

Document Profile: "Procedimiento para establecer la paz firme y duradera en Centroamérica"

Title: Procedimiento para establecer la paz firme y duradera en Centroamérica / Procedure for the Establishment of a Firm and Lasting Peace in Central America

Contributors: Óscar Arias Sánchez, José Napoleón Duarte, Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo, José Azcona Hoyo, Daniel Ortega Saavedra

Publisher: [San José, Costa Rica]: Oficina de Apoyo de la Presidencia de la República

Date: August 7, 1987

Description and Contents Summary:

This pamphlet contains the Esquipulas II Accord in both English and Spanish, along with pictures of the presidents who signed the agreement. This accord was part of the wider Esquipulas Peace Agreement, which was mediated by Óscar Arias Sánchez, the president of Costa Rica. The presidents of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua all signed the peace accord on August 7, 1987. It was published and released by the Costa Rican Oficina de Apoyo de la Presidencia de la República. This document describes the evolution of peace and conflicts in Central America and strategies that could be used to address them. It also gives insights into the role of self-determination for Central American states and their positions during the Cold War. It also addresses the ability of governments to spread information to domestic and foreign constituents and how this impacts their ability to maintain peace.

This 1987 peace accord marked the start of declining tensions and violence in Central America, a region that had been racked by revolutions, genocides, and proxy wars for several decades. The accord advocated for peace, more human rights, and a movement towards democracy that built on previous failed attempts to sue for peace in the region, such as that of the Contadora Group. Costa Rica was the most stable and democratic Central American nation at the time, and it led the charge for the peace settlement. Central American leadership was essential to stabilizing this region, as it removed power from the United States and the USSR, which had been competing in the region during the Cold War.

At the time, four of the five Central American nations had been racked by civil wars, instability, and violence. Costa Rica started peace talks to prevent this violence from crossing its borders. The most stable nation following Costa Rica was Honduras. The government of Honduras had received support from the United States but was also exploited by western nations, including the US. The right-wing Honduran government was afraid that its neighbors' instability would spill over into the country, and instead of taking the Costa Rican approach to stabilizing the region, it authorized the killing and removal of many leftist leaders in the early 1980s. A similar series of events happened in El Salvador, where the US-backed military government took part in a civil war with five left-leaning groups. This conflict took the lives of tens of thousands and lasted from 1979-1992. Unrest had been raging in neighboring Guatemala for decades. In 1954, the President of Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz, was overthrown by a CIA-backed coup, which led to a civil war lasting from 1962 to 1996. The political unrest resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands and the right-leaning government's genocide of indigenous people of Guatemala. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas, a far-left rebel group with ties to Cuba, overthrew Nicaragua's government in 1979. Their government was then confronted by an anti-leftist counterinsurgency, the Contras, which was supported by the United States.

The instability in Central America was heavily influenced by the Cold War tensions of the time. Communist nations like Cuba and the Soviet Union tried to establish and support leftist governments like

the Sandinistas. Meanwhile, the United States worked to maintain control over its “banana republics” and arrest any leftist movements. This conflict of ideologies was fought in a series of proxy wars in Central America. The solution to this conflict came in the form of locally supported peace plans and talks between nations that discouraged further involvement from the United States and the Soviet Union.

The peace plan itself had to achieve the goal of stopping the violence in the region forever. The nations approached this historic challenge head-on, committing themselves to; lasting peace, removing foreign influences, putting words over violence and logic over hate, and devoting the effort for peace to Central America’s youth. The peace process included eleven steps, among them: promoting national reconciliation, encouraging a ceasefire, moving to democratization, implementing free elections, terminating aid to irregular forces and rebels, starting negotiations concerning security matters, controlling and restricting armaments, implementing programs to aid refugees and displaced persons, agreeing upon ongoing cooperation talks and anti-corruption policies.

With this agreement, the author of this pamphlet and the main broker of the peace deal, Óscar Arias Sánchez, managed to end decades of violence in Central America. He received a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

Significance:

Decades of violence in Central American countries prompted the creation of the plan for peace, which is commemorated and publicized in this pamphlet. This document presents the peace plan to a much wider audience, which is achieved through its layout and bilingual format.

The emphasis on sovereignty and independence within the text is reflected by the pamphlet itself. Its bilingual nature prepares it for the consumption of English readers. Furthermore, it can be assumed that it was produced with American readers in mind, who were to be told of the commitment and stability of these Central American countries and the fact that American intervention was not needed.

The document itself is neutrally worded and cautiously avoids conflict between rebels and established governments in the region. It is pro-democracy, pro-human rights, and other liberal beliefs. It is anti-interventionist (specifically targeted at the Cold War powers) and remains vocally in support of both the UN and the OAS. Overall, this document has globalist overtones and is liberally oriented even as it has strong roots in self-determination and local sovereignty.

The layout of the document further highlights this, with the signatures of the five Central American presidents showing their united commitment to peace. The colorful nature of this pamphlet further allows for the mass consumption of the peace plan. The colored pictures emphasize this, with the most striking one being the images of the Central American presidents together. It is interesting to note that while the Central American presidents are emphasized there were no rebel governments or parties present or as signatories to this agreement, despite it being engineered to create peace with them. The fact that they aren't pictured may further emphasize the image of Central American cohesion, despite the vastly different political views of the presidents, to prevent any possible reason for American or Soviet intervention to stabilize the region.

Finally, the formatting of the pamphlet lets the reader easily follow what is said. It starts with a preamble then moves into the plan, which is laid out in steps, which are bolded to stand out to the reader. It ends with final dispositions and the signatures of each president so the reader can easily see where it ends and that each president took a part in the pamphlet. These signatures and the images indicate the unity of the presidents and their commitment to the peace accord. The clear formatting and pictographic

nature of this document allow for easy distribution to people of many different educational levels and nationalities.

Page Count: 38 (19 in each language)

Geographical Subject: Central America

Subject: Central America -- foreign relations -- 1980s; Central America -- politics and government -- 1980s; peace treaties

Languages: Spanish and English

Libraries Reporting Copies in WorldCat: Total number: 33, Number in the United States: 27

Works Cited

LaFeber, Walter. *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America*. 2nd ed., W.W. Norton, 1993.

Moss, Ambler H., Jr. "Peace in Central America?" *Survival*, vol. 32, no. 5, 1990, pp. 421–36.

Document profile prepared by Kendall Ottridge '23 and Lucas Voit '23 as part of the course "Arts of Extraction: Latin American Representations of Ecological Injustice" taught by D. Bret Leraul, Visiting Assistant Professor and Writing Fellow (2019-20) with the assistance of Margaret Schaus, Lead Research and Instruction Librarian, and Charlie Espinosa '15, Archivist.