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Costa Rican President Calls On U.S. To Drop Outdated Policies

by Deborah Tyroler

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In a Jan. 26 interview with the Mexican government's news service, Notimex, Costa Rican President Oscar Arias urged Washington to "change the policies of the past," and open a new dialogue with Latin Americans. He added, "I am certain that with President Bush we can aspire to...this new treatment and a new dialogue is going to result." Arias dismissed the "closed fist" metaphor used by Bush in his first speech as president which suggested risk of US intervention in Central America. He said: "I believe that those times have passed. I do not believe that Washington is thinking of some type of intervention, as has occurred in the past. It is a very sad memory that Latin America does not wish live again and Washington knows that this is not the way to treat a neighbor. I think that there is a genuine desire to seek a new dialogue." Arias was emphatic, however, on the question of the foreign debt burden causing socio-political problems. He said, "We cannot consolidate democracy while we have to pay debt service to creditors...with a large part of our wealth instead of channeling those resources to satisfying nutrition, health and education needs." Peace, said Arias, requires solidarity, but this has been the exception. He added, "The norm is egoism. The US has to recognize that policies of past in the areas of trade, aid, technology, and development loans have to change." It is ironic, he said, that "European, North American and Japanese creditors lent [large sums of money] to tyrannical regimes in Latin America who piled up debt, and wasted a large proportion of the financial resources. Now democracies are forced to make payments. That is really intolerable." For Arias, the major reason provisions of the 1987 Central American peace accord have not been fulfilled is "the lack of political will." (Basic data from Notimex, 01/26/89)

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