

Ahronot, stated, «The Israelis may be seen as American proxies in Honduras and Guatemala».<sup>184</sup> Estimates of Israeli arms sales to Central America vary widely. One source reports 1981 sales to Central America of \$1.2 billion.<sup>185</sup> Others report only \$20 million in 1982 with increases to \$50 million expected.<sup>186</sup> The *New York Times* reported Reagan administration officials saying, «Israel was assisting the United States in Central America...to oppose the Soviet Union, to combat reported PLO support for Nicaragua, and to expand the market for Israeli arms».<sup>187</sup> In January 1983, a special meeting of the Nonaligned Nations in Managua denounced the increasing support provided by Israel to the American policy of intervention in Central America.<sup>188</sup>

## Nicaragua

During dictator Anastasio Somoza's last year in power in Nicaragua, U.S. President Carter cut off overt aid to his regime. Six months before Somoza's fall, the Israeli government promised the U.S. government to cease arms sales to Nicaragua.<sup>189</sup> But Israel took up the slack and supplied 98 percent of Somoza's arms.<sup>190</sup> The Carter administration decided not to try to stop Israeli arms going to Somoza<sup>191</sup> until two weeks before he fell.<sup>192</sup> A man who described himself as a commander in the Israeli army lived in the bunker of Somoza's army commander and was employed by the local agent for an Israeli arms export firm.<sup>193</sup> The Israelis even bought \$75 million in Nicaraguan cotton which Somoza was unable to sell. Later they claimed they were repaying an old debt;<sup>194</sup> Somoza's father had sent them arms in 1948.<sup>195</sup>

In his last two years, Somoza's national guard killed 50,000 people, bombing the slums of Managua primarily with Israeli-made Arava and Westwind planes.<sup>196</sup> At the symbolic moment of Sandinista victory, a guerilla held his captured Galil assault rifle high. The Sandinista government assumed all Somoza's debts to foreign banks except \$5.1 million due Israel and Argentina for arms.<sup>197</sup>

Jaime Wheelock, the Sandinista government's minister of agrarian reform, accused the United States of wanting «Israel to intervene in Central America as the right arm of the United States». Opposition sources in Honduras, including Christian Democrat Moises Velazquez Nazzar, share this view point and see a «tight link» between the Reagan and Sharon visits to Honduras in December 1982, visits serving to tighten the clamps on Nicaragua.<sup>198</sup>

Now that the Nicaraguan people are again under armed attack, the Israelis are back supplying the attackers with arms seized from the PLO and Lebanese resistance in Lebanon. The United States has offered to pay the shipping costs. Reagan administration officials were reported as saying, in the *New York Times*, that «the administration wanted to establish new lines of support to Nicaraguan rebels in case Congress approved legislation that would cut off covert support for the insurgents».<sup>199</sup>

## El Salvador

In the 1960s, high officials from thirteen countries in Latin America, including El Salvador and Guatemala, were given specialized instruction in paramilitary programs intended for youth. These «civic action» programs were funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and were intended to counterbalance Cuban influence.<sup>200</sup> From 1970 to 1979, El Salvador purchased 6 percent of Israel's worldwide arms sales which put it in third place after South Africa and Argentina. The air force includes 18 Dassault fighters, 17 Arava transports,<sup>201</sup> and 6 Fouga Magister Trainers, all purchased from Israel.<sup>202</sup> Some Salvadoran soldiers are armed with Uzi submachine guns and Galil assault rifles. The PLO's ambassador in Nicaragua, Marwan Tahbub, reported about one hundred Israeli advisers stationed at a secret base near San Salvador and instructing Salvadoran officers in counterinsurgency tactics.<sup>203</sup> In 1979, the *New York Times* had reported an earlier charge by Shafik Handal, General Secretary of the El Salvador Communist Party, that Salvadorans had been sent to Israel for training with Israeli military advisers also arriving in El Salvador.<sup>204</sup> In 1981 President Reagan wanted to send 21 million dollars to El Salvador but the funds in his foreign aid budget had been used up. Israel loaned the United States the money from its own aid funds. In 1982 the 21 million was tacked onto another U.S. aid to Israel.<sup>205</sup>

In the 1970s Israeli advisors trained the secret police (AN-SESAL). Roberto D'Aubisson, now president of the Constituent Assembly, served as a minor ANSESAL officer. His friend Colonel Ochoa, also from ANSESAL, staged a rebellion against former Defense Minister Garcia in early 1983. Ochoa credits his training in Israel for his prominent advancement in the ranks.<sup>206</sup> Arnaldo Ramos, U.S. representative of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), reports that an Israeli-installed computer system has been installed in San Salvador, an allegation confirmed by Rene Guerra y Guerra, deputy interior minister in the first junta in 1979.<sup>207</sup> Between 1972 and 1980, when the United States was not shipping arms to El Salvador, 83 percent of El Salvador's arms came from Israel.<sup>208</sup> In August 1983 the Salvadorean government announced it intends to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem around September 15. At the same time the Israeli embassy in San Salvador, closed since 1979 for security reasons, will be reopened.<sup>209</sup>

## Guatemala

Guatemalan-Israeli relations date back to 1948; one of the three United Nations commissioners who have helped set up the Israeli state was Guatemalan.<sup>210</sup> Guatemala received all its arms (including Aravas)<sup>211</sup> from Israel between 1977 and 1981, again at a time when the U.S. stopped all arms transfers.<sup>212</sup> In 1980, the Guatemalan army was fully reequipped with Galil rifles costing \$6 million.<sup>213</sup>