

Moreover, despite their unanimity, there are deep suspicions among them - doubts that the civil authorities in El Salvador, Guatemala and, to a lesser extent, Honduras will, in the end, be strong enough to control the army, control the police, and end the tradition of repression - and a profound skepticism that the Sandinistas will let real democracy threaten the revolution their constitution describes as irreversible. In addition, each government which signed the agreement must deal with combattants and refugees who have not been parties to this accord, and whose views only become known in piecemeal fashion. That is to mention simply the complexities of the region itself, which are complicated further by the extension to Central America of the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. So there are plenty of obstacles.

But there is also a genuine commitment to the peace initiative, and a recognition that the alternative is hopeless: continued bloodshed, economic stagnation, the withering of young democratic institutions, and the consequent rebirth of coercive forces of the right and the left.

Canada's interest and involvement in Central America is relatively recent, but our standing is high. Over the last five years we have tripled our bilateral aid to over \$105 million, and, on a per capita basis, our aid to Central America is second only to what we do in the Caribbean. In that period, total direct Canadian assistance amounted to nearly \$170 million, including support for Canadian non-governmental organizations who are active throughout the region. To get some better sense of the people and the countryside, we visited a Farmers For Peace workshop in Nicaragua where farmers are trained to repair machinery, and two NGO projects in southern Honduras, one where Horizons For Friendship helps educate orphans, and the other, a rural clinic operated by Canadian church workers. Members of our delegation visited different CIDA projects - with purposes ranging from purifying water to providing daycare for single parents, to improving dairy production, to building houses, and meeting other practical needs. Some of our delegation also met with human rights groups, womens' associations, artists, and refugees in the camp at Limon. We saw for ourselves the good reputation of Canada, which gives us credentials to contribute to the peace process.