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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MB

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MEMORANDUM

TO: NSC - Walt Raymond
FROM: ARA - Robert W. Kagan AK
SUBJECT: Public Diplomacy Plan for Explaining U.S.
Central American Policy to the U.S. Religious
Community

Background

By stressing "human rights" and the "people's church" (and by portraying the traditional Catholic structure as the "church of the wealthy"), church-based supporters of the Sandinistas have been able to frame much of the public debate on Nicaragua. In fact, these networks have been successful in dominating the flow of information to local churches, parishes, and synagogues.

Many of the denominational national offices and their respective justice and peace committees and offices of social policy reflect the views of pro-Sandinista religious activists. This bias is bolstered by such church-supported groups as the Washington Office on Latin America and Witness for Peace, and is reinforced by inexpensive solidarity tours of Nicaragua.

Opposition to U.S. policy in Central America has continued to be a central effort of many DC-based religious offices and their support network. Because of this, any public diplomacy effort must reach the local level and respond to the charges and allegations made by the various inter-religious networks supportive of the Sandinistas.

Public Diplomacy Objectives

The objectives of this effort are:

- Increase the U.S. religious community's awareness of the experiences and situation of their religious brethren in Nicaragua.

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LPD PROJECTS

--Compile and update an internal reference book of supportive religious organizations and leaders, potential speakers (USG and private sector), and publications of interest on religious persecution. The reference book will also contain a schedule of meetings of religious groups, particularly meetings in the DC area.

--Publish and distribute a fact sheet to counter those church-supported organizations critical of U.S. policy. Allegations meriting response appear regularly in publications and statements from such organizations as:

Inter-religious Task Force on Central America
Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy
Witness for Peace
Central America Hotline
Religious Task Force on Central America
Presbyterian Advocates on Central America
Nicaraguan Information Center
Washington Office on Latin America

The LPD response sheet will be sent to the IRD list of religious journalists; religious organizations supportive of U.S. policy, e.g., Presbyterian Lay Committee, Concerned Catholics, IRD; selected Members of Congress; and mainstream religious media, including the United Methodist Reporter (the largest circulation Protestant newspaper), the [Presbyterian] Layman (second largest circulation), National Catholic Reporter, and Christianity Today.

--Work with electronic media to focus on religious persecution stories. Prepare and distribute LPD fact sheets/reports on Sandinista religious persecution.

--Translate and distribute Sandinista statements which attack the Catholic Church and its leadership, specifically attacks on Cardinal Obando y Bravo. Translate and distribute statements of Catholic Church leaders in Nicaragua on the Sandinistas and the internal conditions in Nicaragua. Translate and distribute statements of U.S. church sources supporting the Sandinistas that appear in the Nicaraguan media.

--Place articles in diocesan newspapers. Mike Schwartz of the Catholic Center (Free Congress Foundation) whose columns are carried by the National Catholic News Service may be of assistance.

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--Work with friendly groups, e.g., Concerned Catholics, the Catholic Center, IRD, to have priests/ministers from Nicaragua speak on the internal situation. (For example, if he is willing, arrange events for for Father Everett T. Brown, who was expelled 9/2/86; he worked in Santo Tomas, Nicaragua. Also, if it can be arranged, help facilitate tour by Father Enrique Martinez of Leon.)

--Develop a program on Central America for Christian College Coalition's DC interns.

--Assist in facilitating trips to Central America by Jewish leaders and organizations.

--Supply information of interest on regular basis to major Jewish organizations, e.g., the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, leaders within the Jewish community, and to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

--Assist in efforts by private groups to have members of Nicaragua's Jewish community speak outside of Miami. Target cities should be New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. Jewish Members of Congress should also be encouraged to meet with these people either in DC or in their home districts.

--Recommend speakers for local events/debates on Central America. From the USG, recommended speakers for Jewish audiences are Assistant Secretary Abrams, Ambassador Schifter, and Mr. Sofaer; for briefings, LTC North. Private citizens mentioned as being the most effective speakers include Nathan Perlmutter, Kenneth Bialkin, Rabbi Morton Rosenthal, Joshua Muravchik, Ben Wattenberg, Irving Kristol, Midge Decter, and Linda Chavez.

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PUBLIC DIPLOMACY PROJECT SCHEDULE

September 30: Work with Concerned Catholics and Archdiocese of New York (N.E. Regional Pastoral Center for Hispanics) to arrange speaker to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (November 10-14, Washington, DC). Suggested speaker: Bishop Vega or Msgr. Carballo.

September 30: Complete list of Hispanic aides in each diocese.

September 30: Work with friendly Jewish organizations, e.g., National Jewish Coalition, and ADL to have Libyan Activities in the Western Hemisphere circulated to their members.

October 15: Bishop Vega's report to the Pope and his testimony to the OAS Human Rights Commission ready for distribution (without USG i.d.). Send to Catholic press list and other major religious media with cover letter from Assistant Secretary Abrams. Mailing should include a summary of the report and a picture of Vega. Send to Members of Congress in their home districts and to their DC offices. Work with friendly groups, e.g., Concerned Catholics, and "Catholicism in Crisis," to have Vega report distributed to their lists.

October 30: Upgraded and updated LPD report Attack on the Church ready for distribution. Send to complete religious media list, plus work with friendly groups for mass distribution to their lists.

November 5-11: A trip of major Jewish leaders to Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica is being coordinated by the National Jewish Coalition. Provide a pre-trip briefing by State (Abrams) and by NSC (North) and arrange a post-trip meeting with Assistant Secretary Abrams and/or appropriate DASs.

December 1: Press conference with Assistant Secretary Abrams and/or Ambassador Schifter marking anniversary of the burning of the Managua synagogue by the Sandinistas in 1978. At conference, Abrams, et al, will announce the publication of LPD report on the experiences of Nicaragua's Jewish community. Distribute story (press release with glossy pictures) to key Jewish journalists and inter-religious publications. (LPD report should be an In Their Own Words-type report. NOTE: Full transcripts of the interviews used in the September Commentary article are available from the National Jewish Coalition.)

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January 1987: Speaker and publications to the Latin American Jewish Studies Association conference (University of Florida, Gainesville, FL).

No later than March 1987: Conference/briefing for religious leaders and journalists at the White House. (Theme should be "Human Rights in Central America.") Release of comprehensive catalogue of Sandinista abuses against the religious community in Nicaragua which will be an item-by-item listing of Sandinista abuses categorized by religious denomination. "Drop-bys" by the President and the Secretary of State. Speakers include Assistant Secretary Abrams, Ambassador Schifter, and VADM Poindexter from USG; Richard John Neuhaus, Michael Novak, Rabbi Rosenthal and/or Nathan Perlmutter from the religious community. (This event should come before any congressional vote restricting the February disbursement of funds or appropriating new money.)

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MAJOR UPCOMING RELIGIOUS MEETINGS

November 11-14, 1986

**National Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, DC**

**Contact: Phyllis Zagano
Archdiocese of New York
Mario Paredes
N.E. Regional Pastoral Center for Hispanics**

January 1987

**Latin American Jewish Studies Association Conference
University of Florida at Gainesville**

**Contact: Judith Laikin Elkin
2104 Georgetown Boulevard
Ann Arbor, MI 48105**

SUPPORTIVE GROUPS AND CONTACTS (Partial List)

Catholic Center
c/o Committee for Survival of a Free Congress
Washington, DC
Contact: Michael Schwartz

National Jewish Coalition
Washington, DC
Contact: Howard Kohr

Concerned Catholics for Religious Freedom in Nicaragua
Washington, DC
Contact: Peter Flaherty
Henry Ferro (Miami, FL)

Crisis

Norte Dame, IN
Contact: Phil Lawler, Editor
Terry Hall, Associate Editor

Institute on Religion and Democracy
Washington, DC
Contact: Maria Thomas

Presbyterian Lay Committee
Media, PA
Contact: Kerry Ptacek