleth, Genaro Bell, Nabuth Zacarias, Alberto Fraiss, Arnaldo Pedro, Ignacio Macdeth, Celso Perez, Donald Peralta, Milano Enriques, Daniel Gonzalez and Rodolfo Rivera.

There is a great deal of pressure on the Moravian church pastors in Nicaragua. They are not really free to preach their sermons as they would like. Because of the military control and pressure, not only on the Moravian churches, but on the other evangelical denominations, as well as the Catholic churches.

Starting six months ago, the pastors have to present their sermons to the commadantes before they can deliver their sermons. At the present time, however, they have been allowed a certain amount of freedom to preach the Gospel. Not only that, but in my country, Nicaragua, the military exert great control over all of the people, particularly in the area of Zelaya. The Indians are not allowed to work their fields in the mountains to sow their crops, they are not allowed to fish, they are not allowed to hunt, and so on a daily basis we see young people and children and old people dying of hunger.

This is not only happening in Nicaragua. This also happening in the refugee camps in the Honduras and Costa Rica. And the

children are dying daily because of hunger and lack of medicine. At the present time, there are some 20,000 Miskito Indians that have sought refuge in Honduras and another 6,000 or 7,000 in Costa Rica.

And there are some 3,000 to 4,000 Indians that have either got killed or otherwise disappeared. We have searched for them in the jails and were not able to find them. At the present time, a large number of them are in jail or in concentration camps located in Nicaragua, in the Zelaya, and in the Pacific areas.

And so we appealed to a number of government organizations and other organizations throughout the world that are devoted to the defense of human rights, organizations that speak of human rights. We said, "Where were you when the human rights of Indians are concerned?"

In 1979, when the Sandinistas came to power, they promised the countries throughout the world that they were going to defend and protect human rights. But since the time that they have been in power, they have been in constant violation of the human rights of the Indians. And so we ask that these organizations provide us with moral support because what will happen if they do not -- within ten or fifteen years, all of the Miskito, Suma and Rama Indians will disappear from the face of the earth.

And that will be the fault of all of these organizations that talk so much about human rights. Throughout the world now, we find that people don't want to hear the voice of the Nicaraguan, to find out what is going on in our country. This is the end of our presentation, I will be happy to answer -- to try to answer -- any questions you may have.

MRS WHITTLESEY: Thank you Mr. Diego and Mr. Barnes.

Our next speaker is Humberto Belli. He is a former Marxist and collaborator with the Sandinistas who became a convert to Christianity in 1977. He was also editorial page Editor of La Prensa, Nicaragua's only remaining independent newspaper.

He left Nicaragua in April of 1982, after the imposition of total prior censorship by the Sandinista regime. Mr. Belli has established an educational center called La Puebla Institute, which is formulating a Christian response to problems of social change and seeking to counter the so-called Liberation Theology. He is the author of the recently-published book, Christians Under Fire. For any of you who would like copies of this book, it is available from Mr. Belli. Please join me in welcoming to this podium, this morning, Humberto Belli.

MR. BELLI: I want to begin with the last remarks that Mr. Diego made. He said that he was referring to the fact that many people

in the world don't seem to care very much to what is going on in Nicaragua, what is effecting the Nicaraguan Christians.

One of the most frustrating experiences for me, personally, was that when I came to the United States, wishing to find a sympathetic audience -- given that this is mostly a Christian country -- I would find that especially among Christian groups, sympathies were toward the Sandinistas, especially on some sectors of the clergy.

This reminds me of a statement presented by a Cuban poet who had spent 22 years of imprisonment in Castro's Cuba, Armando Valladares. He said during those years: "with the purpose of forcing us to abandon our religious beliefs and to demoralize us -- the Cuban Communist indoctrinators repeatedly used the statements of support for Castro's revolution made by certain representatives of American Christian churches.

"Every time that a pamphlet was published in the United States -- every time that a clergyman would write an article in support of Fidel Castro's dictatorship, a translation would reach us and that was worse for the Christian political prisoners than the beatings or the hunger. While we waited for the embrace of solidarity from our brothers in Christ, incomprehensively to us. those who were embraced were our tormentors."

This is taking place again. If we review a good deal of the Christian literature -- nowadays written in this country -- we find again that those who are being embraced are our tormentors of many Nicaraguan Christians. The Nicaraguan Christians were victimized by these policies -- are not given a hearing -- they are portrayed as conservatives, reactionaries, or perhaps as agents of the CIA, just echoing the same accusations of the Sandinistas.

This concern was recently voiced by the bishops in Nicaragua, in their speech, of the Holy Week. They said one, albeit a small sector of our church, has abandoned ecclesiastical unity and has surrendered to the tenets of a materialistic ideology. These sectors sow confusion inside and outside Nicaragua through a campaign extolling its own ideas and defaming the legitimate pastors and the faithful who follow them.

Censorship of the media make it impossible to clarify the positions and offer other points of view.

So there is an alliance, I would say, between the Sandinistas and the so-called revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua, who are those Christians who have embraced Marxist Liberation theology as their new Gospel and some groups outside Nicaragua.

These revolutionary Christians in Nicaragua constantly organize tours. They invite American visitors, they give them very well-prepared tours around the country, they interview all the members of this so-called People's Church of Revolutionary

Christians, and they come back to the United States saying as I heard a priest in Lansing, Michigan, that the kingdom of God had arrived in Nicaragua.

I think that one of the best weapons of the Sandinistas to legitimize their repression on the Nicaraguan Christians has been the complicity of these Christians around the world. And I say, that in the name of God, this has to stop. It is a sign against truth and it is helping to oppress Christians who like these fellow members have suffered either on their own flesh the brutality of the Sandinista regime.

But it is a brutality about which no media -- very seldom newspaper or newsmen want to talk about it. It is embarrassing to talk about violation of human rights committed by left wing regimes. It is very nice and it is encouraging, sophisticated and elegant to talk about violations of human rights committed by the right, by the Salvadorans and by the Guatemalans. But when it comes to Nicaragua, there is silence or complicity. I just want to give you two short statements from the Nicaraguan bishop, that were published, although not openly published; they have no access to the media -- even the homilies and sermons of the bishop have to be censored in order to be broadcasted.

However, just recently I read a letter by the Center of Concern here in Washington, written by a Jesuit priest claiming that there was no religious persecution in Nicaragua. The bishops don't have access to the mass media, they have to submit, as I said, their sermons or homilies to censorship.

Moravian pastors have been arrested, Christian lay leaders are being killed. It is true that you can go to Nicaragua and you can go to Mass; you can buy a Bible on the street. But to say in that fact that there is religious freedom, is not to be able to see the typical religious persecution that Communists usually develop.

No Communist country acknowledged that it persecutes Christians. When they do repress a Christian, they claim they are doing it without political reasons. They keep some churches open, but underneath they are developing policies aimed to undermine the churches, to destroy the leadership of the churches, in order to submit them to a state power -- and eventually eradicate religious belief.

But getting back to the document of the bishops. The one was published in November 9, by Monsignor Pedro Vilchez, the Bishop of Jinotega in Northern Nicaragua. He sent a letter to a Sandinista leader -- pointed out the following events: People in the countryside escape just by knowing the Sandinistas or the Compas are coming, for they are afraid of the tortures, the violations, and the death for the "great crime" of attempting against the security of the estate. Usually they sent to jail, members of our pastoral teams -- a member of Catholic action.

They also report the burning down of several chapels and churches in the peasant areas. Mentioned how the Sandinistas had been developing a net of spy networks, in order to keep track of all Christian leaders, of all members of all denominations. Now there is another letter also published by Monsignor Pablo Antonio Vega, who is the President of Nicaraguan Bishops Conference, ... I do not know if these people have any credibility or not -- before the downfall of Somoza they were regarded as heroes by the Sandinistas.

After the triumph of the revolution, when they kept denouncing the violations of human rights, because they feel they used double standards, they were blamed as reactionaries and enemies of the people. Yet, I feel that nobody can question the credibility of Monsignor Vega. And he says, when he refers to the murder of three Christian leaders by the end of 1983 in Nicaragua.

The first is the case of Alphonso Galliano from the peasant region of Las Pauas. He had been threatened with death on several occasions, and then one day a group of burglars appeared in his house. They didn't steal anything, but killed him. A few times later, we saw this so-called burglar as a member of the Popular militia going around. Another case -- the case of Daniel Sierra Ocon. He was captured, accused of anti-revolutionary activities, something that was never proved. After saying that he was going to be freed, his wife was told that he committed suicide.

Another case: Yamilet Sequelra de Lorio. She was pressured into becoming a member of the State Security by the Sandinistas. She and her husband refused. Some days later their bodies were found on the mountains nearby with clear signals of torture and violent mutilations.

These are endless stories. The very sad aspect of this is the fact that these stories are not known or the fact that so many people don't want to listen to them. I thank you very much for your attention, because you have listened to me.

QUESTIONS:

General Superintendent of the United States Pentacostal Church International and Prudencio was one of our pastors. We've lost two other churches -- we don't know what has happened to them. In this persecution that has assailed, these two churches have been completely eradicated and we can't find any of them. This is the first contact that we've had when we heard that Prudencio was here. We would do anything to take care of his family, while he is here, anything he wishes, or wants.

(Emotional embrace with Prudencio.) Let me give you this ...

MRS. WHITTLESEY: Thank you very much for being here and your generous offer.

MARLIN MADDOUX WITH INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN MEDIA: Mr. Belli, in talking about the Liberation Theology, I would like to address a question to Mrs. Macias. Do you, or some of the people you knew the several years that you were involved in the revolution against Somoza, I'm sure you discussed these issues quite a bit as the years went by, I'm having some difficulty in understanding how there might have been some compromises in faith -- in embracing Liberation Theology -- while the revolution was embryonic -- and then the turning of the revolution towards Marxism -- how could it have come as a surprise? Was there an area somewhere that you made an intellectual compromise to embrace some areas and then realize that you've made a mistake?

GERALDINE MACIAS: First of all, the FSLN, the Sandinista Liberation Front, didn't become Marxist; it had been from its origin -- always known to be a Marxist-Leninist group.

Church people, I don't think, study politics sufficiently. I certainly don't think my training emphasized political analysis, and so when you talk about Liberation Theology, that was presented as some type of Bible Study -- emphasizing an option for the poor. What happens, I think is that the Marxists realized that -- Fidel Castro realized this a long time ago -- is that they can infiltrate the churches or co-opt on what the churches are going; especially by using the same language the church does -- they can confuse Christians very easily because Christians are not trained in politics and also most Christians tend to feel that other people have good intentions. So what happened in Nicaragua was two things. Some priests, especially the Cardenal brothers, obviously became Marxist-Leninists (they are self-confessed Marxist-Leninists).

Others have come to the belief that somehow Marxist-Leninism is somehow compatible with Christianity. That they have some of the same long-term goals. But that does not mean that all of them are that way.

You can't say that there is a certain number of people that think that way, but there has been a consistent protest about the basic difference between Marxist-Leninism and the Christianity. There has been constant comments from Bishop Obando against Armed Struggle as the only alternative against totalitarian Marxism. There is a struggle going on as to what has happened. I think that for one thing the Sandinista FSLN kept the arms and disarmed the other groups and began to eliminate them systematically. After say, a honeymoon period of a year or so. And church people don't want to acknowledge that. I don't think that it's a theological reason; it's very personal.

They got on a bandwagon in favor of revolution. They have taken these young FSLN heroes as heroes and they don't want to admit that they have made a mistake. My husband can say -- it was a tactical error to align themselves in any way at all with the FSLN. I don't find the same humility amongst Christians in Nicaragua.

FATHER BOB BERRY: I'm a Dominican priest (or Theologian). To members of the panel, I am curious that you reported that there were two Catholic priests killed, given the supposedly cordial relationship that developed between the FSLN and the Catholic Church. What were the circumstances of their deaths, being this is the first I've heard of this?

MR. DIEGO: The Miskito pastors -- Catholic pastors. They work in small communities far from Bluefields and Managua. And many people don't know what's going on on the Mosquita coast. Even the pastors, Reverends, and the Fathers themselves don't know. And I think it's up to the Catholic priests to investigate what's happening to their pastors, their representatives. And apparently they don't know who are Roberto Pilato and Fernando Justiniano. But they are Roman Catholic pastors.

MRS. WHITTLESEY: Mr. Belli would also like to comment on that question.

MR. BELLI: Father Berry, did you say that there are friendly (cordial) relationships between the Catholics and the FSLN?

FATHER BERRY: The original policy statement said the Catholic church was to be treated cordially.

MR. BELLI: I thought that he was implying that there was friendly relationships within the Catholic church and the FSLN, which is not the case. I was surprised by that remark, but it was my misunderstanding.

ROBERT REILLY: If I could refer to what that original reference was to the 72-hour document in which appearance of cordial relations would be maintained by the FSLN, while in fact, what they would be doing is hurting the church.

FATHER RUEDA: My name is Enrique Rueda; I am a Catholic priest. I work in the diocese of Arlington, Virginia, and I was much moved by Mr. Belli's reading of a poem by Armando Valladarez. About 4-5 years ago, when Mr. Valladarez was still in prison, I did go to the United States Catholic Conference looking for support in getting Mr. Valladarez out of jail; at that time I was Vice-Chairman of the Cuban Human Rights Commission and I am afraid that I was turned down.

I have a question for Mr. Belli and Mrs. Macias: The United States Catholic Conference and many Catholic dioceses have units who are supposed to be involved with the promotion of human rights and justice and peace. Have you received any support either by the United States Catholic Conference or from any Catholic dioceses against the violations of human rights and religious persecution of the church in Nicaragua? Have you detected any support for the Nicaraguan bishops and the Nicaraguan Conference of Bishops as part of the American hierarchy?

MR. BELLI: I think that we have with us Mr. Tom Quigley who might tell about the -- if there is any known support here. I have met with several bishops. Usually I have a very receptive meeting and I have been pleased by their interest in learning about the situation of Nicaragua. In all fairness it should be said that the United States Bishops Conference -- the President of the United States Bishops Conference -- Monsignor Roach (I am afraid I do not pronounce it well) after the Sandinistas tried to villify Father Carballo, the Assistant of the Archbishop of Managua presented him naked on television, on all the Sandinista newspapers, saying that he had been caught in an affair with a woman, which happened to be a setup.

Monsignor Roach issued a very strong statement criticizing this flagrant violation of human rights. But I really like to hear more statements of this kind. When the Holy Father was heckled and mobbed in Nicaragua there was a big silence in the United States among most Christian groups both Catholic and Protestant and I think that it is time to speak otherwise, those who refrain from speaking up will lose all their credibility. Because the facts are crystal clear today.

MRS. MACIAS: The answer is NO. There has been no interest, no assistance, no concern. It's just a blank area. It's very ironic, I think, even more for myself than for my husband. My husband worked for a private institute that was financed basically by German Bishops and Canadian Bishops. All of my work was financed by Catholic Relief and World Relief Methodist church groups. None of them have ever asked either of us to give a talk or an explanation of why we are now in the United States.

QUESTION: First, I want to thank Mrs. Whittlesey for bringing us these Outreach programs to the public. My question is to Mrs. Macias and to Mr. Belli. It is a known fact concerning us 29 million Catholics that we have been in a holocaust with the media as anti-Catholicism in this country. Do you feel, Mrs. Macias, that this anti-Catholicism by some of these groups in the United States has been carried on to Nicaragua and to the other 23 Spanish countries in order to destroy Christianity in those 23 countries and the United States, as a Christian country, and how long since you were there, would you feel that this was infiltration coming in?

MRS. MACIAS: I think it's definitely; Marxist-Leninism will destroy religion eventually because it prevents freedom of thought and freedom of organization of any religion -- not just Catholicism. But I think that what the Sandinistas have said themselves -- they see that they have to do it cautiously because the Catholic church is a major force in these countries.

So what they have attempted to do is in many ways -- is besides the attacks on certain religious leaders -- is to form what they called the Revolutionary Church, which is a state-controlled party-controlled church. I think we have to be aware of the fact

that we aren't always going to find direct persecution of the church as much as formation of a parallel church that they can manage and that to me is more dangerous in many ways than direct persecution because people don't always acknowledge the danger of that and what it really is.

It's been going on for a long time, since; basically, I've been in Latin America since 1969, before that time Liberation Theology was also being pushed -- which has a lot of Marxism in it and people were forming Christians for Socialism and promoting Liberation Theology in all the rest of this movement.

SARA MCQUENTIN (News Service): I think it's time we tell you people that the press have been trying for a year to get into these White House Outreach meetings. We were trying to find out what meetings were being held, trying to get a chance to attend them and cover them and we've been denied it until suddenly there is a change. Thank God for the change. I am delighted.

(APPLAUSE)

We've never been allowed in here before.

MRS. WHITTLESEY: We're delighted that you are here and showing interest. We have had the press invited to some meetings prior to this and there has been a limited turnout.

NEGATIVE COMMENTS:

MRS. WHITTLESEY: Sorry about that, but unfortunately the security precautions are the way they are because of the condition our country is in today.

ISRAEL VALDEZ: My name is Israel Valdez, and I have a question for Mrs. Macias. At the very beginning you indicated that there were some 20 groups that supported the Sandinistas.

MRS. MACIAS: Can I clarify that -- they didn't support the Sandinistas, the Sandinistas were three of those groups. And they were all considered Sandinistas in a very general sense.

MR. VALDEZ: Were any of those groups Christian groups and what has happened to the rest of them, where are they now?

MRS. MACIAS: Well of course the Social Christian Party, the Popular-Social Christian Party were definitely Christian parties by their names. My husband was president of the Popular-Social Christian Party; he is now in exile. There is now a Social-Christian Alliance in exile in Costa Rica. Many of their principal leaders have left the country.

The activists within the country are no longer able to move freely or be activists. They have been threatened, many of them have been jailed. Also within that Alliance there were Christian Sandinista Commandos, which were armed groups. Coming out of some

of the Christian parties. They have all been disarmed (immediately) and their command posts taken away in July 1979. Many of those people by 1981 had started to rearm and to form groups to fight against the present government.

Amongst those 20 parties there were three that were FSLN tendencies that split up. And there was another Marxist party called the Socialist Party, and, of course, the Communist Party. But all of those groups that were not FSLN have felt effects of oppression, in fact, even one, the Milpas, which were a Marxist Maoists were taken out of their houses one night and all were killed. The newspaper was destroyed also-- taken away from them. So there has been a constant oppression against anyone who is not FSLN, especially against the persons who are not Marxists, but also against Marxists who are not of the line of the FSLN.

KAREN MCKAY (Committee for a Free Afghanistan): At an earlier Outreach program the liquidation of the small Jewish community in Nicaragua was documented here in this room, and there is indication that a very strong PLO/Khoemeni/Iranian Involvement in Nicaragua. Could some of your panelists address that facet of it?

MRS. WHITTLESEY: I don't think any of these particular panelists would feel comfortable addressing that narrow subject at this time. However, we do have information that we would be happy to provide to you when we have another meeting on that subject again.

MRS. MACIAS: It's just that most of us don't have much contact with the PLO in Nicaragua because their contacts are with the FSLN, but that goes way back. There was a Nicaraguan called Patricio Arguello, who was killed several years ago in London airport attempting to kidnap an airplane. He was trained by the PLO. I also know personally many of them, people in the FSLN who were trained in Libya and by the PLO overseas. So there is a long historical contact with them, which is now much more open.

PATRICIO MUTIEL: I'm a Nicaraguan refugee, now working for the Nicaraguan Development Council. My question is open to the panel with regards to the religious context in which the other religious groups are able to practice. For instance, I heard more about the Christian groups -- they were repressed to practice in Nicaragua. I remember in my early years, my childhood in Nicaragua, there were other nationalities -- Jewish groups, Moslem practitioners and so forth. Are they being allowed, are they being protected to practice freely or are they part of the whole repression that you are speaking of today?

MR. BELLI: I will say that repression against Christian groups is very selective to some extent. Some groups are not harassed or very little harassment. Others are very much so. It has been that those communities or religious denominations, which are weaker or which are located in the most remote region of the country where there is no press coverage -- they get the harshest kind of repression.

As it had been with the Moravians, and with some Protestant groups, even in Managua in 1982. And the Jewish community is one of the weak, small groups which was practically obliterated. They had their synagogue taken over and most Jews were expelled from the country. As a propaganda measure, recently the Sandinistas said that the Jewish could practice their faith in Nicaragua, but there were no longer Jews to do it.

However, I would say that there is no repression against those sections of the Christian churches, both Protestant and Catholic, who are fully Sandinistas, who support the government as it is in the case in all Communist regimes -- for instance in Czechoslovakia where there are two churches: Let's say the Byzantaries group which is a pro-state church, with the full support of the state and then the Catholic church. And it is the Byzantaries church, the one who has the access to the media, the one who can ordain priests, etc.

And the same thing is developing in Nicaragua. The so-called Reactionary Church, which is the non-Sandinista church, is the one which insists it is self-deprived of the media, under harassment. Where the other church -- the Revolutionary Church -- the Sandinista one gets all the facilities.

MRS. WHITTLESEY: Is Mr. Jose Esteban Gonzalez here? I'm sure he could respond to some of these questions, since Mr. Gonzalez is also a Nicaraguan and was present at another briefing this week that (on Wednesday, which took place, which was also opened to the press). Mr. Gonzalez founded the Permanent Commission on Human Rights in Nicaragua in April 1977. He served as its national coordinator during both the Somoza and the Sandinista regime. During the Somoza regime, Mr. Gonzalez defended leader, Tomas Borge.

In August of 1978, the Sandinistas endorsed the commission as the official Human Rights Commission of Nicaragua. However, in May of 1982, Mr. Gonzalez was sentenced in absentia to 16 years in jail, 2 years of forced labor, and 5 years of compulsory surveillance. He presently lives in exile and heads a Nicaraguan Committee on Human Rights based in Costa Rica. Mr. Gonzalez, would you like to respond to that question?

MR. GONZALEZ: We don't have specific information about direct persecution against the Jewish community in Nicaragua. We only have the results of an attitude from the government. Their synagogue in Managua was occupied by the Sandinistas and was handed to a group of young activists of the Sandinistas and was all painted with insults against the Jewish people and the Jewish position. Also, there are practically no Jewish left in Nicaragua. I think that the Jewish, themselves, by their attitude and practical position are responding to the question.

MR. REILLY: You might notice in the White House Digest (in your packet) on the persecution of religious groups in Nicaragua there

is reference to what has happened to the Jewish community there. We also have separately available a White House Digest on the relationship between the PLO and the Sandinistas, tracing it back to the early 1970's when some of the Sandinistas fought with the PLO in Jordan against King Hussein. If you would like a copy of that, please contact our office afterwards.

DeBreis--Arlington, VA--minister of Assembly of God Church there, I just wanted to ask one question. In regards to the current state of the government there in Nicaragua as to whether there are any forces or any voices of moderation inside the government there today that are sitting there and able to make some kind of sense out of the madness which appears to be reigning in Nicaragua today? And just to add on to that, could the very present be likened on to the state of what it was like when Castro was coming to power in Cuba?

MRS. MACIAS: The principle voice that I respect in Nicaragua is of Archbishop Obando. The Episcopal conference, which has from the very beginning, tried a real balancing act even before insurrection. Obando was very much trying to avoid armed conflict.

He consistently said that he was trying to avoid killing each other and in his most recent pastoral letter, which asks foreign negotiations to go on with the armed rebel groups is one more attempt to avoid further bloodshed. So I have a great deal of respect for Obando and what he says and his message of trying to work for peaceful settlement.

As far as what's happening there, I think you have to read what the Sandinistas say they are and they have said in their historical document when they were founded back in 1961, that they are Marxist-Leninist, that they are anti-U.S. in their policies, and their alignment with the Soviet bloc is very evident, especially since 1980 onward.

You have to know what they are in order to deal with them and in order to understand why we have problems with them and why we can't stay in our own country to deal with them--you have to understand who they are and what they say they are. Obando understands that, I think he knows that they are not to be trusted, that they've broken every agreement they've made internally or externally since 1979, and that our biggest problem is with the FSLN, who is a Marxist-Leninist concerned group and very, very difficult to believe.

MR. BELLI: I think that the historic experience is that whenever a moderate person has tried to promote a different position in the Nicaraguan government he has been isolated, he has been accused of being pro-American, pro-Somozan, and anti-revolutionary. You have a whole list of people of very distinguished reliable people. For example Arturo Cruz, the ambassador for the Sandinistas here in the United States; a member of the Junta, Mr. Ravelo, Mrs. Chamorro, several ambassadors of the Sandinistas in Geneva. For example, Mrs. Pasquier who could quote 20-30 names. And I think that the

best or the worst enemies of the Sandinistas are the people who are not telling them the truth or the people who are backing the present attitude, and their best friends would be we, who are trying to recall to them their original commitments, and also all the governments in the democratic countries who are trying to help the Nicaraguan people to find a path of democracy and peace (are the best friend of the Sandinistas). In the fact that they are rejected by the Sandinistas. They do not want any help.

NEXT QUESTION: (INAUDIBLE)-----

.....something about the "media likes to dramatize"..... but in this case.....(inaudible).....it's so in fashion to criticize the government of El Salvador of every little thing that happened. What can we do to animate the media to dramatize what is really happening, what can we do?

MR. BELLI: Just two things have occurred to me: One would be that it is very important people are well-informed about what is going on in Nicaragua and in Central America. The other part is that I think that it is necessary effort for Christians in the United States who are concerned about what is going on and who knows the truth to bombard their parishes, their bishops, their clergy, the media with letters asking them to pronounce themselves in some direction--or asking the media why they are not covering this on such and such views--let their voice be heard. Correspondence may be one of the means; maybe we can devise another.

DIEGO ABICH: I'm a director of "Of Human Rights". My question is directed to Mr. Belli. During 1982 hearings were conducted on religious persecution as a violation of human rights. You testified during those hearings.

Now I noticed that U. S. Catholic Conference, Father Hehir and Mr. Quigley testified during those hearings. Now Father Hehir said that religious freedom is not only a basic human right, but it has to be viewed in the context of the ability of the Church to function in a social and corporate way. I was glad for your testimony.

My question is this: I noticed that the conference treated the human violations in Nicaragua very briefly. My question is this: What can you do and what can we do to convince the U. S. Catholic Conference here in the States that these violations exist in Nicaragua? And the second question is: Were you satisfied with the average responses and their demonstration of human rights violations of Nicaragua?

MR. BELLI: I did not get the last part.

MR. ABICH: Were you satisfied with the U. S. Catholic Conference response on violations of human rights in Nicaragua and if not, what can you do or what can we do to convince them that the Church and the Christians and other religious groups in Nicaragua are suffering religious persecution?

MR. BELLI: Well, as I said before, I was very satisfied when I heard about the statement from Monsignor Roach. I would say that I am waiting and praying that more support will be forthcoming from the U.S. Catholic Bishops and from the U. S. Protestant groups, where Christians are concerned. I do what I can -- I am writing. I am publicizing this book reporting the original documentation about violations of human rights. There might be some time for people to begin to react. I think we should get the influx of people and nation toward them.

ROBERT REILLY: I think I might mention just as a postscript to Mr. Belli's answer that the White House has sent every Catholic bishop in the country a copy of the White House Digest on persecution of Christian groups in Nicaragua along with the interview with Miguel Bolanos on subversion of the Church. And the correspondence from the bishops in response to that has so far been extremely favorable.

DON SHANNON--LOS ANGELES TIMES: One of the charges the Sandinistas make most frequently and with some effect in this country is that ARDE, of the counter-revolutionary force, dominated by ex-Somoza national guard. How wide is that first perception? I noticed that Mr. Diego had mentioned that he had been picked up by an ARDE patrol. How wide is that perception among people in

INTERRUPTED BY MRS. MACIAS: You must have the groups mixed up. It's the FDN that's accused of being....

MR. SHANNON: Oh, I'm sorry. ARDE is Eden Pastora. ARDE is supposed to be okay.

(REACTION FROM THE GROUP)

MR. SHANNON CONTINUES: On the other side, how much of this is felt by people in Nicaragua to be true. When the Sandinista government says this, is this the generally support of the people inside the country or how do they feel about it?

MR. GONZALEZ: I think that to keep the Somoza alive is very bad service to the Sandinistas that they are doing to the Nicaraguan country. Somoza is dead. Somocismo is not anymore possible from the social or political viewpoint in Nicaragua. And I may say that the main enemies of Somoza now are those who were Somozas before because Somoza was such a failure that they do not want to hear from him anymore.

If you want to find the Somocistas you go to the Sandinista government and you go to Sandinista Junta. You have a Sergio Ramirez, who was a writer, who used to publish praise of Somoza in well-known magazine in Nicaragua. You have to go and see their curriculum of several of the ministers who were part of the most hard capitalistic establishment in Nicaragua.

I may mention for example Joaquin Cuadra, who is the father of a Comandante, the father-in-law of another Comandante--two Comandantes--and who is a person who was responsible for the Economic exploitation in Nicaragua. There the fight of the Nicaraguan

people to be liberated has no relation whatsoever with any Somozian interest.

DON SHANNON--CANNOT GET NAMES, LOCATIONS--(INAUDIBLE). I was asking how successful is this inside the country? When the Sandinista government says this--Is this a position which gets public support?

MR. BELLI: The Sandinistas have an absolute control of the press and of the media that really is misleading information that are giving to the people. I also think that some of the very young people react only the basis of that information. That's why part of our work should be just to convey to them the correct information through radio stations--for example from neighboring countries.

MRS. MACIAS: Can I just say that as far as I know personally, people who are in all of the groups that are fighting (Misura, Misurasata, ARDE,) The majority of people are ex-Sandinistas in some form. Ex-members of the Junta, ex-members of the cabinet or ex-members of the government in some form. This tactic of the FSLN is completely wrong if you see who is actually fighting against them.

JOHN HVASTA: I am very involved with the Czech and Slovak organizations and operations. And I've been involved in Czechoslovakia during the late 1940's and '50's. As an American, I spent 3½ years in prison and escaped and was in hiding for a couple of years. What we've heard is a similar situation that exists in Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland--all throughout Eastern Europe).

The message is the same--the method is the same. We have now a former Vice Counsel who was in Czechoslovakia, Claiborne Pell. We've asked him and he has sponsored the hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on violations of religious and human rights, which will be held next month. I would suggest that you probably do the same thing right now in Central America.

MARGE MITCHELL---Cuba Independent and Democratic: It's obvious that this is a tragical situation and we don't have to dramatize it. But the thing is, are we doing the correct thing? Are the people really knowing what's going on nationwide. I don't want to sound optimistic that the world is going to change tomorrow, but obviously, (If -- a suggestion that I also want to make--) can the people, Christian leaders, the people of United States, this committee right here. Can everyone unite or go on the air some time and say these are the facts, we want to make a big committee--something has to be done--I'm talking kind of broad--but what exactly is being done so far?

MRS. MACIAS: Well, I've been here a year and a half, and it's been very slow trying to get people who are interested in listening. Trying to get both versions in the media, and it gets more

difficult as time goes on because the other version has been put out so strongly, so consistently and so distortedly that many groups that I talk to now are like cheerleaders who are just so convinced that they've heard it all. I think it has to go on, I think it's going to be a long struggle--hopefully not too long since too many Nicaraguan are dying in the meantime. But people like you coming to a meeting like this is the process.

MR. QUIGLEY: -----(inaudible)-----Just a word or two about where U. S. Catholic Conference has been on the issues of Nicaragua and indeed on Cuba. Part of the problem that this whole presentation reflects is precisely what Mr. Gonzalez call, or the lack of what he called, a sense of moderation, a sense of interpretation, a sense of understanding, and not as Mrs. Macias said "being a cheerleader".

USCC and many other church groups have spoken about human rights for a long time, long before this White House, the previous White House or the one before that--that's simply a fact. Human rights, throughout the world, generally speaking, without regards to the political orientation of the group committee violation of human rights. There are certain criteria by which difference churches address part of the world's human right question.

We look at Latin America. The USCC has for a long time. We've looked at human rights violations of Cuba; we've done things about them. Those who call for a crusade against the Castro government by U. S. Bishops simply do not understand the reality of the Cuban church. They don't understand the reality of how the Episcopal Conference is related one to the other. The church here, the Bishop's Conference, particularly does not simply lead a march, regardless of other conditions or circumstances. We are in a relationship with the Episcopal conference. We behaved the way according to what that relationship tells us.

Nicaragua's case is similar. I was just offering the observation that the Guatemalan, Nicaragua situation -- violations of human rights -- I think are not quite comparable. I think they are far, far worse in Guatemala. Even as far as the churches are concerned, religious groups are concerned. Thirteen Roman Catholic priests, a number of Protestant ministers have been killed in Guatemala in the last several years and the bishops there said openly that there was a state of persecution.

Archbishop Obando and Archbishop Vega have not said that there was a state of persecution of the Church in Nicaragua. They said many things which would lead one to put together the pieces and come up with that kind of a conclusion. But there is a difference between the situations and the two countries. The USCC has spoken more about conditions of violations of human rights in Nicaragua than it has about Guatemala. Archbishop Roach's statement that Humberto mentions is just one of those statements. After the Pope visited in March 1984, (sic) there was a statement in the U. S. Catholic Conference at that time.

There have been numerous statements in Congressional testimonies that Diego Abich has mentioned. The testimony dealt with three specific test cases in El Salvador, Chile and Brazil. Three countries in which the USCC has had a long history of involvement of the human rights. It did not deal with specifics with Guatemala, with Nicaragua, with other countries of the hemisphere. It was criticized for what it did not speak about, not what it did speak about. Armondo Valladares (to finish the very last point) when Enrique Rueda came to see me a couple of years ago, I don't know how many

FATHER RUEDA: Five.

MR. QUIGLEY: it was indeed to request our assistance on the case of Armondo Valladares. (I have totally forgotten that, I apologize)

FATHER RUEDA: I have not.

MR. QUIGLEY: But I will tell you that the conference did act on the case of Armando Valladares: The question is--the statement that he came to ask for help, but it was to me that he asked the help and he said to you, Sir, that he did not get the help--but I am telling you that he did indeed, whether it was directly in response to his request we acted on the behalf of Armando Valladares.

MR. BELLI: I think I should correct something that he said. Monsignor Obando has referred openly to the persecution of the Church in Nicaragua in explicit terms. He has said in his statement to La Nacion, the Costa Rican newspaper, after about 26 churches were attacked by mobs in October 1983.

I think that Monsignor Vega said at the same time, although I cannot quote him but I can quote Monsignor Obando, I have clipping in my files. When he really said that it was open persecution of the Church in Nicaragua, so I wanted to make this correction. Also, regarding the presentation for Congress, when Father Brian Hehir made his presentation, if you compare what is said about Nicaragua there and what was said about Brazil and Chile and the other countries that you mentioned, you could really sense that the wording and the context of the text referring to Nicaragua were framed in much, much softer terms than in the other cases.

There was a reference to the vilification of religious leaders in Nicaragua. On the case of Carballo, such a blatant case, considered one case that perhaps a case involving bad faith, possibly, leaving some sort of doubt. You will want to have heard the important statement in which they could compare--I don't think that there was a balance.

QUESTION, NAME AND LOCATION INAUDIBLE

INTERRUPTIONS FROM PANELISTS

ADRIANA GUILLEN: I want to follow up on Humberto's--he said that the church in Nicaragua has open persecution. Not only Monsignors Obando and Vega, but Monsignor Schlaefer here, when he came out

with the Indians on December 1983, he said in Nicaragua there is persecution of the Indians and of the Church. It has been very clearly stated that there is bad persecution going on.

ENRIQUE RUEDA: I would just like to get the record straight: I did not want to mention Tom's name for obvious reasons, but I did 5 years ago go to the USCC publicly and openly as a member of the human rights commission for Cuba ask for help in trying to get Armando Valladares out of jail. I was flatly turned down when I was asked for original signed copies of a request from all the Cuban bishops asking that Valladares was let go, out of prison. I thought that this was disingenuous and I was very ashamed of the church.

MY NAME IS----- . I am a Nicaraguan. I work for 5 years very long with Senor Juan. I was in Nicaragua in February 1983, with the Catholic bishops. Our bishops of San Antonio, Senor Flores, the Archbishop from Washington, and Father O'Malley--they met with Monsignor Obando. By that time, I was in charge with Father Carballo to deal with censorship of our advertising on the Catholic radio station. We couldn't broadcast any kind of advertising latent with the future visit of the Pope. I was in charge of doing that with Father Carballo. We had to deal with (Names) of the office of the Censorship and we told that to the Catholic Bishop. I will tell you something--I've worked here very close with the Hispanic community of the Catholic church, but I don't trust in the commission of Catholic Conference of Catholic Bishops here.

I want to make this point. I know that I have some information and maybe Geraldine or Humberto have a wealth of information regarding the meeting in (more documentation) 1982-83, where I had met with some people of the U.S. Conference. They went to Nicaragua to meet with other people of the Nicaraguan Government to develop the network in the U. S. Do you have some type of documentation on this?

(INTERRUPTED)

MRS. MACIAS: Julio de Cortazar has written a book about that, about forming an alliance of intellectuals to promote the revolution. I just like to say that I get the feeling sometimes when the U. S. Catholic Bishops Conference they are waiting for last nail to be in the coffin then they will all mourn with us. I feel that it's better to keep protesting while you're still alive.

QUESTIONS: First of all I think that these statements that have gone back and forth this gentleman and those gentlemen should get their heads together. Secondly, I know we're all aware that Pope John has gone throughout the world and he has said that there is interest in human being's lives--whether they are priests, human beings--whatever country, he said they must be saved. And when one of the gentlemen said that the Jewish element was weak, that's not true.

We in this room know that the Jewish element and the Catholic element whenever present in a country it is because it has

authority behind it, so naturally we must do away with those. But, what I'm interested in, is because I am an American Indian, is to the gentlemen--what is happening to the Indian children--the population that we know has been killed--what about that population that has been growing because they are the citizens of tomorrow, what measures are being taken to make sure that that population remains as the numbers increase?

WYCLIFFE DIEGO: I would like to say that the outset, 80% of the Indian population of our country (The U.S.) supported the Sandinista revolution. As for me, I've visited several agencies in the U. S. that deal with Indian affairs; and I'd like to say out of all the peoples in the world that have suffered, the Indians have suffered the most.

That happened in the U. S. when so many of the Indians were killed--in Central America and South America throughout the hemisphere. At the present time the white people who are coming from Russia and other areas of the world, the bombs used to bomb our communities are foreign bombs. In 1982, the Sumo Indian children, 75 of them, were put on a helicopter as cargo, and they were going to be taken to another area of the country. The helicopter went down, and all of these children were killed. But you don't hear anyone in the world talking about this.

Now at the present time, the Sandinistas are taking out 13 and 14 year old boys and sending them to the border as cannon fodder. But the world is silent on this. And the Sandinistas have taken away a lot of the Miskito children and Sumo away from their parents and they're in an institution being taken care of by the Sandinistas.

They are not allowed to communicate with their parents. And we try and tell this to the world, but nobody seems to want to believe us.

At the present time, in concentration camps we have the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indian children dying at the rate of 15-20 per day. And every day in the refugee camps in the Honduras and Mocoron and Costa Rica we have 12-13 of these children dying every day. And if you can visit for example, the refugee camp in Mocoron, you'd see these children are running around stark naked -- they have no clothing at all.

The American Indians have told the Sandinistas not to do these things. And we hope to continue to get the support of the American Indians. And as for the Church that preaches peace and love, we would like to ask you where is your love, because the world cannot exist without love.

You can say all the pretty words that you wish, but without love we cannot bring peace into the world. God says that he loves you. And where is this love evidenced? There are many people in this world who show more love and respect for a dog than they would

for a human being. I think you have a law here in the United States that if you kill a dog, you can go to jail... And I think that in Nicaragua now we have to consider people are being treated like dogs.

APPLAUSE

QUESTION FOR MRS. MACIAS: The statement you implicitly criticized human right organizations for ignoring human right abuses that have occurred under the Sandinista government -- your statement seemed to indicate the ideological bias of some human rights organizations has blinded them to deplore to those human rights violations that you all testified to today. I want to know if I'm reading you right, you seem to be saying that the fundamental rights of human beings transcend any particular ideology and therefore should be condemned wherever they occur, is that correct?

MRS. MACIAS: Yes, I think too many groups have a double standard. If it's a rightist government they'll condemn it and if it's a leftist government they cover up or they're soft in their criticism.

QUESTION: With that in mind, and given the human rights records as reported by the State Department Country Reports, by the International Commission of Jurists and Amnesty International, I'd like to know on that basis you refer to the governments of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador as your best friends in Central America?

MRS. MACIAS: They're the ones that are our friends because they're the ones feeling the same problems we are as far as intervention and domination by the Sandinistas, who have created for the first time in history terrorism in Costa Rica, which is a very democratic country, terrorism in Honduras for the first time in its history, and terrorist groups in Guatemala, even in Columbia and Peru they have claimed their terrorist acts from Nicaragua. These countries are friends because they're facing the same problem we are, that is: Marxist-Leninism, financed and trained terrorism.

MR. BELLI: I just wanted to add on behalf of Geraldine that Geraldine and her husband Edgard Macias, and Jose Esteban Gonzalez, who is with us, they strongly and openly criticized the violation of human rights committed by Somoza. So I think they cannot be accused of playing a double standard. The emphasis now, since they are victims, the victims of a specific operation, that might make us sometimes over-emphasize what we are suffering; but in the history of Nicaragua, they have played a very fair, they have presented a very fair testimony of criticizing violatings when they occur, whether they come from the right or from the left.

MRS. WHITTLESEY: Thank you, it is now 12 o'clock and we would like to thank Mr. Baltodano, Mr. Belli, Mrs. Macias, and Mr. Wycliffe Diego and also Mr. Gonzalez who joined our panel and Mr. Barnes and Stephanie Von Rickensburg. Thank you all.