11-19-1986

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Summary Of O.a.s. General Assembly Results Regarding Central America

by Deborah Tyroler
Category/Department: General
Published: Wednesday, November 19, 1986

At the closing of the Organization of American States General Assembly Nov. 15 in Guatemala City, Guatemalan Foreign Minister Mario Quinones said that while important regional issues were treated with "firmness and decisiveness," it was evident "profound differences" exist regarding the Central American conflict. According to the minister, the OAS had made a "great gesture toward peace" by issuing a resolution in support of the Contadora initiative, but admitted that many problems remain in attempts to deal with the Central American situation. In a written communication read during the closing session, US Ambassador to the OAS Richard McCormack asserted that Nicaragua was the source of the "infection" in Central America. He declared everyone wishes for success of the Contadora process, but that "all here" were aware of why it has not yet succeeded. The ambassador said that if a pluralist system existed in Nicaragua, the regional crisis would disappear. Mexican Deputy Foreign Minister Victor Flores Olea told the assembly that accusations by US diplomats regarding Mexican partiality in the Central American issue were false. "We are together with Contadora and its Support Group. Our position," he said, "is one of evenhandedness and impartiality." Flores also asserted that while certain "difficulties" characterized the debate on Central America, Contadora Group nations were satisfied because the Assembly ratified its confidence in the peace initiative. In a move to avoid political and ideological divisions, the OAS General Assembly delivered "consensus" resolutions on both the dispute between Argentina and Britain regarding the Malvinas islands, and the Central American issue. As opposed to a formal vote, consensus resolutions do not obligate the organization to take specific actions, such as applying pressure on specific governments, and demanding compliance with a given policy or action. Contadora and Support Group nation diplomats complained during the meetings that while the peace initiative will continue, parties to the dispute have not made efforts to act on Contadora recommendations to attain peace. Specifically, principles of supporting the right of self-determination, opposition to foreign intervention, and the consolidation of democracy and political pluralism in Central America, are not being put into practice. Several diplomats mentioned that exhorting Contadora to continue its efforts makes little impact in the midst of increasing tensions not only between Managua and Washington, but also between Nicaragua and its neighbors, Costa Rica and Honduras. Nonetheless, Secretary General Joao Clemente Baena Soares, said the OAS and Contadora left the meeting strengthened. "I believe that the criticisms of the OAS as being inoperative are unjust," adding that the organization is alive and dedicated to resolving the most crucial problems of nations in the hemisphere. (Basic data from UPI, 11/15/86; PRENSA LATINA, 11/15/86, 11/16/86)

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