



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 February 1985

Prime Minister
He is apparently
a very cool
customer.

CDP 7/2.

Dear Charles,

Call on the Prime Minister by Vice President Ramirez of Nicaragua

In advance of Vice President Ramirez's call on the Prime Minister tomorrow, you might find it useful to have a short account of the Foreign Secretary's discussion with him on 6 February.

Sir Geoffrey found that Ramirez lived up to his advance billing as an articulate and practised spokesman for Nicaragua's policies.

Sir Geoffrey spelled out British policy in clear terms: we supported the Contadora process and wished to see peace, stability, pluralist democracy and a reduction in armaments in Central America. It was necessary to strengthen the procedures in the existing draft Contadora Agreement covering implementation and verification. The Government were concerned about the destabilising effect of Nicaragua's policies on her neighbours, in particular the size of the Nicaraguan Armed Forces and the extensive arms supplies from the Soviet bloc. Sir Geoffrey also made the point that the Opposition groups in Nicaragua felt increasingly intimidated, and inhibited by censorship and Government control of the media. This, and the tendency to equate the Sandinista Party with the State, made it impossible for fair elections to be held. The close alignment of Nicaragua with Soviet policies was another cause of serious concern to Nicaragua's neighbours.

Senor Ramirez took the line that Nicaragua wanted negotiations in order to reach a basis of understanding with the US. They did not wish to challenge the interests or influence of the US in Central America or to influence events in neighbouring countries. But Nicaragua did claim the right to maintain the internal system of its choice. The FSLN had gained the support of 68-69% of the people in the elections in which 7 of the 10 political parties had participated. In the National Assembly the FSLN had only 60 of the 97 seats and were prepared to discuss the new Constitution with all parties and groups including those which did not participate in the elections. He recognised that elections had not been perfect but maintained that they compared favourably with others in the region, e.g. Guatemala and Panama about which no complaints had been made. They wanted to improve their election arrangements in the future.

.../He



He justified the arms build-up as a response to the operations of the Contras in which more than 8000 had died. When pressed, he said Nicaragua was prepared to agree to adequate measures to monitor the implementation and verification of a Contadora agreement. There should also be a firm timetable for freezing the level of arms, the withdrawal of all foreign military advisers and an end to the smuggling of arms across borders. Verification should be carried out under international supervision, not using simply countries of the region. Nicaragua would undertake within a Contadora agreement not to allow the Soviet Union any military facilities in Nicaragua (no base, airport, communications). He noted that the US had objected to the draft Contadora Act only after Nicaragua had accepted it in October but added that Nicaragua was ready to accept amendments to strengthen verification and control of the implementation of the Act.

He concluded by asking the Foreign Secretary to convey to the US Government Nicaragua's wish to resume the bilateral negotiations as soon as possible. The Foreign Secretary had an opportunity to do this when Ambassador Motley of the State Department called on him later the same day. Sir Geoffrey also informed Mr Motley of Ramirez's expressed willingness to consider specific amendments to the Contadora Act ^{on verification,} which struck the Ambassador as a development of some potential significance.

*Y
ever,
Peter Ricketts*

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
No 10 Downing Street