

these matters for over two months, but when a consensus failed to emerge, the Contadora talks were suspended.

The process was revived in January 1986 at a meeting of the Contadora group and the new Contadora Support group composed of Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Peru. The groups released the Caraballeda Message which called for, *inter alia*, an end to external support for unconventional forces, a suspension of all international military manoeuvres and the resumption of US-Nicaraguan talks.

On 14 January the five Central American governments, meeting at the inauguration of President Cerezo in Guatemala, released a joint declaration of support for the Caraballeda Message. In February the foreign ministers of the Contadora and Support Group countries met with US officials in Washington in an attempt to dissuade the Administration from pressing for further aid to the *contras*. Later that month the eight Latin American foreign ministers released a statement at their meeting in Uruguay arguing that "the end to the irregular forces and insurrectionary movements in the countries of the region is imperative for establishing international law and order." (Punta del Este Communiqué, 28 February 1986.)

On 12 March the deputy foreign ministers of Nicaragua and Costa Rica agreed to establish a border monitoring mechanism and to improve bilateral relations. Since then representatives from the five Central American countries have met on several occasions alone and with their Contadora and Support group counterparts in an attempt to sign the treaty by 6 June. Agreement on the few outstanding items was not reached by that date, but on 7 June the Contadora countries presented the five Central American governments with a third draft treaty. This draft strengthened provisions prohibiting international military manoeuvres in the region and offered new guidelines for arms reductions. On 21 June Nicaragua announced its support for the revised draft while El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica rejected it. The Salvadorean government called for the restructuring or the dismantling of the Contadora group.

### PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

The prospects for peace in Central America remain poor. Arguing that the Nicaraguan government would not negotiate unless it was under greater pressure to do so, the Reagan Administration has pressed ahead in its campaign for military assistance to the *contras*. On 25 June 1986 the House of Representatives narrowly voted in favour of extending another \$100 million in aid to those forces,

a decision subsequently supported by the Senate. The Sandinista government shows no sign of yielding to such pressure, nor of changing its approach to opposition elements within the country.

On 27 June the International Court of Justice handed down its judgement on the US-Nicaraguan case. The Court rejected the argument of collective self-defence used by the Reagan Administration to justify its policies against Nicaragua. It decided that the US,

by training, arming, equipping, financing and supplying the *contra* forces or otherwise encouraging, supporting and aiding military or paramilitary activities in and against the Republic of Nicaragua, has acted, against the Republic of Nicaragua, in breach of its obligation under customary international law not to intervene in the affairs of another state.

The Court also decided that the US was under obligation to cease these acts and to make reparations to Nicaragua for the breaches of law identified in the judgement. The US State Department rejected the ruling on the grounds that the Court is not competent to rule on such military matters.

Emboldened by the momentum of the Congressional vote, the Administration is unlikely to cease supporting the *contras* or to pressure its Central American allies to sign the latest Contadora draft. Nicaragua, in turn, is unlikely to sign any treaty requiring it to send home foreign military advisers and reduce the size of its armed forces in the current atmosphere.

In spite of these and other obstacles, Canada still regards the Contadora process as the most promising framework for peace in the region. In July 1986, Mr. Clark sent this message to the countries of the Contadora Group and the Lima Support Group:

I am deeply concerned, as I know you must be, that so much dedicated effort directed to creating an atmosphere and finding a formula for peaceful reconciliation in Central America has not yet achieved success. I wish to assure you that the Government of Canada maintains its support for the Contadora Initiative and its respect for the skill and energy with which you have pursued the search for peace and cooperation.

I fear, as I know that you do, the increased militarization and other dangers that would ensue if Contadora is dismantled and dialogue obstructed.<sup>18</sup>