

NICARAGUA AND IRAN

Nicaragua is oppressed by an old-fashioned dictatorship but caught up in a modern complication. A symptom of the complication is that one of the few free and humane countries in the world, Israel, is under attack for providing arms to the brutal government of Nicaragua.

Last month, the Somozan National Guard entered the hospital at Esteli and summarily executed two surgeons, a nurse and dozens of patients. Earlier, five youths were killed in a Catholic Church in Leon by the National Guard. These are commonplace occurrences, reported by American press observers, the Catholic Church and others. Thousands who have been arrested are missing.

There is little doubt that Israel once provided arms to Somoza, as did the United States. Somoza's father had provided arms to the Haganah, before the State of Israel was established; and Nicaragua has consistently been one of the few supporters of Israel in the world arena. The question is often raised as to whether Israel, in fighting for its survival, should be expected to behave with more altruism than any other nation.

But the fact is that Israel is subject to much attack in Central America, and among Central Americans living here. One Costa Rican publication recently wrote: "Israel continues to denounce the Nazi genocide of the second world war ... but it has no reserve or shame in cooperating in the genocide of Central American peasants, Guatemalan or Nicaraguan Indians."

Israel's policy, a conventional one, is not to officially report on its arms sales. But when a Panamanian group protested to the Israeli Ambassador to Panama, in April, he told them that Israel was no longer sending arms to Somoza. Other Israeli sources have affirmed that the arms sales to Somoza, under old contracts, had ceased in August. But many Central Americans remain disbelieving.

Then there is this complication: the intentions of *some* of the anti-Somoza forces are not to be trusted. The opposition to Somoza is overwhelming and cuts across almost every group in Nicaragua, including businessmen. But one political element in the opposition to Somoza has been associated with the P.L.O.; it is the kind of political element which often emerges dominant.

It is time to recognize that the P.L.O. is no longer a group primarily identified with the destiny of Palestinian Arabs. It turns up supplying arms, ideology and training to certain groups in Japan, Europe, Africa, Turkey, Iran, wherever there is trouble. The P.L.O. is the connective tissue for the international underground pro-totalitarian movement directed against the United States and the free world.

One has to be cautious about the full accuracy of charges launched against the United States or Israel by any group associated with the P.L.O. One has to be worried about the "alternative" political solutions to be provided by any group associated with the P.L.O. President John F. Kennedy once warned that one kind of tyranny could pass away in countries like Nicaragua, or Iran, "merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny," no less inhumane, no less oppressive, and even more durable and imperialistic.

Somoza's brutality is unacceptable to the civilized world. If they are to follow conscience, or maintain credibility, those Americans opposed to Soviet and Iranian tyrannies, must also be actively opposed to the tyranny of Somoza. In seeking the end of Somoza's reign, Americans and America must also actively seek a democratic and humane alternative.