# Sandinistas criticized; Ortega denies Church-state conflict

New York (NC) — Church leaders have accused the Nicaraguan government of harassment and have criticized restrictions on civil liberties under a state of emergency imposed in mid-October.

But on Oct. 25, during a recent visit to New York, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega denied several times that there is church-state conflict in his country.

Ortega's speech at Riverside Church in New York followed his Oct. 15 declaration of a state of emergency, brought attention to Nicaragua's church-state relationship. In early October, Nicaraguan security agents had entered a church-owned building and seized 10,000 copies of Iglesia, an eight-page bulletin of the Archdiocese of Managua.

After Ortega's speech, one member of the audience, which numbered more than 600, asked Ortega whether he believed in God and about his view of the Church-state conflict. "About the church-state conflict, there is no such thing," Ortega said. "There is a larger political conflict that is sustained and fed by United States policy. And as there are priests who favor the revolutionary cause, there are others who don't."

Some clergy are involved in "political polemic and political clashing," Ortega replied, but traditional religious activities 'continue normally.'

The president declined to answer the question about his belief in God directly. "That is for others to judge," he said. The

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important point, he said, is one's attitude

toward justice.

Ortega said former Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza, overthrown by the Sandinista revolutionaries in 1979, prayed and received Communion every day and said he believed in God. "But my God cannot be Somoza's God," Ortega said.

Much of Ortega's address was devoted to defending his government's recent declaration of a state of emergency.

Ortega said the declaration of a state of emergency was "provisional," and that his government remained committed to political pluralism, a mixed economy and nonalignment.

Earlier in the week, during an appearance on The Phil Donahue show, Ortega had noted that "we don't kill priests" in Nicaragua. However, the Nicaraguan bishops' conference has protested government treatment of the church.

"Intimidation of priests, break-ins and raiding of church property, and threats and pressure on the laity injure the respect and guarantee of fundamental rights such as freedom of conscience and expression of Catholics' religious convictions," said the bishops in a statement released Oct. 20.

Monsignor Daniel F. Hoye, general secretary of the U.S. Catholic Conference, has protested the seizure of Iglesia. In an Oct. 16 telegram to Ortega, he said the USCC called for "a settlement which will respect the right of the church to publish freely.'

Monsignor Hoye also protested the emergency restrictions. "We deeply regret the decision of the government of Nicaragua to reinstate the excessively broad restrictions imposed by the state of emergency," he said.

On Oct. 20, Cardinal Miguel Obando Bravo of Managua led about 7,000 people in a short procession from a church to a cathedral in Esteli, about 100 miles north of Managua. Police watched the procession, but no incidents were reported, despite restrictions on assembly and travel.

When Ortega declared the state of emergency, he formally suspended freedom of speech, assembly and travel, as well as the right of workers to strike and the right of habeas corpus for prisoners. He said the rights were suspended because "the brutal aggression by North America and its internal allies has created an extraordinary situation."

Ortega also said there were "agents of imperialism," including some in "religious institutions," trying to destabilize the

In Managua, the Nicaraguan Interior Ministry called Iglesia "not religious but highly political, openly attacking the policy of defending the revolution and especially patriotic military service."

#### 'self-destruction Lefebvre: Synod will move Church toward

By John Thavis

Rome (NC) - Dissident French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre has predicted that the Nov. 24-Dec. 8 extraordinary Synod of Bishops will take the Church a step closer to 'self-destruction" by uncritically ratifying changes made by the Second Vatican

Archbishop Lefebvre also said he might decide to ordain bishops, an act which would cause a schism in the Church.

"If it is shown that in Rome there is a schism with the tradition and the Church of old, I may decide to take this serious step. But if Rome returns to the doctrine of old, there will be no reason to do so," he said.

The goal of the synod is "to exclude all judgment or criticism of the council," the 79-year-old archbishop said. He said the two-week event would be a debate "among liberals only" because no true conservatives were left in the Church.

Archibishop Lebebvre described the synod as "the second stage of the revolution begun by the council, which is leading to selfdestruction."

Pope John Paul II called the extraordinary synod to evaluate the results of the council. Some critics have suggested that the pope wants to modify some of the council's reforms.

Archbishp Lefebvre, former head of the Archdiocese of Tulle, France, has consistently rejected the teachings of Vatican II, which brought him into conflict with the Vatican.

In 1976 Pope Paul VI suspended him from his priestly functions after the archbishop defied papal orders and ordained priests at a traditionalist seminary he had established in Econe, Switzerland.

"They (Vatican officials) want me to sign a paper in which I accept the council according to tradition. But there are conciliar texts that contradict (tradition), and this is unacceptable. For me, the faith does not change,'' he said.

Archbishop Lefebvre said he told Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, during a January meeting: "Your description of the crisis in the Church is more terrifying than mine. I cannot understand why, when you see the destruction, you do not seek the true causes and have the courage to return to tradition.

In a book published in English this year under the title, "The Ratzinger Report," the cardinal said the Church had passed from 'self-criticism to self-destruction" in the years since the council.

The archbishop said he thought Pope John Paul had "put aside the saving of souls" in order to find a way of living with the world.

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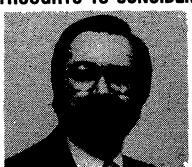
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