

8-26-1987

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Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Brazilian President Calls On Western European Governments To Join Latin America In Providing Assistance To Nicaragua." (1987). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/848>

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Brazilian President Calls On Western European Governments To Join Latin America In Providing Assistance To Nicaragua

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, August 26, 1987

On August 19 in Mexico City, Brazilian President Jose Sarney declared that some Latin American governments are prepared to assist Nicaragua, and issued a call to Western European governments to do the same. At a press conference during an official state visit in the Mexican capital, Sarney said that Brazil has provided economic aid to Nicaragua and is prepared to contribute more in the future. Sarney said that he had discussed aid to Nicaragua with his Argentine and Uruguayan counterparts, Raul Alfonsin, and Julio Maria Sanguinetti, respectively. The two South American presidents, said Sarney, were in agreement on the need for aid to the Central American country. On August 18 in Managua, Nicaraguan Vice President Sergio Ramirez announced that his country does not possess adequate foreign exchange to purchase oil on the international market. According to the Associated Press, this situation has not apparently caused much concern at the moment among automobile drivers and service station owners. In interviews with AP in Managua, several indicated that to the present gasoline shortages are not apparent. (Gasoline in Nicaragua is rationed by the government.) However, they said, shortages may develop next month. Ramirez told reporters that Nicaragua will need at least an additional 220,000 tons of oil before year-end. Government statistics indicate that Nicaragua imports an average 750,000 tons of crude and derivatives per year, the lion's share in the form of gasoline. The Soviet "quota" of 300,000 tons for the year, according to Nicaraguan authorities, has already been delivered. On August 22, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega dispatched a message to Sarney, thanking him for the appeal to the international community. (Basic data from AP, 08/19/87; PRENSA LATINA, 08/22/87)

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