

The Contadora Peace Process

by

Harold Dana Sims and Vilma Petrash

INTRODUCTION: THE CRISIS

The foreign ministers of Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico met on the Panamanian island of Contadora January 8-9, 1983 to launch an effort aimed at persuading the states of Central America to make peace with each other and with their guerrillas. Internal wars had raged in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua since the early 1970s—intensifying since 1979, abetted by external intervention by the superpowers and their allies—and an uncertain peace had prevailed in Honduras. The leadership of the guerrillas generally professed a commitment to Marxism-Leninism, though some had been attracted by Liberation Theology, and their political-military organizations maintained strong links with Cuba and other Communist Party states as well as the Latin American and European left. A sizeable Cuban presence was evident in Nicaragua after July 1979, accompanied by professions of Marxism-Leninism by several members of the Sandinista leadership. Just across the border in Honduras an impressive U.S. military presence was seemingly permanently ensconced, explained by the staging of repeated maneuvers, the longest in U.S. history. Moreover, after November 1981 the United States was sponsoring an initially covert war in Nicaragua using Nicaraguan exiles and refugees, based primarily in Honduras and secondarily in Costa Rica, against the revolutionary regime. Public protestations aside, the obvious implication was that the governments of Honduras and Nicaragua accepted the presence of the “contras” and the correctness of U.S. strategy *vis à vis* Managua.

By 1983, just as the Contadora effort was commencing, domestic divisions over U.S. Central American policy led the administration of President Ronald Reagan to summon a bipartisan commission, headed by Henry Kissinger, to prepare an agenda that might calm the debate at home and rally more Democrats to the President’s side. The Kissinger Commission completed its report by year’s end, providing the outline for future administration policy including massive aid recommendations and lukewarm support for the Nicaraguan Contras. U.S. aid had escalated after 1979, reaching levels unprecedented in the history of American relations with Central America. Economic aid outstripped military aid by the ratio of roughly three-to-one. As the states of the Isthmus increased their dependence upon U.S. largesse, the influence of the “Colossus to the North” increased accordingly.¹

The Contadora “Process” which resulted from the foreign ministers’ first meeting in January 1983 attempted to address all of the issues raised by the conflicts in Central America and most importantly, revealed a tenacity which no one could have predicted at the outset. The effort produced three treaty drafts by 1986, by which time the parties who were

the object of this peaceful "intervention" had begun to expose and address the tough issues which had to be resolved if the Contadora effort was to succeed.

The case under study involves one group of states—the Contadora Four—attempting to end internal rebellion and external intervention and regulate relations among a second set of states—those of the Central American Isthmus—in the interests of all concerned, including the superpowers. Lessons to be derived from this multilateral effort revolve around the difficulty of such a thankless undertaking; efforts of this sort may be "predestined" to fail. Third parties may be unable to initiate negotiations between contending states suffering internal war and external interventions aimed at intensifying war. When the states attempting the effort have prestige but little material weight in the region (only Mexico was a major oil supplier, for example), they are in no position to force a decision. Bargaining between intermediaries is at best only a poor substitute for negotiations between rival actors.

CENTRAL AMERICAN INTERESTS: THE STATES OF THE ISTHMUS

A number of nations had a special interest in the outcome of the conflicts in Central America. The U.S. saw the hand of the Soviet Union and of Cuba at work in the guerrilla wars in El Salvador and Guatemala, and since 1979 in the revolutionary government of Nicaragua. America resented outside interference in its traditional sphere of influence and feared the potential for exporting revolution commanded by the Sandinista government.

For Guatemala, which, after 1982, was in the process of restoring democracy, there was the danger that Managua's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) regime and the Cubans might provide additional support for the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) guerrillas. As if to pacify the Nicaraguans, Guatemala pursued a neutral policy, a policy unique in the region and all the more surprising given the military nature of the Guatemalan government for most of the period following the launching of Contadora. The dictatorship of General Oscar Mejía Víctores gave way to the elected Christian Democrat government of Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo only in early 1986.

For El Salvador, calculated diplomatic subterfuge made less sense, since it faced a ferocious guerrilla war, marked by aid and advice flowing directly from Nicaragua to the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). El Salvador depended upon U.S. military and economic support for its very survival. Its Christian Democrat regime, headed by José Napoleón Duarte, was elected in 1984 in a process boycotted by the left.

Quiescent Honduras cast a wary eye over all of the revolutions of the Isthmus, sharing, as it does, a common border with Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Its civilian government was really "bicephalous," because the armed forces commander had as much or more to say about policy than the President. Like El Salvador, Honduras

was dependent upon the United States for economic and military aid, and its territory served as a locale for repeated military maneuvers sponsored by its benefactor, the Reagan administration. Tensions with Nicaragua were heightened by the presence of the main contra force, the National Democratic Front (FDN), and its Miskito Indian component, *Kisan*, on Honduran soil—irregular armies, financed by the U.S. and attempting to overthrow the Sandinista government. In elections of January 1986, the ineffectual Roberto Suazo Córdoba government was replaced by an even weaker one, led by José Azcona Hoyo of a different faction of the badly-divided traditional Liberal Party.

Costa Rica, lacking an army and enjoying political stability since 1948, also had reason to fear Nicaragua's revolutionary fervor and potential aggressiveness. As the nation in the region with the longest consistent commitment to democratic practice, Costa Rica risked a great deal by allowing the U.S. and the contras (initially, the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE), later the FDN) to operate from its northern border. As the first state of the Isthmus to declare bankruptcy, it too was dependent upon American economic aid and by 1985, was receiving military assistance for its ill-equipped civil defence force. Costa Rica's traditional pro-American attitude and foreign policy was reinforced by the threat immediately to the north.

Nicaragua had after 1979 a militant, leftist, revolutionary regime closely aligned with Cuba and sympathetic to the Cuban doctrine of "proletarian internationalism." Its support for the left in neighboring countries, as well as its revolutionary example, was a threat to the more traditional governments of the Isthmus. Once the U.S. began a process of eliminating economic ties with Nicaragua, the FSLN regime expanded links with Western Europe and the Communist states. Its burgeoning Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) ties made the revolutionary government appear an even greater threat. By 1984 Nicaragua's dependence upon the COMECON states was quite advanced and the Reagan administration, though restrained by the Congress, seemed determined to remove the regime through support for the contras, if not by actual U.S. invasion (expected almost daily by the FSLN). Nicaragua became the most heavily armed state in the region, receiving the latest sophisticated Soviet bloc weapons with the exception of MiGs, which the U.S. had made clear it would not tolerate. Guerrillas and young militants from neighboring states (including Honduras and Costa Rica) were receiving training under FSLN auspices. Any effort to diffuse potential threats in Central America, therefore, required a major campaign by a bloc of key countries, and hopes for success did not seem bright.

REGIONAL INTERESTS

The nations that attempted to find such a solution had good reason to make the effort. Mexico had traditionally displayed an interest in Central America, having exercised a profound cultural influence in the region, and on more than one occasion, working unsuccessfully to prevent the U.S. from unseating a government that had shown a marked

tendency to independence. Mexico harbored the suspicion that the United States sought to "encircle" it and deny Mexican influence in the region. Moreover, a U.S. policy that aspired to eradicate the left in Central America, created problems at home for the Mexican government with its own left. Since the days of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) Mexico's foreign policy had functioned to co-opt the left domestically by displaying a marked tolerance of leftist regimes abroad.

Venezuela, on the other hand, supported democracy in Latin America generally and the COPEI party had an affinity for the Christian Democrats of the region. Venezuela was also concerned about the spread of Cuban influence in the Caribbean basin and had pursued an activist policy in the Isthmus, especially during the revolutionary war against the Anastasio Somoza Debayle regime in Nicaragua when it had helped arm the Sandinistas and defend Costa Rica against threats from Somoza. Now it was concerned about anti-democratic tendencies in Managua, as well as U.S. intervention in the region.

Colombia, the other major participant in Contadora, was also a formal democracy with some seniority as such. Though conservatively governed it had just entered the non-aligned movement. It too sought to forestall both U.S. and Cuban influence in the region and no doubt wished to prevent Venezuela from gaining too much influence to the exclusion of Colombia.

Panama became involved in Contadora for two reasons. First, such involvement allowed Panama to demonstrate its independence from the U.S. However, under the populist Omar Torrijos regime, Panama had played a major role in the defeat of Somoza, having provided arms to the FSLN. Therefore it is likely that Panama's concern over the ideological drift in Managua provided the second reason. This was especially true for its coup-prone National Guard (soon to be 'promoted' to the status of Panamanian Defense Forces). Panama served as the seat of the Group but was less active than the larger states, at least until 1986. It did not enjoy the benefits of thoroughgoing democracy, since its officer corps, under General Manuel Antonio Noriega, a man deeply involved in drug smuggling and corruption, displayed a marked instinct for political meddling with the executive, whom it regularly altered. Current president, Erick Arturo Delvalle, is referred to as 'your turn' by the local press.

THE ORIGINS OF CONTADORA

The origins of the Contadora process may be traced to a series of challenges and responses by regional actors in 1982. On March 23, for example, Honduran foreign minister Edgardo Paz Bárnica proposed a six-point agenda concerning disarmament in Central America² in a speech before the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States. In terms similar to those adopted by Contadora the following year, he called for reductions in foreign military advisors, procedures and mechanisms to halt the regional arms traffic, respect for national boundaries, a permanent multilateral dialogue leading to internal political reconciliation, the full exercise of civil rights throughout the

region, and monitoring and control of compliance with compromises assumed by regional governments. The first serious signs of Venezuelan and Mexican activity aimed at promoting Central American peace was contained in their joint Declaration communicated to President Reagan on September 7, 1982. In it they recommended a regional Program of Cooperation, a program which resulted from a summit held in San José, Costa Rica on May 8.³ The López Portillo-Herrera Campíns initiative of September 7 assigned part of the blame for regional tensions to Nicaragua whose "disproportionate" military build-up was said to be responsible for poor relations with her northern neighbor, Honduras. Nicaragua, of course, took issue with that interpretation in its response to the initiative on September 24. The Sandinistas called for the start of a "constructive dialogue" with representatives of the Honduran government.⁴ Reacting to the formation of a Latin American bloc interested in Central American questions, on October 4 the United States fostered a second Declaration of San José, backed by a 'Forum for Peace and Democracy,' a cluster of Central American and Caribbean states. Mexico and Venezuela refused to attend but Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica and Belize heeded the U.S. call.⁵ When approached by Costa Rica, Nicaragua rejected the San José initiative, citing U.S. participation. As illustrated, a flurry of activity preceded the launching of the Contadora Process, and from the outset, the United States was clearly in disagreement over Central American security issues with several of the participants.

The initial meeting of the Contadora Group, on January 8-9, 1983, produced a consensus among the participating nations that they could play a constructive role in bringing peace to the Isthmus.⁶ Shuttle diplomacy commenced as the "Contadora Four," Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama, sought to persuade Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica to cooperate in an effort to reduce tensions and find peaceful, negotiated solutions to their differences. The resulting "Bulletin" enunciated the participants concern over foreign intervention—direct and indirect—in Central American affairs, as well as their rejection of the East-West framework of analysis applied by the Reagan administration. Since the United States was not, officially at least, a party to the process, there was considerable uncertainty concerning the U.S. position regarding the effort. Publicly, the American government professed support for Contadora while its regional oponents contended that the 'colossus of the north' was seeking to sabotage negotiations.

The initial emphasis was placed upon reducing tensions in the region and especially on preventing the outbreak of war between Honduras and Nicaragua, a development which could have replaced covert conflict with overt war across national boundaries. With this in mind a series of meetings were held, February to July 1983, between Contadora members and the key Central American states. Nothing of significance resulted, however.

THE PROCESS GAINS MOMENTUM (1983-84)

An event of much greater importance took place on July 16-17: the presidents of the Contadora Four met in Mexico and issued the Cancún Declaration on Peace in Central America. The document set forth, for the first time, a set of ten commitments which, if assumed by the states of the Isthmus, in the opinion of the Contadora governments, would allow peaceful coexistence in Central America.⁷ The commitments included ending all belligerencies, freezing offensive weapons at their current level, beginning negotiations to control and reduce current weapons stocks, prohibiting foreign military installations within national territories, providing prior notice of important troop movements near frontiers, organizing groups of frontier observers, establishing mixed border security commissions, creating additional commissions to prevent the transit of weapons from one country to another, promoting a climate of detente and confidence in the region, and establishing direct communications between governments. For the first time, the process seemed hopeful, as Nicaragua welcomed the step on July 19,⁸ the U.S. recognized the Cancún initiative on July 21, and Cuba spoke favorably of it on July 23. These steps were followed by statements of support for the process from many nations both inside and outside the region; Honduras, El Salvador, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Spain, Japan, Italy, and India all declared their support. The Nicaraguan response came at the IV Anniversary celebration of the Sandinista Revolution on July 19. Junta Coordinator Daniel Ortega Saavedra pledged support for Contadora and the Cancún Declaration and proposed a six-point agenda to attain regional peace. Among the points presented by Ortega were his government's willingness to accept all proposals put forward thus far by Contadora, the need for the signing of a set of regional "common principles," and the creation of monitoring commissions. On August 5, the Honduran foreign minister added his voice of approval concerning the results achieved at Cancún.⁹

Buoyed by this response the foreign ministers of the Contadora group and the five Central American states met in Panama City on September 7-9, and adopted a pronouncement of fundamental importance: the Document of Objectives, based upon the earlier ten-point agreement.¹⁰ Addressing the most serious problems of the region, the new Document contained 21 basic points aimed at achieving peace, security, the cooperation required for economic and social development, and the strengthening of democratic institutions in Central America. The Document of Objectives constituted the only specific political understanding to be endorsed by the five Central American nations under the auspices of the Contadora Group. By adopting the Document, the Central American states committed themselves to: end the arms race; ban the presence of foreign forces, or installations of national territory; reduce the numbers of (and eventually eliminate) foreign military advisors; halt the arms traffic in the region; oppose the use of these territories for military or logistical support of groups intent upon overthrowing other governments; oppose acts of terrorism and sabotage in

Central America; and bring about national reconciliation within each country. Goals this sweeping would not be easy to implement or enforce in practice.

With this progress came new support for the Contadora process. On September 27, Pope John Paul II praised the effort, and on October 8, representatives of 43 countries attending a meeting of the Liberal International endorsed the quest for peace. On November 7, Alejandro Orfila, Secretary General of the Organization of American States, expressed OAS support for the initiative undertaken by the Contadora states in his annual report. Further, on November 11, the United Nations General Assembly issued Resolution 38/10, embracing both the Cancún Declaration and the Document of Objectives. Finally, the General Commission of the XIII OAS Assembly acclaimed a Resolution reaffirming the principles of the OAS Charter. On November 17 the Commission issued this Resolution and expressed its firm support for the endeavors of the Contadora Group.

Yet the response that counted, of course, was the one from Managua. On September 26, Coordinator Ortega endorsed the Document of Objectives and reiterated Nicaragua's support for the peace process.¹¹ On October 15, the Nicaraguan government drew up an official proposal, intended for consideration within the Contadora framework, entitled "Juridical Bases to Guarantee International Peace and Security in the Central American States."¹² This served to shape, to a considerable degree, the subsequent efforts of the Contadora Group. The proposal contained four draft treaties: the first, a guarantee of mutual respect, peace and security between Nicaragua and the United States; the second, a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation between Honduras and Nicaragua; the third, an accord intended to contribute to the peaceful solution of the armed conflict in El Salvador; and the fourth, a general treaty for the maintenance of peace and security as well as friendship and cooperation between the states of Central America. The United States opposed this effort by Nicaragua to redirect the Contadora Process to Nicaragua's advantage.¹³

In addition, no other Central American state acted upon the Nicaraguan initiative. As a result, the Sandinista effort was aborted. The failure of other Central American states to act lends credence to the Nicaraguan charge that the Tegucigalpa bloc is dependent upon the U.S. for its policy direction.

Nonetheless, the process made concrete progress early in 1984 when the foreign ministers of the Contadora Four and of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua met in Panama City. The joint meeting drew up an appropriately named document, "Norms for the Implementation of Commitments in the Document of Objectives,"¹⁴ treating questions of regional security, political systems, and cooperation in economic and social matters. Separate Commissions on Security, Political Affairs, and Economic and Social Affairs soon set to work. In April the Central American and Contadora foreign

ministers, acting upon reports submitted by the Commissions, agreed to carry on the task of ordering and integrating available information, facilitating the preparation of documents which could become regional peace agreements.

By June 9, the Contadora Group was ready to submit its first comprehensive draft agreement for consideration by the Heads of State of the five Central American nations.¹⁵ Entitled "Contadora Act for Peace and Cooperation in Central America," it represented an effort to incorporate all of the proposals that had emerged up to mid-1984.¹⁶ It stressed the need for detente in Central America and the importance of confidence-building measures but more importantly, it set down rules for the conduct of military maneuvers, banned new foreign military bases or training establishments and proposed the elimination of existing bases within one year of the treaty's signing. The draft affirmed the need to end arms sales and the arms race in the region and to deny support for irregular forces and proposed the creation of a mechanism for control and verification through a permanent and autonomous commission. The Act envisioned the creation of rapid communication channels between governments and military authorities and the foundation of mixed security commissions, particularly between Nicaragua and Honduras while strengthening existing ones such as the Costa Rican-Nicaraguan commission. The Act also advocated the principles of pluralist democracy with full freedom for different currents of opinion, national reconciliation and dialogue, including certain guarantees for opponents and amnesties. A political commission was envisioned, of a construction similar to the military commission, to receive and assess information about the implementation of political, electoral, and human rights obligations undertaken by the signatories.¹⁷ In July, U.S. special envoy Harry Schlaudemann and Nicaraguan Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Victor Hugo Tinoco began bilateral talks at Manzanillo, Mexico. Each of these moves seemed to portend progress in resolving various conflicts in the Isthmus.

The revised version of the Contadora Act for Peace and Cooperation in Central America was submitted to the five Central American states on September 7, 1984.¹⁸ Two weeks of intensive study followed, during which neither the United States nor its Isthmian allies publicly criticized the document. Then on September 21, to the astonishment of Nicaragua's adversaries, the Sandinistas agreed to accept the Act in its entirety, immediately and without modification.¹⁹ The U.S., caught by surprise, protested that the Act was a draft only, never intended to be a final document; changes were necessary, asserted Washington on October 1. The allies were unprepared for the rapid and wholly positive Nicaraguan response and a consultation was called among the Sandinistas' neighbors. In the end, despite having expressed support for the document earlier, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and "neutral" Guatemala would be pressured effectively by U.S. envoy Harry Schlaudemann not to sign the treaty draft.²⁰ Clearly, the U.S. commitment to destabilize Nicaragua played a role in this decision: the North

Americans were counted upon to protect the Tegucigalpa bloc from the aggressive revolution next door. Whether more direct leverage was applied by Schlaudemann, one cannot be certain. The Act that stirred such concern was not in itself a weak document: it prohibited the introduction of new weapons systems or the construction of foreign military bases in the Isthmus; and it called for the eventual removal of foreign military advisors, an end to "regional and extra-regional arms traffic to persons, organizations, irregular forces or armed bands that [were] trying to destabilize governments," and for free elections and an amnesty for political dissidents.²¹ In the U.S. view, however, the document offered decided disadvantages to open democracies and favored Nicaragua's "closed society" where the government would implement its tenets selectively.

FAILED OPPORTUNITY: THE PROCESS STALLS (1984-85)

In view of the opposition, Honduran Foreign Minister Paz Bárnica hosted a meeting on October 20 of the Central American nations aligned with the U.S. to discuss new revisions of the Contadora Act. A 'counterdraft' resulted which included several proposed changes, aimed at producing "an appropriate equilibrium" between the demands of each of the Central American states.²² The counterdraft called for: 1) an immediate temporary arms freeze, followed by negotiations to set each nation's arms level; 2) the establishment of a verification and control commission that included representatives from each of the Central American states and had the power to conduct on-site inspections; 3) the elimination of the original document's ban on military maneuvers; and 4) a proposal for a timetable to be drawn up within ninety days for the elimination of foreign bases and removal of foreign military advisors.²³ Clearly, this reflected U.S. concern over the weakness of enforcement provisions contained in the earlier revised Act.

The U.S. government was now faced with Nicaragua's acceptance of the revised Act and with the pressure exerted by the Contadora states upon each of the Central American 'democracies' to sign a document which the United States considered to be contrary to its interest. In response, the U.S. sought to forestall Latin American acceptance by countering this pressure. According to a National Security Council memo, the Tegucigalpa counterdraft reflected the administration's "concerns and shift[ed] the focus within Contadora to a document broadly consistent with U.S. interests."²⁴ Moreover, a secret background paper, prepared for the NSC on October 30, asserted that the U.S. government had succeeded in blocking the Contadora Group's efforts to impose the second draft of the revised Act.²⁵ The memo also acknowledged that the counterdraft submitted to the Contadora states by the Tegucigalpa Group was the result of intensive U.S. consultation with its allies—El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica. The Tegucigalpa response forced the Contadora states into another round of consultations and prolonged the peace effort into 1985.

The Contadora Group met in Panama on January 8-9, 1985 (on the second anniversary of the process) to discuss the objections to the revised act put forward at Tegucigalpa by Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. The Group called for a new conference to be held in February in Panama and to include all of the Central American republics. However, on January 10 Costa Rica announced its decision not to attend any further Contadora meetings until its dispute with Nicaragua over the Sandinistas' alleged violation of Costa Rican asylum for a Nicaraguan youth, José Manuel Urbina Lara, was resolved.²⁶ In addition, Costa Rica petitioned the Organization of American States (OAS) to investigate the case. The issue escalated when, on January 17, the Honduran National Security Council expressed its solidarity with Costa Rica, announcing that unless Urbina Lara was released Honduras would also boycott the February meeting. The following day, the Salvadoran government, denouncing Nicaragua's "totalitarian system," its "contempt for legality," and its "lack of respect for human rights," joined its two allies in boycotting the February gathering.²⁷

This occurred just prior to an abrupt deterioration in U.S.-Nicaraguan relations. The Reagan administration, frustrated in its attempts to get the Congress to support the Contra war, considered new measures to bring pressure to bear upon the Sandinistas, including more thoroughgoing restrictions on U.S. trade and commerce with Nicaragua. Between January 17-19, U.S. National Security Advisor, Robert McFarlane, made a secret tour of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama.²⁸ The purpose of the trip was never revealed. Occurring as it did in the midst of the crisis in the Contadora process, McFarlane's intent may have been to reassure regional allies that the Reagan administration could be counted upon to support their position and perhaps also to inform them of an impending breakdown in talks with the Sandinista government. Following McFarlane's return to Washington, the U.S. announced the suspension of its discussions with the Nicaraguan government—discussions which had begun in July 1984 at Manzanillo, Mexico, and proceeded through nine apparently fruitless sessions. Both the Sandinistas and the Contadora Group were (and still are) greatly distressed by this development, which seemed to close the door on a peaceful solution in the Isthmus. Nicaragua had used the Manzanillo talks to consider issues bilaterally which it had agreed to treat comprehensively in the Contadora process.²⁹ By ending discussions, the U.S. was, in part, attempting to force the Sandinistas to deal with these matters in a multilateral regional forum.

The Contadora meeting scheduled for February 12-14, 1985 was cancelled.³⁰ Subsequent moves would await resolution of the asylum conflict which was resolved through mediation by the Contadora Four in March.³¹ A new meeting to include the Contadora Group and the Central American states could now be scheduled for May 14-16 in Panama.

During this work session agreements were produced on implementation procedures pertaining to illegal arms traffic, the withdrawal of 'irregular forces' from the region, and the establishment of a direct

communication system to handle potentially volatile regional incidents. Nothing was achieved, however, regarding verification and arms control, issues that proved to be intractable.³² At the conclusion of the May meeting the Contadora Group governments circulated a proposal to resolve the more difficult security issues, which were to be considered at the next meeting in June.³³

The Contadora Group met with the Central American Ministers of Foreign Relations on June 18-19. By then, a new issue had arisen to trouble the Nicaraguans. Following the U.S. House of Representatives seemingly definitive vote against financial aid to the Contras, Ortega had departed on a tour of the Communist Party States, in quest of financial aid. U.S. congressmen who had taken a political risk by supporting a 'diplomatic solution' then reversed themselves and \$27 million in 'humanitarian aid' was provided for the contras. The Nicaraguan government, as a result, sought to alter the agenda of the Contadora meeting to include the contra aid issue as well as discussion of border conflicts with Costa Rica. The alliance of Nicaragua's neighbors, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica, objected, insisting that only topics related to the regional Peace Act should be discussed. In consequence, the conference had to be suspended.³⁴ Once again, the process was in disarray.

On July 21-22, 1985, two-and-a-half years after the initiation of the peace effort, the foreign ministers of the Contadora Four met on the island where it had all begun to evaluate their frustrated labors. More importantly, they met to plan tactics for the immediate future and the results were fruitful. It was decided that the Contadora vice-foreign ministers should visit each Central American country to determine the criteria for resolving unsettled issues. It was also resolved that Contadora membership be restricted to those now belonging. Costa Rica and Nicaragua were urged to begin a dialogue, in August, to work out their border-related problems bilaterally, and the U.S. and Nicaragua were encouraged to renew the suspended Manzanillo talks. Finally the theme of Central American pacification was proposed as an agenda item for the October General Assembly of the United Nations.³⁵

Contadora received an important vote of confidence in Latin America on July 28 when representatives from throughout the region gathered for the inauguration of the youthful President of Peru, Alan García. The suggestion that a support group of additional major Latin American states be organized became a reality with the "Lima Declaration," issued by Peru, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. Beyond offering support for the Contadora process, the Declaration embraced cooperative postures on the debt, arms limitations, and called for a regional presidential summit.³⁶

Now backed by all major regional powers (except Chile), the vice-foreign ministers of the Contadora Group set out on a four-day tour of Central America in August 1985. On the tour they attempted to determine the criteria for each country to resolve all remaining unsettled

security issues blocking the signing of a regional peace agreement. Matters still perplexing participants included issues such as arms control, limits on the size of armed forces, and the numbers of foreign military advisors.³⁷

The departure of the Contadora vice-foreign ministers was preceded by a meeting of the so-called Central American bloc countries, or Tegucigalpa Group, "to evaluate the negotiating process of the five countries of the region" and to draw up a new peace strategy to be presented to Contadora at the end of August. In that meeting, Costa Rica urged a partial implementation of the unsigned Peace Act, accomplished by undertaking a series of tasks. A study would be made to determine the constitutional implications of those parts of the Act that could become effective on a provisional basis. All arms and military personnel would be inventoried with maximums suggested that could be negotiated later. The countries that formed the verification and control teams would be selected, costs projected and sources of funds and funding mechanisms identified. The human and material infrastructure required to implement the Act, once it was signed, also had to be prepared. A permanent committee of plenipotentiaries, to meet at length and facilitate the signing, needed to be created.³⁸ In this effort, Costa Rica's role had become quite positive, as the region's most democratic nation gradually, yet hesitantly, moved toward a degree of reconciliation with Sandinista Nicaragua.

The Contadora Group met with representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Uruguay in Cartagena, Colombia, on August 24-25, to formalize the existence of the Lima Group. During the meeting several roles were assigned to the new participants. They were to exchange information with the Contadora Four concerning Central American problems and identify any new measures that might lead to a solution, make diplomatic contracts with governments having interests in the region, with those simply moved to promote peace in Central America, and with international organizations such as the UN or the OAS, work toward the swift signing of a peace agreement, and, once signed, promote effective compliance with such an agreement. In short, they were to lend their considerable weight to the effort in every possible manner.³⁹

The Tegucigalpa Group—the opponents of Nicaragua—met in San José, Costa Rica on September 3-4 to finalize their joint position for the upcoming Contadora meeting. The foreign ministers of El Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica, and the vice minister from Guatemala who sat as an observer, prepared a joint communiqué denouncing the lack of dialogue between the Nicaraguan government and the diverse political and armed opposition groups, insisting upon negotiations that should lead quickly to "justice and representative democracy." The foreign ministers also demanded that Contadora be "more energetic" with Nicaragua.⁴⁰ The position of the Tegucigalpa Group was very close to that of the U.S. With the Contadora meeting approaching, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams summoned his principal diplomats to a meeting in Panama on September 9-10 to discuss the need to counteract perceived Latin American solidarity with Nicaragua and to prevent Contadora from producing an agreement that did not fully respond to U.S. interests.⁴¹

The key Contadora meeting in which the final version of the Act was to be presented took place on September 12-13 at Panama City. While this meeting was underway, the U.S. roving Ambassador for Central America, Mr. Schlaudemann, visited the four countries of the Contadora Support Group to clarify U.S. objections to the revised document. The Contadora Group ministers delivered the revised Act for Peace and Cooperation to their Central American colleagues.⁴² The document represented a revision of the September 7, 1984 version, having incorporated the observations of the Tegucigalpa Group.⁴³ At the time, Mexican Foreign Secretary Bernardo Sepulveda commented that only "polishing and tuning" had been done to the original peace Act, to which Nicaraguan foreign minister Miguel d'Escoto replied, "There are changes that I cannot consider polishing."⁴⁴ The revised Act called for, among other things, the removal of all foreign military bases and advisors, the regulation (not the halting) of military maneuvers with foreign participation, an end to the Central American arms race, the use of negotiated settlements in both external and internal conflicts (though the previous drafts had dealt fundamentally with external conflicts), the regulation (not the end) of the use of one state's territory to destabilize another state, the proscription of arms trafficking, and the encouragement of democracy as the preferred political system. An additional protocol was also included to draw in extraregional nations with an interest in the area, to insure their respect and support for the Act—this was intended for the signatures of the Contadora nations and the United States, if not others.⁴⁵

Contadora was to enter into 'permanent session' on October 7, for the purpose of producing a final revision of the Act as soon as possible. Given the composition of the Contadora bloc, there could be no guarantee that the U.S. position would be instrumental in the creation of the final document. In anticipation of the push for completion, Secretary of State George Shultz met with the foreign ministers of Guatemala and the Tegucigalpa Group in Washington on October 2 in order to present the positions and preoccupations of the Reagan administration in advance. Shultz emphasized the importance of "internal reconciliation" in Nicaragua and contended that the United States would be under no obligation as a result of a signing of the Contadora Act. Shortly thereafter, the Tegucigalpa bloc called upon Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, both U.S. allies, to join the Lima Group. The move was widely seen as an effort to dilute the Contadora process, although it was clearly aimed at bringing the support bloc into closer harmony with the position of Nicaragua's neighbors and the U.S.⁴⁶ Neither of these states joined.

So concerned was the United States over the possibility that an 'inadequate' document might be signed, that a delegation of the U.S. National Security Council embarked upon a "secret mission" to Central America, prior to the October 7 "permanent" meeting of Vice-Ministers. The NSC's goal was apparently to persuade friendly governments to withhold support for the Contadora Act in its present form.⁴⁷

The crucial "permanent" session began on October 7 on the Island of Contadora. Its aim was to reach agreement on a final Central American Peace Accord within a period not to exceed 45 days with the Contadora Group setting November 22 as its self-imposed deadline. Three rounds of talks were to be held, the first October 7-11, the second October 17-19, and the third November 6-9. Strong U.S. pressure continued during the sessions, so much so that the Panamanian Head of Intelligence, Lt. Colonel Julio Ow Young, complained that the United States was involved in a "seditious plan" to align Panama in a "regional operation designed to neutralize and destroy the Contadora Group," and that the U.S. was implementing measures "against Panamanian participation in . . . Contadora . . ."⁴⁸ Reagan administration statements indicated that the key to U.S. acceptance of any agreement was 'internal reconciliation' within Nicaragua. In a White House "Report on Nicaragua," released November 6, the U.S. bolstered its contention that the domestic and foreign policies of the FSLN were at the root of Central American interstate tensions and the cause of internal conflict in Nicaragua. The American goal was to convince the Sandinista regime to enter into negotiations with the new Contra organization, the "United National Opposition" (UNO), the major component of which was the armed FDN, as a condition for the resumption of U.S.-Nicaraguan bilateral talks. Washington's position was that without FSLN-opposition negotiations, Contadora could not proceed.⁴⁹

In light of the 'defects' in the Act and the hostile U.S. posture, Nicaragua formally rejected the current draft treaty on October 8, calling for the inclusion of the United States to make the process 'realistic.' In a lengthy letter to the Presidents of the Contadora nations, President Ortega expressed Nicaragua's preoccupation with the lack of a mechanism to involve the U.S. openly in the peace effort. In rejecting the September 1985 draft treaty, Nicaragua called for an amendment to the document explicitly requiring three commitments from the United States: 1) to halt all forms of "aggression" against Nicaragua; 2) to comply with international agreements on military maneuvers; and 3) to comply with two World Court rulings, that of May 10 concerning the mining of Nicaraguan harbors in May 1984 by the CIA and that against the U.S. for supporting the contras. In addition to these concerns with regard to the U.S. the FSLN government cited four specific areas in which it considered the current draft treaty to be a step backward from the 1984 version, namely sections on: 1) military maneuvers; 2) commitments on armaments and troop strength; 3) foreign military advisors; and 4) the duration of the treaty's validity and its denunciation procedures.⁵⁰ These were the areas which, as a result of consultation, had undergone modification since the earlier draft.

THE PROCESS IN CRISIS (1985-86)

As a result of the U.S. and Nicaraguan campaigns against the draft treaty the Contadora effort now entered into a new period of crisis. On December 7, 1985, in response to a request by Nicaragua, the Contadora Group's mediation effort suffered a postponement for a five-month

period, not necessarily in the interest of the U.S. government. In the FSLN regime's view, the upcoming changes in the presidencies of three Central American states—Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica—warranted the temporary halt in Contadora's efforts.⁵¹ Such a halt was justified when Guatemalan President-elect Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo, on a tour of regional capitals in mid-December, proposed the creation of a Central American parliament to provide a forum, free of foreign influence, in which regional problems could be discussed.⁵² It appeared that the new regimes were going to back away, to a degree as yet undefined, from compliance with U.S. policy prescriptions for the region.

As a result of this postponement, the foreign ministers of the Contadora Group and the Lima Group met in Caraballeda, Venezuela on January 11-12, 1986 to analyze Contadora's three years of labor and to set in place a binding commitment to peace in Central America, in hopes of extricating the region from East/West rivalry. As a consequence of this meeting, the "Caraballeda Message for Peace, Security and Democracy in Central America" was spelled out. The joint communiqué compiled a list of nine priorities to be stressed in future efforts: resumption and conclusion of negotiations leading to the signing of the Contadora Peace Agreement; resumption of direct talks with Nicaragua by the U.S.; encouragement of an end to foreign support for irregular forces and for insurrectionist movements; suspension of international military maneuvers; gradual reduction and eventual elimination of foreign military advisors and of foreign military installations; a unilateral declaration of non-aggression by the five Central American countries; and steps to promote regional and international cooperation to alleviate pressing economic and social problems.⁵³

The Latin American "solidarity" that the Sandinistas detected at the gathering pleased them, especially as it was expressed in the "Principles of Caraballeda," another document issued by the participants. The ten "Principles" included: Latin American solutions to Latin American problems; respect for self-determination; non-interference in the affairs of other states; territorial integrity, pluralist democracy; the absence of foreign armaments or military bases; prohibition of military acts against neighbors; banning of foreign troops or advisors; no political, logistic, or military support to subversive groups; and respect for human rights. Delegates at the Caraballeda meeting also supported the proposal by Vinicio Cerezo to establish a Central American parliament.⁵⁴

The inauguration of Cerezo as President of Guatemala provided an opportunity for a mid-January gathering of regional heads of state in Guatemala City. Following the ceremonies, the Presidents issued the Guatemalan Declaration which reaffirmed their confidence in the possibilities and benefits of dialogue and their vigorous support for Contadora.⁵⁵ In addition, they agreed to convoke a regional summit in the spring, at Esquipulas, Guatemala, to consider forming a Central American legislature. Once again, they backed a proposal calling on the U.S. to resume direct negotiations with Managua.⁵⁶

REVITALIZING THE PROCESS (1986)

The United States was still committed to the idea that pressure resulting from the contra war was necessary to bring the FSLN regime to the bargaining table in a sufficiently compliant frame of mind. On January 18, Assistant Secretary of State Abrams asserted that it was a mistake to think that contra activity undercut the peace initiative. He claimed that the only way to get the Sandinistas to accept Contadora was, in fact, to apply more pressure.⁵⁷ The added pressure was to come from a Reagan administration request in February for an additional \$100 million in aid to the contras. The U.S. response to the Caraballeda Message was delivered to the states of the region in late January when Special Envoy to Central America Schlaudemann travelled twice to Central America, Colombia, and Venezuela to discuss its implications. Nicaragua was omitted from his itinerary.⁵⁸ Publicly, the United States claimed to support Caraballeda and the administration soon lobbied Congress anew in quest of support for a major contra aid package.

In view of U.S. determination to exert pressure on Managua by support for the contras, the foreign ministers of both the Contadora and Lima Groups converged on Washington in February to urge Secretary of State Shultz to halt aid to the contras and return to the negotiating table by resuming the Manzanillo talks. The Latin American effort proved a failure, however, when Secretary Shultz and President Reagan persisted in urging Congress to provide \$100 million in military and 'humanitarian' aid to the contras.⁵⁹ However, by the spring of 1986, several developments indicated that the U.S. posture needed to be softened in light of trends in the region. First, the *Liberacion* Party and President-elect Oscar Arias of Costa Rica had prevailed upon his predecessor, President Luis Alberto Monge, who had previously been very much in the U.S. camp, to commence talks with the Sandinistas aimed at providing a system of joint border surveillance and a commensurate reduction of tensions between the two states. The Contadora Group entered the process as mediator and concrete steps were taken by both sides, resulting in a warming trend in relations between the two neighbors. Second, in the aftermath of an incursion into Honduras by Nicaraguan forces (which Washington sought to utilize in order to bolster the chances for a favorable vote in Congress on contra aid), it was revealed that secret contacts had been in effect for some time between these belligerent states. Thus, Honduras was, in fact, informed in advance when Sandinista troops entered Honduran territory to attack contra bases. Contadora pressure was now applied to effect a solution in the north similar to the one underway on Nicaragua's southern border. The new President of Honduras, Azcona, seemed more anxious (as did the Honduran Armed Forces as well) than his predecessor to reduce tensions with Nicaragua. The Honduran administration was still inclined to take its directions from Washington, however, and this was more evident by mid-1986.⁶⁰

Nonetheless, in light of these trends, it appeared that the U.S. would have to soften its stand. The new approach may have been signalled on

March 7 when President Reagan, asserting that the United States was seeking a "diplomatic solution for Central America," announced the appointment of Philip Habib as Special Envoy to the region. According to some administration officials, however, Habib's mission was designed, in part, to sway sceptical members of Congress to the president's side on the contra aid issue.⁶¹

New administration pronouncements, and developments in Central America following Habib's visits, soon made it appear that a change was in the offing. Quite unexpectedly, on April 11, Habib wrote to key opposition members of Congress spelling out a compromise whereby U.S. support for the contras would cease in exchange for peaceful behavior by the Sandinistas and adherence to the strict terms of the Contadora Peace Act.⁶² Yet, it is evident that Habib did not speak for all factions in the Administration.⁶³

On April 12, Nicaragua suddenly altered the posture announced by foreign minister d'Escoto at Caraballeda and agreed to sign the revised Contadora Act, on the condition that the United States halt its aid to the contras.⁶⁴ On April 16, in a letter from Habib to Panamanian foreign minister Jorge Abadía Arias (Panama functioned as secretary to the Contadora Group), the Reagan administration did indeed offer to halt the renewal of military aid to the contras if Nicaragua signed the Contadora peace pact on June 6, 1986, as urged by the Contadora Group.⁶⁵ The offer was conditional upon a U.S. desire to continue "humanitarian aid to those irregular forces so they do not lack necessities and can be repatriated if that is the case." The foreign minister said such aid "would logically be distributed under the supervision of Contadora." (Habib's offer to halt contra aid if Nicaragua "signed" evidently misrepresented administration policy. The more accurate phrase would have been "complies with treaty terms.") Abadía Arias had also received a letter from the Nicaraguan government stating its willingness to sign on June 6 and asserting that it was "ready to renew negotiations about the two points in question—armaments and military advisors." The Sandinista stance seemed less hopeful on May 8, when Víctor Hugo Tinoco said that Nicaragua "demand[ed] a formal and simultaneous guarantee of non-aggression from Washington on the day that Nicaragua sign[ed] the Contadora Peace Act." Further, on May 16, Nicaragua's ambassador to Peru rejected the claim by the Panamanian Foreign Minister that the Sandinistas had agreed to sign the Peace Act.⁶⁶ By mid-May the political 'right' in Washington was counter-attacking also, attempting to undermine Habib and move the administration back toward unconditional support for the contras. As Habib was communicating his positive message to Abadía Arias, Secretary Shultz, in a letter to Democrat Dante Fascell, was denying that the administration was ready to settle differences with Nicaragua; the U.S. would only stop aiding the contras when the Sandinistas entered into negotiations with their domestic opponents.⁶⁷ The administration was still determined to force the Sandinistas to talk to their domestic opponents, in keeping with a key proposition contained in Contadora's original 21 points.

The atmosphere was cooling by May 1986, and the Nicaraguan regime, with the Sandinistas believing U.S. "aggressions" would continue, now seemed disinclined to sign the revised Act. Ortega insisted on two prerequisites before signing: the Central American states must reach an agreement on pending issues and U.S. "aggression" must cease.⁶⁸ In the United States the debate continued with 'hawks' in the Pentagon and State Department, led by Fred Ikle, sponsoring a report, released in mid-May, which argued that Nicaragua would violate the agreement, thereby weakening the security of Honduras and Costa Rica and provoking a U.S. military intervention within three years.⁶⁹ When administration spokespersons denied that the report represented policy, differences in Washington were exposed for the world to see. Then, on May 22, in response to an attack by Congressman Jack Kemp and conservative Republicans on the new conciliatory policy line, the administration reaffirmed its support for both Habib and a comprehensive enforceable treaty.

As a result of divided counsels in Managua and the U.S., the June 6 signing was by no means assured, though for the Nicaraguans, by late May, expediency seemed to encourage such an act, particularly since signing might place Washington in an extremely awkward position.⁷⁰ In an attempt to resolve outstanding issues, Central American deputy foreign ministers began two days of talks with their Contadora counterparts on May 17 in Panama City. On the agenda were the two difficult points still pending in the Peace Act: arms control and reduction, and foreign military maneuvers in Central America. Tinoco, the Sandinista representative, proposed that each country's security needs be considered separately and he expressed alarm that there were currently "three different [military] exercises" sponsored by the U.S. occurring simultaneously in Honduras.⁷¹ A new development at this meeting was the posture of Guatemala: it was allied for the first time, with the "Tegucigalpa bloc" against Nicaragua. As a result the Sandinistas left Panama City more isolated than they had been for several years.⁷² Such isolation was not likely to encourage the United States to be more flexible.

As the U.S. public position came to include the requirement of actual compliance with any Contadora treaty before aid to the contras ended, it soon became apparent that the date of signing would be postponed once again. The question remained verification—a major issue in the view of the United States—and the cost and scope of any policing mechanism. The Department of State estimated that it would cost \$40 million annually and would require 1,300 permanent observers to ensure compliance with any Central American peace treaty.⁷³ The meeting of the Presidents of Central American states at Esquipulas, Guatemala in late May revealed that any signing on June 6 would have to be postponed in favor of further negotiations on the remaining issues.⁷⁴ The declaration emerging from the meeting had to be modified when, at the insistence of Costa Rica, Nicaragua's neighbors proved unwilling to accept Ortega's election as "democratic,"⁷⁵ though one positive result was the

acceptance of President Cerezo's suggestion that a Central American Parliament be formed.

On the day following the summit, President Ortega released a document promising to sign the Peace Act if U.S. allies in the region were willing to discuss banning military maneuvers with foreign forces, bases and advisors. Moreover, the Nicaraguans had produced a list of 'offensive' weaponry they were now willing to limit or abolish, including military airports, planes and helicopters, warships, tanks, heavy mortars, artillery of at least 160 mm, and multiple rocket launchers. The Sandinistas also proposed that the purchase of offensive weapons be suspended for 180 days, following the treaty's signing, in order to inventory weapons supplies and that a limit on offensive weapons should be negotiated within 60 days as well.⁷⁶ This represented a reversal of Nicaragua's April position when Managua had refused to approve an arms freeze. Honduras, joined by El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala, characterized these suggestions as unacceptable. Costa Rica and Guatemala then proposed that joint military exercises be permitted ten kilometers from the border, with a limit of 60 days per year and no more than 5,000 troops participating. El Salvador and Honduras endorsed this proposal but it, in turn, was rejected by Nicaragua.⁷⁷ Guatemala proposed an alternative to the Nicaraguan plan: to freeze the present national arsenals, with application of a weighted point system to evaluate weaponry. The alliance of Guatemala with the Tegucigalpa bloc once again isolated the Sandinistas. As a consequence, it seems likely they will be forced to make additional concessions in the future, if they are to come to terms with their neighbors.

The Contadora Group began a new round of talks on May 27 at Panama City, in an attempt to arrive at agreements that could resolve differences over military-related issues. Contadora foreign ministers arrived on June 6, even though the signing had been postponed, "to evaluate the state of the negotiations," in the words of the Guatemalan vice-minister.⁷⁸ Foreign ministers of the South American Support Group arrived as well, adding weight to the moment. Contadora spokespersons were not all optimistic, however; Colombian minister Augusto Ramírez Ocampo noted that "the gap may be too great between Nicaragua and its neighbors." The Sandinistas had proposed, for example, that the 'military count' should include all participants in maneuvers, while, on the other hand, militia should not be counted in national totals. While the majority of her neighbors accepted this proposition, Honduras, the most affected, did not.⁷⁹

Nonetheless, on June 7, the Contadora ministers handed over to the Central American states a third draft treaty that was rather optimistically termed the "last version" of the proposed regional peace accord. The leaders were urged to sign the pact swiftly and negotiate details concerning verification later. In turn, the Contadora foreign ministers pledged to continue their efforts to achieve a regional peace formula; it seems that keeping the process alive had become an end in itself, to forestall a broader conflict, including direct U.S. intervention.⁸⁰ By proposing a

new version of the treaty and avoiding setting a new deadline, the Contadora members kept the door ajar for continuing negotiations without risking the appearance of a new failure. Nicaraguan minister d'Escoto optimistically predicted that a treaty version acceptable to all could be agreed upon by the end of July, but his view was evidently not to be shared by his colleagues, and especially by the United States, since it left unresolved questions of how to verify compliance.¹¹

The 'details' which remained were not minor. The most important shifts in this 'third draft treaty' dealt with arms limits and military maneuvers. It assigned relative weight to different kinds of arms, as the Guatemalans suggested, but attempted to balance Sandinista concerns with those of her neighbors. Nicaragua had offered to limit offensive weapons but claimed the need to possess a larger military than other states of the region, due to Sandinista perception of the U.S. threat. (It must keep the potential cost to the U.S. high enough to prevent an invasion from being contemplated.) Honduras defended its right to participate in repeated military maneuvers with the United States, while Nicaragua claimed these maneuvers prepared Honduras for the role of 'platform' for a future U.S. invasion. Washington insisted that simultaneous verification, in particular, of military controls and nonintervention, must accompany the signing of any workable Central American pact, and El Salvador continued to support the U.S. posture on this crucial matter, because of FSLN support for the Salvadoran FMLN. On the other hand, Costa Rica and Guatemala seemed somewhat more amenable. In a letter accompanying the draft treaty, the Contadora governments noted that "Once this question is resolved, we propose immediately going on to another phase of negotiation . . . principally to the status of the commission of verification and control."¹² The U.S. and its allies appeared to have rejected this formulation, insisting on verification assurances in advance.

THE FUTURE OF CONTADORA

The problem is, as Mexican analyst Jorge Castaneda put it, "Nobody has anything to gain from an accord now."¹³ If Nicaragua had signed the Peace Act, the U.S. Congress would not have voted the \$100 million for the contras; but, by signing, the Sandinistas would have lost their 800 or so Cuban military advisors and confronted limitations on arms acquisition. By signing, El Salvador would lose its 54 U.S. military advisors and face arms limits as well. Honduras would lose its 200 or so U.S. advisors and possibly the joint maneuvers which, in the view of some military officials, keep the Nicaraguans at bay. Costa Rica fears the Sandinistas also and is hesitant to see Nicaragua 'legitimized' under its current political system. The United States, in particular, shares the concerns of Costa Rica and Honduras regarding the Nicaraguan 'threat' and cannot accept the removal of its military advisors and the limitations placed upon its military aid programs unless the Nicaraguan government itself takes on a pluralist cast, which might signal the abandonment of Cuban-style 'proletarian internationalism.' The Sandinista assessment may be correct: barring direct negotiations between Nicaragua and the

United States, no peace accord may be workable. The continuation of the Contadora Process is in the interest of Nicaragua, then, since it keeps the regime in touch with Latin American 'solidarity' and helps to keep the U.S. from isolating the revolutionary government.⁴⁴

Despite the distance that still separates the two sides, these developments, taken together, demonstrate that Contadora was still a viable but powerless mediator in mid-1986, with all actors relying upon its good offices. Progress, though gradual, was evident in the refining of the issues. The broad questions that remained were: 1) whether the Sandinistas on the one hand, and the U.S. and its regional allies on the other, would accept the outcome of negotiations over troops levels and maneuvers; and 2) whether the Sandinistas would cease to represent a threat to neighboring states and whether the Reagan administration would back away from its determined effort to change the Nicaraguan government, ending military aid for the contras. This presumes, of course, that the Sandinistas might still be interested in Contadora when freed from Contra pressure. If these two difficult problems could be resolved, Contadora might yet see its efforts reach fruition. For that to occur, the Peace Pact itself must be seen by all affected parties as serving their interests. Such was still not the case by mid-1987.

Endnotes

- * The authors wish to thank professors Martin Staniland of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and George Reid Andrews of the History Department, University of Pittsburgh, for their criticism of earlier versions of this essay.
1. The complete text of the Kissinger report was published as *The Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1984). Aid figures may be found in *The U.S. and Central America: Implementing the National Bipartisan Commission Report*. Special Report No. 148 (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, August 1986), pp. 26-27. On U.S. suspicions of Communist involvement in Central America, see *The Soviet-Cuban Connection in Central America and the Caribbean*, (Washington, D.C.: Department of State and Department of Defense, March 1985). For the early posture of the United States, and the 'official' U.S. version of the evolution of the Contadora process, see *Resource Book: The Contadora Process* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, 1984). Our summation of the positions of each Central American state, which follows, is based upon careful reading of the press of each nation for 1983-1986. Earlier essays by Harold Sims concerning Nicaraguan relations with the Communist states appeared in *Conflict Quarterly*, 5:1 (Winter 1985), pp. 5-14, and 5:4 (Fall 1985), pp. 53-77. On the importance of Mexico's strategic position, see Richard R. Fagen and Olga Pellicer, eds., *The Future of Central America: Policy Choices for the U.S. and Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 119-86.
 2. Speech, published in Bruce Bagley, et al., eds., *Contadora and the Central American Peace Process. Selected Documents* (cited hereafter as *Selected Documents*), SAIS Papers in International Affairs, No. 9 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 104-10.
 3. Letter, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 154-55.
 4. Nicaraguan response, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 54-55.
 5. The Declaration, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 156-60.
 6. Information Bulletin, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 164-67.
 7. Cancún Declaration, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 170-74.

8. Nicaraguan Peace Proposal, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 57-59.
9. Message, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 131-35.
10. Document of Objectives, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 176-80.
11. Letter, Daniel Ortega to Presidents of Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 59-60.
12. In *Selected Documents*, pp. 61-83.
13. Address by Langhorne Motley to the Foreign Policy Association, New York, January 19, 1984, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 14-22.
14. Bulletin, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 180-81.
15. Communication from Foreign Ministers of Colombia, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela, to Heads of State of the five Central American countries, in *International Legal Materials* (cited hereafter as *ILM*), 24:1 (January 1985), pp. 183-84.
16. Original draft, Contadora Act for Peace and Cooperation in Central America (in Spanish), in *Revista del Pensamiento Centroamericano*, 39:184 (July-September 1984), pp. 76-110.
17. Esperanza Duran, "The Contadora Approach to Peace in Central America," *The World Today*, 40:8-9 (August-September 1984), pp. 351-52.
18. Revised Act, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 188-217.
19. Letter, Daniel Ortega to Presidents of the Contadora countries, in *Selected Documents*, pp. 83-85.
20. *Central American Bulletin* (cited hereafter as *CAB*), July 1985, p. 4.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Tegucigalpa Declaration (Joint Communiqué of the Foreign Ministers of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and the vice minister of Guatemala), in *ILM*, 24:1 (January 1985), pp. 215-16.
23. Revisions, in *ILM*, 24:1 (January 1985), pp. 218-32. See also *CAB*, 4:7 (July 1985), p. 4.
24. *Update* (Central American Historical Institute, Georgetown University), 4:39 (December 31, 1985), p. 3.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *CAB*, July 1985, p. 4; *Update*, 4:11 (April 30, 1985), p. 2; *Central American Report* (Guatemala) (cited hereafter as *CAR*), February 22, 1985, p. 49.
27. *CAR*, January 25, 1985, p. 17.
28. *CAR*, January 25, 1985, pp. 17-18.
29. *Ibid.*; private communication, Kenneth W. Bleakley, Deputy Director, Policy Planning Staff, Department of State, Washington, D.C., August 25, 1986.
30. *CAR*, February 22, 1985, p. 49.
31. Colombia agreed to accept the youth, who remained only a short time then took up residence in Costa Rica. *Update*, 4:11 (April 30, 1985), p. 2.
32. *CAR*, May 24, 1985, p. 147.
33. "The Contadora Process in 1985," an appendix to *Update*, 4:39 (December 31, 1985), pp. 1-3.
34. *CAR*, June 28, 1985, p. 187.
35. *CAR*, August 2, 1985, p. 225.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 226.
37. *CAR*, August 16, 1985, p. 241.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-42.
39. *CAR*, August 30, 1985, p. 257.
40. *CAR*, September 20, 1985, p. 282.
41. *CAB*, December 1985, p. 6; *CAR*, September 20, 1985, p. 281. No proof is offered by either source, but the *CAR*, the most prestigious and balanced source of information on Central America, accepted the same version of the meeting as the *CAB*, a 'leftist' newsletter.
42. Final Draft, Contadora Act on Peace and Cooperation in Central America, U.N. Document A/40/737, S/17549 (October 9, 1985), pp. 33-78.
43. Embassy of Mexico, Press Release 016/1985 (September 18, 1985).
44. *CAR*, September 20, 1985, p. 282.
45. *CAB*, December 1985, p. 1.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 6; *CAR*, November 1, 1985, pp. 329-30.
47. Details of the mission have not been made public. This version was accepted by the usually reliable *CAR* (*Ibid.*, p. 330).
48. *CAB*, December 1985, p. 6; *CAR*, November 1, 1985, p. 330.
49. *Update*, 4:39 (December 31, 1985), p. 1.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
52. *CAR*, December 20, 1985, p., 387.
53. Tom Wicker, "The Last Chance?," *New York Times* (cited hereafter as *NYT*), February 11, 1986, p. 31; *CAR*, January 24, 1986, p. 23.
54. Principals, in *Envío* (Managua), 5:59 (May 1986), p. 14; *NYT*, February 11, 1986, p. 31; *CAR*, January 24, 1986, p. 23.
55. *NYT*, February 11, 1986, p. 31; *CAR*, January 24, 1986, p. 23.
56. *Latin American Monitor. 2. Central America* (January-February 1986), p. 254.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *CAR*, January 24, 1986, p. 24.
59. Wayne S. Smith, "Why Not Try Diplomacy Instead?," *NYT*, March 4, 1986, p. 27.
60. Azcona reversed himself, taking a favorable stance on aid to the contras in early April. *Miami Herald* (cited hereafter as *MH*), April 5, 1986. See, also, *Washington Post* (cited hereafter as *WP*), May 29, 1986.
61. *NYT*, March 8, 1986, p. 6.
62. *Daily Texan*, April 25, 1986; *This Week in Central America & Panama* (Guatemala) (cited hereafter as *TWCAP*), May 5, 1986.
63. See the *Los Angeles Times* dispatch, *Pittsburgh Press* (cited hereafter as *PP*), May 17, 1986.
64. UPI dispatch, *PP*, April 13, 1986.
65. UPI dispatch, *PP*, April 16, 1986; *Boston Globe*, May 28, 1986.
66. Quoted on the radio station La Voz de Nicaragua, May 8 and 16, respectively, 1986.
67. See the analysis in the pro-Sandinista *Envío*, 5:59, May 1986, pp. 9-10.
68. See the *WP*, May 2, 1986; *Barricada Internacional*, May 8, 1986.
69. The *New York Times* obtained a copy of the multi-agency report, which was sponsored by the Department of Defense, though the State Department divorced itself from the document (see *PP*, May 21, 1986).

Fall 1987

70. "All Things Considered," National Public Radio, May 22, 1986; *CAR*, May 23, 1986; *PP*, May 23, 1986.
71. *La Voz de Nicaragua*, May 17, 1986; *CAR*, May 23, 1986.
72. *CAR*, May 23, 1986.
73. *Ibid.*; *WP*, May 25, 1986; *Boston Globe*, May 28, 1986. On estimated costs, see the *Washington Post* dispatch, *PP*, May 11, 1986.
74. "All Things Considered," National Public Radio, May 25 & 26, 1986; Associated Press dispatch, May 27, 1986; *PP*, May 27, 1986.
75. *WP*, May 26, 1986; *Los Angeles Times* (cited hereafter as *LAT*), May 28, 1986. For greater detail, see *Rumbo Centroamericano* (San José, Costa Rica), May 30 - June 5, 1986, pp. 6-7.
76. AP dispatch, May 27, 1986; UPI dispatch, in *PP*, May 27, 1986; *LAT*, May 28, 1986; *TWCAP*, June 2, 1986.
77. AP dispatch, May 27, 1986; *CAR*, May 23, 1986.
78. *Christian Science Monitor* (cited hereafter as *CSM*), June 6, 1986.
79. "Morning Edition," National Public Radio, June 6, 1986.
80. Guatemalan Foreign Minister Francisco Quinones said negotiations "could go on for one . . . or two years," and Salvadoran Vice President Rodolfo Castillo Claramount added: "No more deadlines." *WP*, June 8, 1986; AP dispatch in the *Dallas Morning News*, June 8, 1986.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. See Jorge Castaneda's analysis in *CSM*, June 6, 1986.
84. *Ibid.*; *CAR*, June 20, 1986.