
Central America

Contadora plan is the only way out

by Robyn Quijano

Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid returned to Mexico on April 7 after having met with the four presidents of the Contadora countries. On April 8 the foreign ministers of these nations—Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama—met in emergency session declaring a new diplomatic offensive vis-à-vis the United States, Cuba, and the Soviet Union to counter the “grave deterioration” of the Central American crisis.

They attacked the U.S. mining of Nicaragua’s ports, and the “ever more manifest presence of foreign troops and advisers, as well as the increase in the arms buildup and the proliferation of military actions and maneuvers.” The Panamanian foreign minister, speaking for the group, directly asked the United States and Cuba to “cease their growing military presence” and thereby show with “actions” that they “support the work of Contadora.”

Both Washington, D.C. and Havana have given lip-service support to Contadora’s efforts.

Contadora’s peace plan is straightforward: “cessation of hostilities and acts of war or preparations for war, control of the arms race in the region, the pledge of all the nations of the region not to support subversion or destabilization of their neighbors, the withdrawal of any foreign military forces.”

De la Madrid’s message

Miguel de la Madrid warned throughout his two-week tour to five Ibero-American nations—representing 75% of the population of the continent—that the Central American crisis must be resolved or every nation could confront war, destabilization, and the disappearance “of the notion of Latin America itself.”

De la Madrid warned of the “risks of regionalizing the Central American war, [which] can affect us, the neighboring nations, and continue to feed discord among countries of the American continent.”

While Ibero-America organized itself to prevent Central America from succumbing to the decade-old plan of Henry Kissinger to spread depopulation wars and border conflicts to every reach of the continent, implementation of the Kissinger plan was proving very costly for Ronald Reagan. The Senate’s 82-to-12 vote against the CIA’s mining of Nicaraguan ports was one in a series of debacles attributable to the administration’s acceptance of the Kissinger Commission

Report for Central America, both the secret and published aspects. The Soviet ambassador to the United Nations played with the Reagan humiliation on April 10, stating that perhaps his nation “would consider” sweeping the mines for Nicaragua.

President de la Madrid explained to millions of Mexicans on a radio and television broadcast the basis for the emergency negotiating activities Contadora has launched.

Shakeup in Honduras

As de la Madrid started his tour, surprising and crucial support came from the foreign minister of Honduras, who declared that the removal of military chief Gen. Gustavo Álvarez, a Moonie cultist, would lead to greater cooperation with Contadora. The ouster, a move understood as a blow against the Kissingerian policy for the region, and another slap against Reagan, could affect the balance of forces in all of Central America.

Honduras is a base of U.S. military operations, and although the new military head, Gen. Walter López, will certainly continue collaboration with the United States, he may draw the line on such matters as U.S. training of Salvadoran troops on Honduran soil. This alone would be a crucial victory for Contadora.

“Contadora’s objectives center on the re-establishment of peace and support for the economic and social development of the peoples of Central America,” said President de la Madrid, laying out a policy the nationalists of Central America cannot reject.

“There is where we find the origins of the tensions in poverty, in lack of health care, in backwardness, and in systems of exploitation, and authoritarian regimes that have impeded liberty and democracy in Central America,” said the Mexican President.

“Contadora offers its negotiations with a criterion equidistant from the poles of conflict,” so that “Central American tensions do not constitute a pretext . . . for conflict between the great powers,” he said.

“. . . We also established a Committee for the Economic and Social Development of Central America [Cadesca], as an auxiliary mechanism of the Latin American Economic System [SELA].”

The economic aid the continent is offering is not for “development” on the Hong Kong drugs-and-sweatshops model, as prescribed by in the Kissinger Report. One of the first accords of the Mexican president’s tour was the study of a hydroelectric project that will stretch from Colombia to Mexico, electrifying large sections of Central America which have remained in the most hideous backwardness. It will be “a great project with the participation of Mexican and Brazilian capital. . . . Colombia has enormous hydroelectric waterfalls . . . and can thus generate electrical energy and transfer it along the entire Central American isthmus, augmenting the electrical capacity of our country,” de la Madrid informed the Mexican population.