

NICARAGUA

Campaign To Eradicate Illiteracy

From A Correspondent

LAUNCHING an international appeal for support of Nicaragua's national literacy campaign at a ceremony in UNESCO's Paris headquarters on January 23, the Director-General of the Organization, Mr. Amadou Mahtar M'Bow, declared that few nations in recent history had endured so much physical and psychological suffering.

Following the earthquake of 1972, the liberation struggle had entailed pillage of treasures, destruction of resources, severe damage of towns and villages and dislocation of infrastructures, while heavy toll had been taken of its people, most of them already suffering great poverty: 35,000 dead, 100,000 injured and 40,000 orphans out of a total population of 2,200,000.

The Director-General said he had visited Nicaragua in De-

cember 1979 and had been able to judge the extent of the work that had to be done to rebuild the country.

"What is required is to mobilize all the country's manpower, to reorganize and expand its education, cultural and scientific institutions and to redeploy its means of production, in line with a coherent, overall programme. The country's new authorities have committed themselves to achieving these goals, and in order to do so have drawn up a national reconstruction plan which deserves both our sympathy and our support," said the Director-General.

A key objective in the plan was the achievement of general literacy throughout the country because the illiteracy of some 850,000 people was a major obstacle to conscious participation by all citizens in the task of national revival.

The campaign for the eradication of illiteracy had been planned to serve as the lever for a movement of education and social advancement extending to all categories of the population. Beginning in March the campaign would enlist the services of 200,000 literacy teachers who for six months would live together and share the same living conditions with the illiterates in a stirring experiment seeking to bring about a profound change in the relations between the various social strata in the country.

Nicaragua would not be able to achieve its goals without support from the world community and it was hoped that international solidarity would contribute \$20 million. Mr. M'Bow said that contributions in kind would also be welcomed, particularly school supplies and equipment—paper,

pencils, exercise books, blackboards, audio-visual aids, radios—as well as motor vehicles, camping equipment, clothing, blankets, oil lamps, powdered or tinned foodstuffs, etc.

Recalling that UNESCO's Executive Board had expressed its unanimous support to the government and people of Nicaragua in their task of national reconstruction, Mr. M'Bow called on governments, public and private institutions and international foundations and organizations to give proof of their active solidarity with liberated Nicaragua.

He also invited churches, trade union organisations, women's organisations, and youth movements as well as "all those who enjoy the benefits of education" to contribute financial and material resources to "those it. Nicaragua who are endeavouring to take their future in hand".

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