

Nicaragua

UNDER SIEGE



PEOPLE in the firing line

CAPITAL CITY: Managua
SIZE: 57,000 square miles (about the size of England and Wales).
POPULATION: 3.2 million
EXPORTS: Coffee, cotton, sugar, meat.
GOVERNMENT: Somoza dictatorship until July, 1979. Since then, revolutionary Government led by the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN).
 November 1984 open elections confirmed the popularity of the Sandinista Party which formed new Government under President Ortega.
 Three main policy principles are: mixed economy, political pluralism and non-alignment.
RELIGION: Christian, mainly Roman Catholic.



Through OXFAM, people in Britain have been able to help efforts to improve health, education and agriculture in Nicaragua. Tragically, recent grants have had to concentrate increasingly on relieving the damage and hardship caused by "contra" (counter-revolutionary) attacks.

In the past 5 years, Oxfam has helped the people of Nicaragua with grants for the provision of:

- food, medicines, clothing and equipment for families displaced through 'contra' attacks.
- training of midwives, health promoters, adult educators, mechanics and agricultural workers.
- medical kits for health workers accompanying people on the coffee harvest.
- building of new tractor workshop and provision of equipment at Malpaisillo, Leon Department.
- vehicle, repairs and equipment for the National Small Farmer's Union.
- transport in remote areas including boats and lorries, plus spare parts.

These are just a handful of the many hundreds of "contra" attacks which have taken place between 1981-85. Oxfam has a duty to speak out on behalf of those who suffer as a result of the policies being pursued in this area.

Corinto, October 1983: Motor launches attack oil tanks; 1 million gallons diesel fuel lost, coffee exports, imports of medicines and farm machinery destroyed, 40,000 evacuated. March 1984 and May 1984: Further sabotage including mines laid in harbour. **1**

Puerto Sandino, October 1983: Oil pipeline sabotaged. January 1984: Air attack and speedboats fire on fishing boats. March 1984: Oil tanker damaged by mine. **2**

Managua, September 1983: Airport bombed and strafed by "contra" aircraft. Runway and control tower damaged. **3**

Pantasma, Jinotega, October 1983: 200-300 "contra" attacks killing 47 people including adult educators, cooperative members and families. Many burnt to death. Families in 6 cooperatives homeless. September 1984: 5 teachers abducted to Honduras. **4**

La Trinidad, August 1985: 150 contras open fire on health centre (now closed), telecommunications, church, homes, vehicles and grain store destroying 200 tons of rice and beans. 15 people killed. **5**

Jinotega, July 1985: Cooperative and health centre burned, warehouse looted. **6**

Sumubila, Zelaya Norte, April 1984: Attack on Miskito settlement destroys craft centre, cocoa store, electric plant, office and the community's only ambulance. 6 civilians murdered, 35 kidnapped. **7**

Border Attacks have displaced over 200,000 Nicaraguans. In the Matagalpa/Jinotega region alone, 50,000 people resettled in 1985/86. **8**

Rama-ky Island, off Zelaya Sur, January 1985: 3 civilians murdered, 2 wounded in attack; 5 health workers and the vice dean of medical school kidnapped. **11**

Jesús María, Chontales, March 1985: 2000 gallons of gasoline, 4,000 gallons diesel lost in attack on 2 lorries. Further attacks on trucks and lorries in April and May. 9 deaths. **10**

Tuapy & Siuna, Zelaya Norte, June 1985: Water pump sabotaged, ambulance driver murdered, 5 workers from Institute of Agrarian Reform kidnapped, trucks ambushed. **9**

Potosí, January 1984: Attack on port by "Pirana" speedboats; Honduran planes fire on port installations. Two further attacks in April 1984. **13**

Ocotál, June 1984: Large scale sabotage of sawmill, trucks, machinery, workshop, airplane, tractors, offices. Damage to hospital; destruction of food and oil supplies. 250 left unemployed. **12**

San Jeronimo, Esteli, May 1984: Sabotage of town, all homes burnt in 6 surrounding villages; school and cooperative destroyed. September 1984: grain silo destroyed containing 90,000lbs. rice, 180,200lbs. corn, 27,400lbs. beans, 17,400 lbs. salt, 50 crates soap. **14**

Yali, South Jinotega, April 1984: Coffee cooperative entirely destroyed including machinery, warehouses, grain plant, generator, animals. 4 people killed. **15**

Matagalpa & Jinotega, April 1984: 8 state farms destroyed by widespread sabotage in 7 incidents. November 1984: 2 coffee farms attacked destroying 600lbs. coffee, processing plant, warehouses, coffee-workers' accommodation and all surrounding houses. 17 civilians killed. **16**

Honduras: Joint military exercises by US and Honduran troops are planned until 1988. It is estimated that \$250 million was spent on manoeuvres in 1984, and a further \$200 million spent on intelligence and logistical support for the "contra". **17**

