

The Nicaraguan Peace Process: A Documentary Record

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Introduction

The Contadora process had as one of its agreed objectives "to promote national reconciliation efforts wherever deep divisions have taken place within society, with a view to fostering participation in democratic political processes." Nicaragua is one of the signatories.

An internal dialogue to promote national reconciliation has been a central feature of President Duarte's policy in El Salvador, where four competitive nationwide elections have been held in 3 years.

The establishment of an effective dialogue for national reconciliation has been a critical necessity in Nicaragua ever since the failure to establish a working democracy, perhaps the fundamental objective of the revolution against the Somoza dictatorship.

This special report provides basic documentation concerning the Nicaraguan peace process, including the Contadora framework, the proposals of the Nicaraguan Catholic bishops and the various opposition groups, and the positions taken since by President Reagan and leaders in the region itself.

The Contadora Framework

The Contadora negotiations involve five Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) and the four members of the Contadora Group (Colombia, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela).

The text of the basic negotiating objectives agreed to by all nine Contadora countries is reprinted below. Three of the 21 objectives deal with the centrality of democracy and internal reconciliation to the resolution of conflict in Central America.

Contadora Document of Objectives¹

Considering:

The situation prevailing in Central America, which is characterized by an atmosphere of tension that threatens security and peaceful coexistence in the region, and which requires, for its solution, observance of the principles of international law governing the actions of States, especially:

¹Emphases added.

The self-determination of peoples;
Non-intervention;
The sovereign equality of States;
The peaceful settlement of disputes;
Refraining from the threat or use of force;
Respect of the territorial integrity of States;
Pluralism in its various manifestations;
Full support for democratic institutions;
The promotion of social justice;
International co-operation for development;
Respect for and promotion of human rights;
The prohibition of terrorism and subversion;

We want to help opposition groups join the political process in all countries and compete by ballots instead of bullets.

President Reagan,
April 27, 1983

The desire to reconstruct the Central American homeland through progressive integration of its economic, legal and social institutions;

The need for economic co-operation among the States of Central America so as to make a fundamental contribution to the development of their peoples and the strengthening of their independence;

The undertaking to establish, promote or revitalize representative, democratic systems in all the countries of the region;

The unjust economic, social and political structures which exacerbate the conflicts in Central America;

The urgent need to put an end to the tensions and lay the foundations for understanding and solidarity among the countries of the area;

The arms race and the growing arms traffic in Central America, which aggravate political relations in the region and divert economic resources that could be used for development;

The presence of foreign advisers and other forms of foreign military interference in the zone;

The risks that the territory of Central American States may be used for the purpose of conducting military

operations and pursuing policies of destabilization against others;

The need for concerted political efforts in order to encourage dialogue and understanding in Central America, avert the danger of a general spreading of the conflicts, and set in motion the machinery needed to ensure the peaceful coexistence and security of their peoples;

Declare their intention of achieving the following objectives:

To promote detente and put an end to situations of conflict in the area, restraining from taking any action that might jeopardize political confidence or obstruct the achievement of peace, security and stability in the region;

To ensure strict compliance with the aforementioned principles of international law, whose violators will be held accountable;

To respect and ensure the exercise of human, political, civil, economic, social, religious and cultural rights;

To adopt measures conducive to the establishment and, where appropriate, improvement of democratic, representative and pluralistic systems that will guarantee effective popular participation in the decision-making process and ensure that the various currents of opinion have free access to fair and regular elections based on the full observance of citizens' rights;

To promote national reconciliation efforts wherever deep divisions have taken place within society, with a view to fostering participation in democratic political processes in accordance with the law;

To create political conditions intended to ensure the international security, integrity and sovereignty of the State of the region;

To stop the arms race in all its forms and begin negotiations for the control and reduction of current stocks of weapons and on the number of armed troops;

To prevent the installation on their territory of foreign military bases or any other type of foreign military interference;

To conclude agreements to reduce the presence of foreign military advisers and other foreign elements involved in military and security activities, with a view to their elimination;

To establish internal control machinery to prevent the traffic in arms from the territory of any country in the region to the territory of another;

To eliminate the traffic in arms, whether within the region or from outside it, intended for persons, organiza-

tions or groups seeking to destabilize the Governments of Central American countries;

To prevent the use of their own territory by persons, organizations or groups seeking to destabilize the Governments of Central American countries and to refuse to provide them with or permit them to receive military or logistical support;

To refrain from inciting or supporting acts of terrorism, subversion or sabotage in the countries in the area;

To establish and co-ordinate direct communication systems with a view to preventing or, where appropriate, settling incidents between States of the region;

To continue humanitarian aid aimed at helping Central American refugees who have been displaced from their countries of origin, and to create suitable conditions for the voluntary repatriation of such refugees, in consultation with or with the co-operation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international agencies deemed appropriate;

To undertake economic and social development programs with the aim of promoting well being and an equitable distribution of wealth;

To revitalize and restore economic integration machinery in order to attain sustained development on the basis of solidarity and mutual advance;

To negotiate the provision of external monetary resources which will provide additional means of financing the resumption of intra-regional trade, meet the serious balance-of-payments problems, attract funds for working capital, support programs to extend and restructure production systems and promote medium- and long-term investment projects;

To negotiate better and broader access to international markets in order to increase the volume of trade between the countries of Central America and the rest of the world, particularly the industrialized countries; by means of a revision of trade practices, the elimination of tariff and other barriers, and the achievement of the price stability at a profitable and fair level for the products exported by the countries of the region;

To establish technical co-operation machinery for the planning, programming and implementation of multi-sectoral investment and trade promotion projects.

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Central American countries, with the participation of the countries in the

Contadora Group, have begun negotiations with the aim of preparing for the conclusion of the agreements and the establishment of machinery necessary to formalize and develop the objectives contained in this document, and to bring about the establishment of appropriate verification of monitoring systems. To that end, account will be taken of the initiatives put forward at the meetings convened by the Contadora Group.

Panama City, 9 September 1983

Nicaraguan Calls for Dialogue

The peace process in Nicaragua is framed by the four documents excerpted below.

The Nicaraguan bishops' 1984 Easter Pastoral took stock of the worsening conflict inside Nicaragua and its spillover into neighboring countries in Central America. The bishops called for a dialogue among "all Nicaraguans inside and outside the country . . . [including] Nicaraguans who have taken up arms against the government."

After the elections of November 4, 1984, had failed to provide either free competition or reconciliation, the inter-

If Managua proves responsive to serious negotiations, hopeful vistas open up for the beleaguered peoples of Central America, including those of Nicaragua. . . . We prefer to resolve the conflicts in the region peacefully.

National Bipartisan
Commission
on Central America,
January 10, 1984

nal political resistance—in a February statement issued by the *Coordinadora Democrática Nicaraguense*—reaffirmed its interest in genuine dialogue.

While some resistance leaders, notably Sandinista hero Eden Pastora, continued to stress the need for armed struggle as the only way to end the betrayal of the revolution to the Soviet Union and Cuba, important leaders from both the political and the armed resistance came together to call for

dialogue in a joint statement signed in San Jose, Costa Rica, on March 1, 1985.

On March 22, the Bishops' Council then reemphasized its availability to mediate among all Nicaraguans without exception or favoritism.

Pastoral Letter on Reconciliation From the Nicaraguan Bishops, April 22, 1984

To the priests and deacons in our dioceses:

To members of religious orders:
To catechists and bearers of the Word:

To our brothers and sisters in the apostolic lay movements:

To principals, teachers, and students in Catholic schools:

To all our beloved faithful:

Grace and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Dear brothers and sisters:

At this solemn Easter celebration, the ultimate expression of God's love for mankind through the redemption, we invite you to share more fully in the spiritual wealth of the Holy Year, which will be extended in Nicaragua by a special concession from Pope John Paul II until June 17, 1984, the feast of the Holy Trinity.

This extension and the urgent need in our society for sincere and brotherly reconciliation through individual conversion have moved us to send you this exhortation. . . .

II. OUR SITUATION

1. The Problem of Sin in the World

Pope John Paul II, in his message for the 17th World Day of Prayer for Peace on January 1, 1984, expressed his concern about the current world situation, a concern which we, too, share: "Peace is truly precarious, and injustice abounds. Relentless warfare is occurring in many countries, continuing on and on despite the proliferation of deaths, mourning, and destruction, without any apparent progress toward a solution. It is often the innocent who suffer, while passions become inflamed and there is the risk that fear will lead to an extreme situation."

2. In Nicaragua

A. Belligerent Situation:

Our country, too, is plagued by a belligerent situation pitting Nicaraguan against Nicaraguan, and the consequences of this situation could not be sadder:

- Many Nicaraguan youths and men are dying on the battlefields.
- Many others look toward the future with the fear of seeing their own lives prematurely ended.
- A materialistic and atheistic educational system is undermining the consciences of our children.
- Many families are divided by political differences.
- The suffering of mothers who have lost their children, which should merit our great respect, is instead exploited to incite hatred and feed the desire for vengeance.
- Farmworkers and Indians, for whom the Church reserves a special love, are suffering, living in constant anxiety, and many of them are forced to abandon their homes in search of a peace and tranquility that they do not find.
- Some of the mass media, using the language of hate, encourage a spirit of violence.

B. The Church:

One, albeit small, sector of our Church has abandoned ecclesiastical unity and surrendered to the tenets of a materialistic ideology. This sector sows confusion inside and outside Nicaragua through a campaign extolling its own ideas and defaming the legitimate pastors and the faithful who follow them. Censorship of the media makes it impossible to clarify the positions and offer other points of view.

3. Foreign interference

Foreign powers take advantage of our situation to encourage economic and ideological exploitation. They see us as support for their power, without respect for our persons, our history, our culture, and our right to decide our own destiny.

Consequently, the majority of the Nicaraguan people live in fear of their present and uncertainty of their future. They feel deep frustration, clamor for peace and freedom. Yet their voices are not heard, muted by belligerent propaganda on all sides. . . .

III. RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

1. Conversion and Reconciliation. . . .

2. Confession: the path to conversion. . . .

3. Dialogue:

The road to social peace is possible through dialogue, sincere dialogue that seeks truth and goodness. "That [dialogue] must be a meaningful and generous offer of a meeting of good intentions and not a possible justification for continuing to foment dissension and violence." (John Paul II, Greeting to Nicaragua, March 4, 1983)

***If we do not sit down to talk,
to try to find solutions to our
problems in civilized ways,
with talks . . . the flow of blood
will continue. . . .***

Archbishop of Managua
Obando y Bravo,
April 7, 1985

It is dishonest to constantly blame internal aggression and violence on foreign aggression.

It is useless to blame the evil past for everything without recognizing the problems of the present.

All Nicaraguans inside and outside the country must participate in this dialogue, regardless of ideology, class, or partisan belief. Furthermore, we think that Nicaraguans who have taken up arms against the Government must also participate in this dialogue. If not, there will be no possibility of a settlement, and our people, especially the poorest among them, will continue to suffer and die.

The dialogue of which we speak is not a tactical truce to strengthen positions for further struggle but a sincere effort to seek appropriate solutions to the anguish, pain, exhaustion, and fatigue of the many, many people who long for peace, the many, many people who want to live, to rise from the ashes, to see the warmth of a smile on a child's face, far from terror, in a climate of democratic harmony.

The terrible chain of reactions inherent in friend-enemy dialectics is halted by the word of God, who demands that we love even our enemies and that we forgive them. He urges us to move from distrust and aggressive-

ness to respect and harmony, in a climate conducive to true and objective deliberation on our problems and a prudent search for solutions. The solution is reconciliation (cf. John Paul II, Peace and Reconciliation. Address by the Pope in El Salvador, March 6, 1983).

If we are not open to objective acknowledgement of our situation and the events that distress our people ideologically, politically, and militarily, then we are not prepared, in a true and Christian way, for reconciliation for the sake of the real, living wholeness of our nation.

Considering that freedom of speech is a vital part of the dignity of a human being, and as such is indispensable to the well-being of the nation inasmuch as a country progresses only when there is freedom to generate new ideas, the right to free expression of one's ideas must be recognized.

The great powers, which are involved in this problem for ideological or economic reasons, must leave the Nicaraguans free from coercion. . . .

Done at Managua, April 22, Easter Sunday, 1984 (to be read and published in the usual manner), Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua.

Pablo A. Vega
Bishop of Juigalpa
President

Miguel Obando Bravo
Archbishop of Managua

Leovigildo Lopez Fitoria
Bishop of Granada

Salvador Schlaeffer B.
Bishop of Bluefields

Pedro L. Vilchez V.
Prelate of Jinotega

Bosco Vivas Robelo
Assistant Bishop of Managua
Secretary

Julian Barni
Bishop of Leon

Ruben Lopez Ardon
Bishop of Esteli

Carlos Santi
Bishop of Matagalpa

**Statement of the Coordinadora
Democratiza Nicaraguense,
February 22, 1985**

The *Coordinadora Democratiza Nicaraguense* (Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinating Board) wishes to make the following known to the people of Nicaragua and the free peoples of the world:

The situation in Nicaragua is deteriorating daily and has reached a state of true anguish. The people are suffering because there is a shortage of food and the salaries are low; there is no work, no medicine, no gasoline, no candles, no toilet paper, no toothpaste, no spare parts. The people are suffering because their children are receiving an education that can be more accurately described as Marxist-Leninist political indoctrination. Day and night, young people live with the fear that they will be unexpectedly detained and sent to perform military service in which they do not believe because it is identified with the interests of the party. Consequently, some choose to leave Nicaragua and others join the ranks of the armed resistance.

Just as our 1978-79 civil war was basically the result of the political intransigence of the Somoza dictatorship, the current civil war, and most of the other evils afflicting the Nicaraguan people, are basically the result of the intransigence of the FSLN [Sandinista National Liberation Front], which has adopted a Marxist-Leninist program and departed from the original plan. Approximately six years under the FSLN government have shown that it has not, to date, brought about liberation, as its name suggests, but rather burdens and subjugation.

... A successful solution will not be attained piecemeal or through separate dialogues involving the government and the farmers, the government and the cattle ranchers, or the government and the labor sector or even from dialogues with foreign governments. A comprehensive, fundamental solution [could] come about through a consensus between all Nicaraguans on a political, social, economic, moral, and human program for a new Nicaragua based on democracy sustained in freedom.

... We know that the number of citizens who no longer expect anything from such a civilized solution is continually growing because previous attempts at dialogue have shown that when the FSLN suggests such a course of action it is doing so, not with the honest desire to negotiate, but rather for the sole purpose of simulating democratic forms of government for foreign consumption. Nevertheless, we believe that there is still a way to bring about the honest, sincere, and effective dialogue that we are seeking and we suggest that the most promising way to bring it about would be to have it convened, organized, and coordinated by the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua.

It shares the people's suffering and their yearning for freedom, which has strengthened its moral authority, and it enjoys the absolute confidence of all sectors.

We therefore respectfully invite the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua to convoke such a dialogue without delay, providing for the representation of all Nicaraguans. In addition we request of the bishops that the dialogue sponsored by them be attended by guarantors whose presence would endorse the commitments made to the Nicaraguan people.

An honest desire to hold such a dialogue should be demonstrated in advance by halting armed actions and lifting the state of emergency for a reasonable period of time during which the dialogue should produce results; through a decree providing for general amnesty as well as complete and effective pardons; and through absolute respect for freedom of expressions, association, and assembly, as well as the rights set forth in the laws on amparo and habeas corpus. . . .

The anguish, the misery, the uncertainty, and the frustration of the Nicaraguan people all call for national dialogue. Let us heed that call.

Document on National Dialogue of the Nicaraguan Resistance, March 1, 1985

We, democratic citizens, representatives of all sectors of the Nicaraguan Resistance, announce to the Nicaraguan people, to the governments and peoples of the Americas and of the world, the following manifesto:

The Present Situation of Nicaragua

In recent years, the Sandinista Front has submerged our people in a crisis without precedent in our national history.

At this time, the impact of this crisis is evident in the economic, political, social and moral spheres of the nation.

This situation is rooted both in the abandonment of the original Program of Government and the Fundamental Statute as well as in the interference of the Soviet bloc in our internal affairs. . . .

The solution to the national crisis can only be found through a genuine understanding among all Nicaraguans that might end the civil war and lead to the reconciliation of the Nicaraguan family.

The proposal [of the opposition, issued on March 1] offers more than a chance for national reconciliation. It lets Nicaraguans remove their fate from foreign hands and restore it to Nicaraguan hands alone.

*Washington Post Editorial,
March 17, 1985*

Members of the *Coordinadora Democrática Nicaraguense*

- CTN:** *Central de los Trabajadores Nicaraguenses* (Nicaraguan Workers Central)
- CUS:** *Confederación de la Unidad Sindical* (Confederation of Labor Unity)
- PLC:** *Partido Liberal Constitucionalista* (Liberal Constitutionalist Party)
- PSD:** *Partido Social Democrático* (Social Democratic Party)
- COSEP:** *Consejo Superior de la Empresa Privada* (Superior Private Enterprise Council)
- PSC:** *Partido Social Cristiano* (Social Christian Party)

We wish to emphasize that this initiative is not taken to search for a quota of power, but rather it seeks only to establish in Nicaragua the rule of law which will permit the people to live in peace and to go about resolving our problems within a new constitutional order. . . .

Therefore, in view of the gravity of the moment, and conscious of our civic responsibilities and of the urgent need to save our people from greater suffering, we accept the call of the Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinating Board and exhort the Sandinista Front, for the last time, and in definitive and absolute fashion, to participate in a national dialogue which will end the national crisis. This dialogue should follow these modalities:

Convocation

The Nicaraguan Bishops Conference is the entity with the necessary moral authority to organize and coordinate the national dialogue. In this regard, we reiterate the petition made to it by the Democratic Coordinating Board to convene the national dialogue.

Participants

In order that the dialogue be efficient and produce the desired results, it is necessary to structure it in accordance with Nicaraguan reality. There are two political tendencies in Nicaragua: the totalitarian one which for the moment has accepted the Sandinista Front as its

sion of armed activities, with a ceasefire *in situ*; lifting of the state of emergency; absolute freedom of expression and assembly; general amnesty and pardon for political crimes and related crimes; entry into effect of the right of protective legal procedure (amparo) and *habeas corpus*, adding the granting of full protection of the physical and moral integrity of those members of the resistance who participate in the dialogue, in the event that it should take place in Nicaragua.

The application of these measures should be carried out under the supervision of the guarantor governments.

tional dialogue has not begun or has not progressed in clear and substantial form, it will be definitely suspended by the Nicaraguan Resistance, thereby terminating the possibilities for a peaceful resolution of the national crisis.

If the Nicaraguan Bishops Conference considers it useful to hold conversations with this group for purposes of preparations leading to the speedy realization of the dialogue, we announce our immediate availability to participate in such conversations. To that end we appoint as our representatives Messrs. Arturo J. Cruz, Alfonso Robelo and Adolfo Calero.

May love for our fatherland overcome selfishness and foreign involvement, so that the National Directorate of the Sandinista Front will respond positively to this our last effort to grant to our country a civilized solution.

God Save Nicaragua!

Wide possibilities are opening up for a political solution with the participation of all the sectors of the Nicaraguan population. The example that President Jose Napoleon Duarte gave when he accepted dialogue in El Salvador is relevant to the current Nicaraguan picture.

Carlos Andres Perez,
Vice President of the Socialist
International and former
President of Venezuela,
January 6, 1985

[Signed in San Jose, Costa Rica, March 1, 1985, by Arturo J. Cruz, Alfonso Robelo, Adolfo Calero P., Fernando Chamorro, Pedro J. Chamorro, Fernando Aguerro, Indalecio Rodriguez, Carlos Coronel Kautz, Leonel Poveda S., Claudio Picasso, Jose Luis Velasquez, Benjamin Gallo Lacayo, Jaime Morales C., Zacarias Hernandez, Jose Molina, Ulises Fonseca, Felix P. Pastora G., Federico Arguello S., Donald Lacayo N., Jairo Sanchez, Luz Marina Smith.]

vanguard, and the democratic one which is divided into armed organizations and civilian organizations; therefore, the dialogue should be between these two political tendencies so that both can name their respective delegates, as many as the Bishops Conference feels is appropriate.

Observers and Guarantors

We suggest to the Bishops Conference that it request the participation of the Central American governments in the dialogue as guarantors of the agreements which may be reached, given the fact that our fellow Central Americans are, in the final analysis, those which have been most directly affected by the Nicaraguan crisis.

The presence of these governments as guarantors in no way hinders the presence as observers or even as guarantors of other governments and democratic entities of the American continent.

Minimum Requirements

We support fully the minimum requirements demanded by the Democratic Coordinating Board in order to initiate the national dialogue. They are: suspen-

Temporary Permanence of the Executive

If this dialogue is carried out, we pledge to accept that Mr. Daniel Ortega continue acting as head of the Executive Branch until such time as the people pronounce themselves in a plebiscite. During this period, Mr. Ortega should govern in fulfillment of the promises of the Nicaraguan Revolutionary Government Junta contained in the document of July 12, 1979 transmitted to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, and in fulfillment of the original Program of Government, the Fundamental Statute and the American Human Rights Convention or Pact of San Jose. . . .

Initiation of the National Dialogue, Instrumentation and Deadlines

In order to carry out the national dialogue proposed by the Democratic Coordinating Board, on the basis of the statements contained in this document, and conscious of the Leninist tactic of stalling in order to consolidate the totalitarian program of the Sandinista Front, said dialogue must begin by March 20, 1985. This date cannot be postponed. If by April 20, 1985 the na-

Communique of the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference, March 22, 1985

The bishops of the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference after holding a regular meeting at our Episcopal House in Managua to meditate, in light of the Gospel, on the painful current situation in Nicaragua, wish to inform our faithful people and all men of good will of the following:

1. We bishops feel as our own the pain and suffering of all Nicaraguans, without any exceptions.
2. While we pray to our Lord Jesus Christ and to his Holy Mother for our brothers in the countryside and in the cities, we would like to cooperate, on the basis of our pastoral mission as conciliators, in seeking solutions to put an end to so much pain and so many tears.
3. It should be understood that this line of pastoral concern should include all our meetings or talks, be it with the Nicaraguan Government, or with any other person or organized sector in Nicaragua.

4. We feel that under the current circumstances, everything stated in our pastoral letter of 22 April 1984 is still valid, particularly in relation to the dialogue as the path toward conciliation.

5. Under the conviction that violence will never solve a problem from its roots, we express our willingness to mediate in an internal dialogue, as long as the following points are clear:

A. The church cannot impose a dialogue.

B. A dialogue must be accepted by both sides.

C. Our stance must not be interpreted as a political position in favor of a specific party or ideology.

We urge Catholic Church members to work hard at becoming promoters of peace and conciliation in their homes, and we urge our brothers suffering in one way or the other to share their pain with Jesus Christ, in order to obtain forgiveness and achieve harmony among Nicaraguans.

[Signed in Managua by Msgr. Bosco Vivas Robelo, Managua's Auxiliary Bishop and Secretary of the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference.]

President Reagan's Proposal

"In a sincere effort to start a dialogue aimed at true internal reconciliation which can bring peace and liberty to Nicaragua" (Radio address April 6, 1985), President Reagan on April 4, 1985, added his prestige to the building Nicaraguan peace process.

The President's proposal made clear that because U.S. support for the Nicaraguan resistance had peace and democracy as its priority objectives, that support would be treated as part of the peace process.

Remarks by President Reagan, April 4, 1985

I want to announce today a proposal for peace in Central America that can enable liberty and democracy to prevail in this troubled region and that can protect the security of our own borders, economy, and people.

On March 1 in San Jose, Costa Rica, the leaders of the Nicaraguan democratic resistance met with a broad coalition of other exiled Nicaraguan democrats. They agreed upon and signed a historic proposal to restore peace and democracy in their country.

The members of the democratic resistance offered a cease-fire in return for an agreement by the Nicaraguan regime to begin a dialogue mediated by the Bishops' Conference of the Roman Catholic Church with the goal of restoring democracy through honest elections. To date, the Nicaraguan regime has refused this offer.

What matters is the commitment to democratic institutions governed by regular popular elections. Unlike the guerrillas in El Salvador, we are not demanding power, we are demanding only our rights. . . . we want a constitutional solution.

Arturo Cruz, Sr. and Jr.,
March 18, 1985

The Central American countries, including Nicaragua, have agreed that internal reconciliation is indispensable to regional peace. But we know that, unlike President Duarte of El Salvador who seeks a dialogue with his opponents, the communists in Nicaragua have turned, at least up until now, a cold shoulder to appeals for national reconciliation from the Pope and the Nicaraguan bishops. And we know that without incentives, none of this will change.

For these reasons, great numbers of Nicaraguans are demanding change and taking up arms to fight for the stolen promise of freedom and democracy. Over 15,000 farmers, small merchants, whites, blacks, and Miskito Indians have united to struggle for a true democracy.

We supported democracy in Nicaragua before, and we support democracy today. We supported national reconciliation before, and we support it today. We believe that democracy deserves as much support in Nicaragua as it has received in El Salvador. And we're proud of the help that we've given to El Salvador.

You may recall that in 1981, we were told that the communist guerrillas were mounting a final offensive, the government had no chance, and our approach would lead to greater American involvement. Well, our critics were wrong. Democracy and freedom are winning in El Salvador. President Duarte is pulling his country together and enjoys wide support from the people. And all of this with America's help kept strictly limited.

The formula that worked in El Salvador—support for democracy, self-defense, economic development, and dialogue—will work for the entire region. And we couldn't have ac-

complished this without bipartisan support in Congress, backed up by the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, headed by Henry Kissinger. And that's why, after months of consulting with congressional leaders and listening carefully to their concerns, I am making the following proposal: I'm calling upon both sides to lay down their

arms and accept the offer of church-mediated talks on internationally supervised elections and an end to the repression now in place against the church, the press, and individual rights.

To the members of the democratic resistance, I ask them to extend their offer of a cease-fire until June 1.

To the Congress, I ask for immediate release of the \$14 million already appropriated. While the cease-fire offer is on the table, I pledge these funds will not be used for arms or munitions. These funds will be used for food, clothing, and medicine and other support for survival. The democratic opposition cannot be a partner in negotiations without these basic necessities.

If the Sandinistas accept this peace offer, I will keep my funding restrictions in effect. But peace negotiations must not become a cover for deception and delay. If there is no agreement after 60 days of negotiations, I will lift these restrictions, unless both sides ask me not to.

I want to emphasize that consistent with the 21 goals of the Contadora process, the United States continues to seek:

1. Nicaragua's implementation of its commitment to democracy made to the Organization of American States;

2. An end to Nicaragua's aggression against its neighbors;

3. A removal of the thousands of Soviet-bloc, Cuban, PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization], Libyan, and other military and security personnel; and

4. A return of the Nicaraguan military to a level of parity with their neighbors.

Now, later today, I will be meeting with Arturo Cruz, Adolfo Calero, and Alfonso Robelo [leaders of the - Nicaraguan opposition] to discuss my proposal. Democracy is the road to peace. But if we abandon the brave members of the democratic resistance, we will also remove all constraints on the communists.

Democracy can succeed in Central America, but Congress must release the funds that can create incentives for dialogue and peace. If we provide too little help, our choice will be a communist Central America with communist subversion spreading southward and northward. We face the risk that 100 million people from Panama to our open southern border could come under the control of pro-Soviet regimes and threaten the United States with violence, economic chaos, and a human tidal wave of refugees.

We strongly support President Duarte's dialogue with Salvadoran guerrillas. The lack of a parallel development in Nicaragua was 1984's major disappointment.

Secretary Shultz,
Special Report No. 124,
April 1985

Central America is not condemned to that dark future of endless violence. If the United States meets its obligations to help those now striving for democracy, they can create a bright future in which peace for all Americans will be secure.

So, in the spirit of Easter, let us make this so. I look forward to working with the Congress on this important matter in the coming weeks.

Initial Regional Support

The President's Easter peace proposal focused attention on the need for dialogue as essential to peace in Central America.

President Duarte of El Salvador:

*Letter to President Reagan,
April 4, 1985*

Dear Mr. President:

I want to thank you most sincerely and warmly for your letter delivered to me today which explains your new peace initiative in Nicaragua and Central America. Your initiative and approach have my complete support and I strongly urge all of the friends of Central America in your Congress to give it their full backing. It is the right step at the right time in our quest for peace and democracy in this region. We appreciate as well your continuing strong support for democracy in El Salvador.

As you know, the Salvadoran people have just been to the polls for the fourth time in three years. While we do not yet have the official results, the apparent significant victory of my government and my party is, in my opinion, first and foremost an endorsement of the efforts we have made, with the help of the people and government of the United States, to bring peace, reconciliation and democracy to our own country through an internal dialogue. We believe our approach of opening such a dialogue and offering a full opportunity to all of our Salvadoran brothers to participate in a free and constitutional democratic process in our country should also be offered to all of those who are struggling for democracy in Nicaragua. I speak for all Salvadorans in warmly applauding your efforts.

We remain concerned, as we have been for some time, by the continuing flow of supplies and munitions from Nicaragua to guerrilla forces here in El Salvador which are fighting against my government and our programs of reform, democracy, reconciliation, and peace. This continuing intervention in our internal affairs is of great concern to us and we deeply appreciate any efforts which your government can take to

build a broad barrier to such activities—efforts which a small country like El Salvador cannot take in its own behalf.

Please accept my personal thanks for this courageous step and my best wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,

JOSE NAPOLEON DUARTE
President of the Republic of
El Salvador
San Salvador.

President Betancur of Colombia:

Press Conference, April 5, 1985

The step the President of the United States has taken fits perfectly within the philosophy and within the reach of the Document of Objectives which the countries of Central America freely signed. . . .

Address to Nation, April 7, 1985

I am in agreement with the President in seeking a dialogue between the Sandinista government and the opposition especially the *Coordinadora Democrática*—all within the spirit of Contadora which seeks national reconciliations and for which the President confirmed to me his support.

President Suazo of Honduras:

*Letter to President Reagan,
April 8, 1985*

Dear Mr. President:

I have received your kind communication of April 4 by which you brought to my attention the efforts that the Government of the United States is making with the purpose of strengthening democratic institutions in Nicaragua and supporting a dialogue between the opposition forces and the Sandinista government with the mediation of the Catholic Church in that country.

Since the month of June 1983, when my government actively participated in the drafting of a document known as "Bases for Peace in Central America," Honduras has firmly supported actions intended to put an end to the armed conflicts being experienced in some Central American countries. We have supported actions of national reconciliation, dialogue, and the free manifestation of popular will as ways which could lead to

the establishment of authentic democratic, pluralistic, and representative institutions in all of the countries in our region.

In this sense, your initiative has the enormous merit of supporting negotiated solutions to the Central American crisis and at the same time positively supporting the efforts of the Nicaraguan people to find peace in democracy.

I very much appreciate the advance notification of actions which your government will take in the near future. For my part, I want to reiterate once again that the government over which I preside will not hesitate even for an instant in its efforts to achieve a comprehensive, regional agreement which is fully verifiable, as is specified in the Twenty-one Objectives approved by the Central American countries in the framework of the Contadora negotiations. In this sense, my government shares and supports the ends that you pursue with this important initiative.

Please accept, Mr. President, my congratulations for this decision while at the same time I reiterate my sentiments of personal respect.

ROBERTO SUAZO CORDOVA
Constitutional President of the
Republic of Honduras

President de la Madrid of Mexico

*Excerpt From Office Communique,
April 8, 1985*

Cessation of hostilities is, in Mexico's opinion, an indispensable objective for the promotion of a climate appropriate for dialogue and negotiation among the countries of the area and among the different political groups within each country. President Reagan's proposal to encourage cessation of hostilities could constitute a forward step in the solution of this delicate conflict.

President Barletta of Panama:

*Excerpt from Foreign Ministry Bulletin,
April 10, 1985*

In President Barletta's opinion, there exist positive elements in President Reagan's proposal. Above all, the proposal moves forward both on the cessation of hostilities in Central America as well as on dialogue instead of confrontation. President Barletta indicated that in any case it is important to open a breathing space that would permit deeper study of President Reagan's proposal in order to determine its true scope. President Barletta indicated his

pleasure with the support President Reagan is giving to the Contadora Group's effort.

President Lusinchi of Venezuela:

*Press Conference, New York,
April 10, 1985*

We believe that [President Reagan's proposal] is valid, as it explores a possibility for a peaceful solution to the internal crisis in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan Government would not lose anything by entering into conversations with the opposition.

President Febres Cordero of Ecuador:

*Press Conference, New York,
April 10, 1985*

I've already looked favorably on the call for a dialogue. If the left has been suggesting in general a dialogue between the guerrillas and the legitimately constituted government in El Salvador, and all the parties in Guatemala take part in the democratic process, why can't there be a dialogue between the Sandinista Government and the opposition forces?

President Monge of Costa Rica

*Letter to President Reagan,
April 10, 1985*

I feel obliged to convey my enthusiastic support for [the President's] proposal. . . . As a Costa Rican, I should note that my position is justified above all because it is a proposal for a peaceful solution to one of the great problems of our time in Central America, aimed at achieving peace and making possible democracy. Having for many years resolved our problems in a peaceful manner, through the exercise of democracy, Costa Ricans fervently desire that all the peoples of Central America likewise receive the benefits which such procedures convey and that by their means they may resolve their problems, thus definitively distancing Central America from the nightmare of war, both international and civil.

President Alfonsin of Argentina:

*Washington Post, Interview,
April 11, 1985*

I think [President Reagan's proposal] is a positive policy that, if taken up by Latin America, might produce some formula for a solution.

Chronology

June 1979

Anti-Somoza opposition issues communique from San Jose, Costa Rica, promising first free Nicaraguan elections in 100 years.

Resolution of 17th Meeting of Consultation of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of American States (OAS) calls for installation of democratic government in Nicaragua including representatives of all groups opposing the Somoza regime.

July 1979

Anti-Somoza opposition sends cable promising free elections to the Secretary General of the OAS.

Anti-Somoza opposition coalition assumes power in Nicaragua; United States begins economic assistance.

October 1979

General Romero is overthrown in El Salvador by military and civilian group promising extensive political, social and economic reform.

April 1980

Alfonso Robelo resigns from Nicaraguan Government after Sandinistas pack Council of State with its supporters by enlarging the membership from 33 to 47.

March 1980

Agrarian reform begins in El Salvador.

November 1980

Sandinista security forces murder Jorge Salazar. Business group (COSEP) and independent political parties withdraw temporarily from Council of State.

January 1981

Salvadoran FMLN guerrillas, using arms supplied by the Soviet bloc through Nicaragua, launch "final offensive" against the Salvadoran Government; United States suspends aid to Nicaragua.

March 1982

Constituent Assembly election in El Salvador.

October 1982

Declaration of San Jose (signed by Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, and the United States) calls for internal reconciliation and democracy in each Central American country as requirement for regional peace.

January 1983

Contadora peace process launched by Foreign Ministers of Colombia, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela.

February 1983

El Salvador Peace Commission established, including a representative from the church. Efforts focused on promoting the participation of all social and political sectors in the democratic process.

April 1983

President Reagan announces appointment of a Special Envoy for Central America. Focus included facilitating internal dialogue in both El Salvador and Nicaragua.

September 1983

21-point "Document of Objectives" signed by the five Central American and the four Contadora countries.

December 1983

Nicaraguan opposition *Coordinadora* issues nine-point communique calling for dialogue leading to open elections.

February 1984

Nicaraguan armed opposition FDN offers to lay down arms in exchange for participation in elections.

April 1984

Easter pastoral letter of the Nicaraguan bishops calls for dialogue, including with armed opposition.

May 1984

Jose Napoleon Duarte elected President of El Salvador in run-off election.

September-October 1984

International and regional efforts to induce Sandinistas to allow open, fair competition for November 4 elections fail.

October-November 1984

Salvadoran President Duarte calls at UN General Assembly for dialogue with armed opposition; meetings between government and FMLN take place October 15 at La Palma and November 20 at Ayagualo.

February 1985

Statement calling for church-mediated dialogue issued in Managua by the opposition *Coordinadora*.

March 1985

Document on national dialogue of the Nicaraguan resistance issued in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Communique of the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference, accepting mediation role in dialogue.

Legislative and municipal elections in El Salvador; fourth free election in 3 years.

April 1985

President Reagan calls on Nicaraguan Government to accept dialogue.

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