

THE MIAMI HERALD
30 de agosto 1987

2C The Miami Herald / International Edition / Sunday, Aug. 30, 1987

The Miami Herald

JOHN S. KNIGHT (1894-1981)

JAMES L. KNIGHT, Chairman Emeritus

RICHARD G. CAPEN, JR., Chairman and Publisher

PHIL DEMONTMOLLIN
President and General Manager

JIM HAMPTON
Editor

JANET CHUSMIR
Executive Editor

JOANNA WRAGG, Associate Editor

PETE WEITZEL, Managing Editor

Wait on lethal aid *Miami Herald 30.9.87*

PEACE AND democracy in a Sandinista Nicaragua may be a chimera. Skeptical observers of Marxist politics have abundant reasons to look for a catch in Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's agreement with the Arias Peace Plan. Signed by Mr. Ortega and the presidents of Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, the document calls for each country to issue political amnesty, restore freedom of the press, open communication channels to opposition groups, and hold free elections under an "authentic democratic, pluralist, and participatory process."

Such language within the context of the Managua regime sounds Utopian, to say the least. Yet it is part of a signed commitment by the Sandinistas. As such, it deserves a fair chance to function.

Last week the Nicaraguan rebels took a step of their own. They asked President Reagan to seek renewal of the *contra* aid package in Congress, but to disburse only nonlethal, humanitarian aid at first. The military portion of the new aid package would remain on hold until the Nov. 7 deadline set by the Arias Plan. By that time, the measures called for by the Guatemala document are supposed to be on track in all five nations. The *contra* proposal thus rests on the untested assumption that Congress would have approved new military aid if the Arias Plan had never appeared.

Both President Reagan and the *contra*

CONTRA PLAN

Release humanitarian funds and monitor Sandinistas' compliance with accords.

leaders have always referred to the *contra* armed resistance as an incentive to the Sandinistas to negotiate peace and pluralism. While purporting to create as optimum an atmosphere as possible for peace and democracy in Nicaragua, the *contra* proposal would leave the Sandinistas little room for excuses. Managua's actions between now and the deadline would determine whether the new military aid would be released.

To the extent that it would delay the congressional fight over military aid, the *contra* proposal is attractive. But instead of seeking a complete aid package while the peace negotiations are in progress — and while the *contras* have arms enough to last to the end of the year — the President should ask Congress for only nonlethal, humanitarian aid. Debate and vote over military aid should wait at least until Nov. 7, when the entire U.S. policy could be assessed in relation to the peace-talk results.

Approving lethal aid now for release later would put the momentum on the wrong side of the scale on which war and peace are balanced.