THE MAKING OF A LIBERAL APOSTATE -- 1985

B.C.

On April 24 the House of Representatives voted to deny funds to the contras in Nicaragua. The key vote was a two-vote margin. On June 12, the House voted to provide $27 million in non-lethal economic aid to the contras, a 74-vote margin.

In the week preceeding the April 24th vote, I lobbied against aid to the contras. In the weeks preceeding the June 12th vote, I worked very hard to find a compromise that would allow funding to the contras but under strict conditions.

Had I changed my mind? I don't know. I didn't know then and I still don't know now. I had been ambivalent about contra funding for over a year. On the one hand, I do not believe that the United States government should be in the business of overthrowing sovereign governments. On the other hand, Sandinista policies had pushed out many of the small "d" democrats who had originally supported the revolution. And Reagan policies had pulled out others.

Eden Pastora and Alfonso Robelo tried on successive occasions, before they launched their war on March 15, 1983, to try to begin a dialogue with the Sandinistas, but each time the Sandinistas turned them down. As recently as March 1, 1985, Arturo Cruz had pulled together a group of Nicaraguan exiles, including the major leaders of the CIA sponsored group: Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguense, who called for a political solution in which they would lay down their arms and agree that President Ortega's government would remain in power until it was turned out by a truly free election. But the Sandinistas rejected that proposal too.

Further, I have been persuaded since March, 1982, that successful internal negotiations in El Salvador depend on successful negotiations in Nicaragua. The Salvador negotiations have begun, but they are in real trouble and more than ever I am convinced that they need to be nourished

by similar negotiations in Nicaragua. There needs to be an historical compromise in each country in which the government agrees to power-sharing through elections[1] and the guerillas agree, with guarantees, to lay down their arms. To negotiate seriously, the government in El Salvador needs to see that its allies in Nicaragua -- the contras and the internal opposition -- will be able to compete for political power in truly free elections. The Nicaraguan government would like to see its allies win or share power in El Salvador with or without elections, but they won't give up any of their own power at this time.

But I am ahead of myself. — 1982

The Wednesday before Thanksgiving, 1982, Cindy Buhl of the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy had called in frustration: "Why will no one offer an amendment (to the Defense Appropriation Bill) to stop funding of the contras?" "No one asked us," I replied.

"Us" was Congressman Tom Harkin and myself. I had been working with him closely since 1976 when I first went to work for ADA. In 1981, he had convinced me to come work for him. I agreed to do this as long as I could work independently of his office as a lobbyist.

This arrangement did not really effect an enormous change in our relationship. In 1977, 78, 79 and 80 I had worked with Congressman Harkin on about 20 different pieces of legislation as a lobbyist seeking other Congressional support and as a de facto aide.

"Look Cindy," I told her, "let me call Tom and I will get right back to you."

I called Tom and without a moment's hesitation he said, "Let's do it!"

---

1 It is to share power to participate in an election and, although even with a minority share, influence the course of governance; e.g. Democrats in U.S., Labor in Britain.

Harkin's great gift is his own sense of himself and what is right and wrong. If his moral compass tells him that what you propose is right -- even if others say it is premature, that it will alienate the House leadership, and there is no guarantee that it will do any good anyway -- he does it.

Harkin is opposed to most foreign U.S. intervention. He believes that the U.S. does it badly and is usually on the wrong side. He also believed that the Sandinistas -- whatever their faults -- were helping the Nicaraguan people.

My own view at the time was different, but it did not differ on the issue of the contras.

I believed that the Sandinistas were subverting their own revolution, but I did not believe in the contras. To my mind they were a U.S. artifact of the worst kind, a band of cutthroats trained by the CIA. It should be recalled that Adolfo Calero, the present leader of the main contra force -- the FDN -- was still in Nicaragua, still active in the Conservative Party and at least publicly was counseling people not to leave.

My prinicipal friends from Nicaragua, Alfonso Robelo and Alvaro Jerez, had left their country in March of 1982, but were not, however, active in military activities. They were in Costa Rica building a political structure with Eden Pastora and the framework for an army, but they were still seeking a political solution.

Robelo and Jerez left Nicaragua after the Sandinistas imposed a state of seige in response to the destruction of two bridges by the contras, and the two men reached the conclusion that it was no longer possible to pursue meaningful opposition to the Sandinistas ~~from~~ inside Nicaragua.

Before they left, however, they issued a brillant political statement. They excoriated the Sandinistas for abandoning a non-aligned foreign policy, for being unable to define a consistent policy toward the private sector which would encourage the latter to invest in the country's reconstruction and for the

failure to allow political pluralism. That was more or less routine. But what was brillant was their call for a set of simultaneous negotiations: among the Central American states to limit arms exports, outside military advisors, and establish mutual non-aggression pacts; between the U.S. and Nicaragua; and internal negotiations between Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala to create a framework for political pluralism and democracy.

Cindy's call came in the midst of an effort by myself and some other Democratic staffers to formulate an alternative large "D" Democratic Central policy which would lend support to these ideas. Already, negotiations in El Salvador were a liberal Democratic plank. We wanted to place liberal Democrats on record as also supporting negotiations between the Sandinistas and democratic dissidents.

That document, after much work and re-working by Members had been released on December 4. No one noticed it, and except for an admiring remark every month or so since then, it had no impact.

On December 8, somewhat tardily from a legislative point of view, Tom and Congressman Oberstar announced that they would introduce legislation to prohibit CIA or DOD support of military or paramilitary activities in or against Nicaragua. On the night of December 9, they were joined by Representative Jim Leach, a Republican from Iowa. That same evening, I spent two hours in the lobby as a lobbyist lining up Members to support the Harkin-Leach-Oberstar amendment.

My efforts were successful, for in the last hour of debate on the DOD appropriations bill, Tom, Jim and Jim and eleven of their colleagues lambasted the Administration's policy without interruption. Only at the conclusion did Representative Edward Boland of Masschusetts rise to offer a substitute amendment which would prohibit funding for the purpose of either overthrowing the government of Nicaragua or provoking a war between Nicaragua and Honduras.

The amendment passed without opposition, 380 to 0.

Six months later when it became clear to Boland that the Administration had every intention to overthrow the Sandinistas, he offered Harkin-like language which the House adopted in July, 1983. In May of 1984, the CIA ran out of the money it had left for the contra operations and the President failed to convinvce the House to give him additional funds.

But I need to back up again. 1980

In 1980, Carter was still President. The issue was not aid to the contras. The issue was aid to the Sandinistas and it was just as divisive. I worked for eight months (mid-January to mid-September) on the legislation to provide the new government in Nicaragua with $75 million. My assistant and I lobbied over eight offices. I talked with dozens of Members.

The key to my lobbying was always the views of the moderate Democrats who were serving in or supportive of the Nicaraguan government. There were three votes: February __, May __, and July 2.

In January of that year I had traveled to Nicaragua with Representative Robert Drinan. We had met with Arturo Cruz, then head of the Central Bank and Alfonso Robelo, a member of the Junta.

One of our meetings with Robelo was quite remarkable. The Soviet Union had just invaded Afghanistan a month earlier and Nicaragua's position was one of public neutrality. It obstained on the vote in the United Nations condemning the Soviet Union for the invasion. Robelo had no hesitations in opposing the invasion, condemning it and labeling it the kind of great power interventionism in the Third World which should stop. And then he immediately agreed to say it again on tape and in front of reporters.

That incident typified the pluralism that Robelo and others believed existed in Nicaragua in 1980. And in our lobbying we cite Robelo and Cruz over and over.

In May of 1980, Robelo resigned from the Junta. In the agreement of San Jose of June, 1979, creating the government of National Reconstruction, there was a provision for a Council of State of 32 members of which the FSLN would control a little over one third. In May, the FSLN decreed that the Council would be expanded to 47 of which more than one-half would be controlled by the FSLN.

I was at a dinner that night at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, sitting next to Representative Millicent Fenwick who had voted against the aid because she was convinced that the Sandinistas would not share power. From Carnegie I placed a number of calls to Robelo and his deputy.

Robelo was not at all dependent that night. He was convinced that his decision was right. He believed that while the Sandinistas had acted dishonorably, that nonetheless, opposition was still posssible and he would be more potent outside the government than as a member. "We have become civilized in Nicaragua," he told me, explaining that Tomas Borge, minister of the Interior, had offered to let Robelo keep his bodyguards.

I arranged for Robelo to receive calls from key Congressmen to reiterate his views that the U.S. should aid the government from which he had just resigned. He also sent a telegram.

Adolfo Calero was then only a prominent Nicaraguan citizen, manager of a Coca-Cola plant and the most prominent spokesman of the Conservative Party. After Robelo resigned two Conservative Party Members, one of them Arturo Cruz, took Robelo and Violetta Chamorro's place on the Junta. Calero in ~~June~~ May of 1980 was confident that democrats and businessmen like himself had a place in revolutionary Nicaragua and could work with the Sandinistas.

The last vote of the year was July 2. We won that time by only two votes.

But the battle was not over. The authorization bill required that aid could only be released if the President certified that the Nicaraguan government

was not aiding and abetting subversions of the other governments.

What had once been an enormous lobby of different groups with individuals of the Administration to get aid for the Sandinistas dwindled to two: Myself and Jim Cheeck, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central America. During August and September, he and I coordinated a small campaign to encourage Members to pressure Carter to sign the certification.

I did not know at the time there was serious doubt if such a certification could be honestly made. There was clear evidence that military equipment and supplies were transported through Nicaragua to El Salvador. The debate centered on whether there was clear government involvement, i.e. that it was a policy of the Nicaraguan government to permit or actually participate in the deliveries.

Eventually the President and the Secretary of State decided it was not policy and the President signed the certification. Shortly thereafter ADA endorsed President Carter for reelection. His Nicaraguan decision was not a principal reason, but his policy towards Rhodesia, by then Zimbabwe and Nicaragua were important considerations for many ADA members in not listening to some of ADA's old guard: Joe Rauh, Victor Reuther and Arthur Schlesinger who argued against any endorsement.

By signing the certification, Carter was showing his determination to continue a policy of trying to work with the new regime. But it had taken eleven months from his announcement in October of 1979 proposing the aid until September of 1980 to begin to provide it. This was unfortunately typical of Carter: he had a good idea, but he lacked daring and the ability to build working political coalitions domestically or internationally. That he lacked domestic political skills was clear in the aid debate. Majority Leader Jim Wright, not the President, was the architect of the aid victory in 1980.

In 1978 when I first encountered Nicaragua seriously, I saw his failure on the international scale. In 1978, there were three different factions of the

Sandinistas. One, the Terceristas or the Insurrectionary tendency, led an insurrection in September in five cities (but not the capital). They held the cities only briefly and retreated quickly when Somoza sent in the National Guard. 3,000 mainly innocent civilians were slaughtered by the National Guard in retaking the cities.

In October, the OAS sponsored a three member mediation team, including Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and the United States to try to work out a compromise between the Somoza government and the Broad Opposition Front. The latter was a group of political parties, union and private sector organizations which had come together the previous spring. Contact with the Sandinistas was mediated through a group of prominent Nicaraguan intellectuals, called the group of twelve, which included Arturo Cruz. By the end of October, the Group of Twelve and therefore the Terceristas had already withdrawn their support of mediation.

I became involved election night 1978. I had been at a party at Representative Don Edwards apartment in the Watergate. At about 10:30, the networks projected Senator Dick Clark would loose. Senator Clark was one of the best people that I had ever met in the Congress and I had just recently worked successfully with him to put teeth into one of the human rights laws, Section 502-B, which links the provision of U.S. arms and a government's treatment of its own citizens.

Very despondent, I took a taxi to see one of my closest friends. She was not home but just as I was leaving I ran into another friends, George Lawton, who had just returned from the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights mission to Nicaragua.

We talked from eleven to three in the morning about what he had seen and heard in Nicaragua. His descriptions of the slaughter by the National Guard were chilling. Never before and never since, including twelve different trips

to Central America, was I so moved.

Twice he called his contact, a man I would later learn was Dr. Alvaro Jerez, Robelo's principal deputy.

A week later Jerez came to the United States. The two of them spent two straight days making me understand the situation in Nicaragua. They still had hopes for the mediation and the willingness of the Terceristas to accept it if the United States acted decisively. The key was getting the United States to facilitate Somoza's departure remove Somoza and to stop Israeli arms shipments.

For three weeks we spoke with anybody who would receive us: press, Congress, and the Administration. It may have been that the moment had already passed in October. But in retrospect what strikes me the most is the total lack of urgency on behalf of the Administration officials we spoke with.

Two are most memorable. A Deputy Assistant Secretary of State ~~talking~~ spoke to us about different colored ballots which could be used in a plebicite on Somoza's continuing tenure the following February and the relevance of the Dominican Republic precedent. But Bob Pastor, the National Security Council specialist on Latin America won the prize.

First, he lectured us, he did not listen. He told us that it was good that the mediation was taking a long time. The Nicaraguan's opposition lacking any experience of democracy under the Somoza dictatorship were learning the process of give and take. He was saying this to a Nicaraguan who cut his teeth on American politics attending anti-war rallies in the late sixties and early seventies when he was a resident at George Washington University.

And Pastor told us that this President did not believe in intervention. Except that it was Carter's tenacity in 1978 that insured that the U.S. would not lift sanctions against Rhodesia allowing Lord Carrington to later negotiate a settlement in 1979. And it was Carter also in 1978 who decisively acted to prevent the Dominican Republic military from stopping the counting of the

ballots which led to victory by the opposition party.

But most memorable was his condescension toward the Nicaraguan opposition, Sandinista and non-Sandinista.

And the mediation failed. Instead, the period of mediation -- October 1978 to January 1979 -- was used by Somoza to double the size of his army. In January 1979, the Administration in response imposed very weak sanctions. And the Israeli's continued their arms shipments.

If the mediation had been successful and Somoza had retired, the victory would have been jointly the Sandinistas, the business and labor opposition, and international pressure. When the July 19, 1979 triumph came, the civic opposition and international pressure undeniably had played a role that insured Somoza's departure at that time. But the victory was not theirs. They had only accelerated the fall. The victory belonged to the Sandinistas, now united, whose courageous determination and above all sacrifices had brought down Somoza.

This kind of courageous, determination and willingness to sacrifice has only become part of the political persona of many then opposition businessmen and politicians in response to the Sandinistas.

In May of 1984, Arturo Cruz, by then in retirement since November 1981, from his various stints as head of the Central Bank, member of the Junta, and Ambassador to the U.S., called me. He wanted to talk to various members and Seantors and asked me to set up the appointments. At that time I felt closest to Arturo of all the Nicaraguan exiles. He steadfastly maintained his role as a dissident opposed to the political direction of the Sandinista revolution while supporting most of his social reforms. But he ~~was~~ equally opposed to the course of U.S. policy and particularly to the building of an opposition army based on the former Guardsmen.

I was therefore quite astonished when in the first meeting with Representative Dante Fascell, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee,

he called for a continuation of covert military support for the contras. The Sandinistas had announced elections for November 1984 and Arturo believed that only continued pressure through the contras would force the Sandinistas to conduct honest and open elections.

The Congress thought otherwise and on _____ voted to provide $ million in supplemental military aid to the government of El Salvador and to deny additional assistance through the CIA to the contras. I understood Congress's decision on El Salvador. Napoleon Duarte had just defeated Roberto D'Abuisson for President and over the previous five months significant reforms of the military had been achieved. But there was no serious talk of negotiations with the Salvadoran armed opposition and many officers guilty of serious human rights abuses remained in the chain of command. I thought Congress was wrong in that decision.

And for the first time I was ambivalent about the outcome of the contra vote.

In July, Arturo Cruz was nominated by the Coordinadora Democratica -- a coalition of four political parties, two union confederations and the organization of the private sector -- to be their Presidential candidate. He accepted their nomination, but the Coordinadora decided not to participate in the election unless certain demands were met.

In _____ Arturo Cruz, non-candidate, went to _____, matagalpa and Chinondega to campaign. In Chinondega, despite efforts by the FSLN to harrass his organizers and mobs to disrupt his rally, 7,000 people attended and their enthusiasm was overwhelming. I saw him shortly after he returned from Nicaragua and I can clearly recognize a politician who has made a special connection with an electorate, and I cannot be fooled by one who hasn't. He made that connection. His almost candidacy touched at least some of the Nicaraguan people very deeply.

In September, Arturo and his people continued to attempt to work out a compromise in which his coalition would participate. Many of the procedural guarantees they wanted were met.

The key, however, was timing. The Coordinadora wanted a delay. In October, both Arturo and Commandante Bayardo Arce traveled to Rio de Janerio to attend the Socialist International Meetings.

Willy Brandt, President of the SI, and others worked to achieve a compromise. On the afternoon of September 15 (October 2??), they seemed to have it. On their part, the Sandinistas would agree to postpone the elections until January 15 and allow Cruz to begin campaigning immediately. On Cruz's part, he would try to convince the contras to establish a cease-fire. On October 28 both sides would evaluate the other side's good faith and the agreement would continue or not.

Cruz asked for three days to return to Managua to seek agreement from the Coordinadora. I think he made a mistake. He should have just taken it upon his own authority to accept for the Coordinadora. But Arturo was still then acting as a gentleman, still acting as though he had no power. It is hard for him to understand that even without ~~divisions~~ battalions, he commands authority in Nicaragua and in the international community that others with ~~divisions~~ battalions do not.

Abuptly, Arce broke off the negotiations saying that postponement was unacceptable (he also reported that Cruz was making other demands, but those charges were merely lies). Many argue that Cruz never could have participated in any case; the right-wing of his coalition was controlled by the CIA. The latter may be true, certainly American, Administration or CIA influence were strong and did urge a boycott of the elections. But the influence was not so strong that they could have blocked a deal made by Cruz and the Sandinistas. The Sandinistas simply did not want to make a deal; they only desired to appear as if they were dealing in good faith.

In the meantime, Congress once more had to make a decision on aid to the contras. By this time, the House had voted four times by larger and larger margins to deny aid. The latest Senate vote was 55-45 in favor. But the House was more determined.

I was working ever more closely with Robert Leiken. He had returned from Nicaragua in early September convinced that there was so much popular disatisfaction that not only could Arturo Cruz do well, but that he could win.

Neither of us believed that the Congress should renew aid to the contras, but we also did not want the Sandinistas to think the issue was resolved. The Socialist International was still hoping to renew its mediation begun in Rio and we believed that ambiguity about covert funding would be helpful.

Bob surfaced the idea of delaying the final vote until 1985 in a Washington Post op-ed piece. An Administration offical and I, both operating outside the guidance of our institutions, began to circulate his memo aggressively. In the end, $14 million was set aside for aid to the contras, but it could be released only through an affirmative vote by both Houses after February 28, 1985.

Shortly thereafter, Brandt went to Panama with the hope of renewing negotiations. Cruz was in attendance, but Ortega failed to show.

The Nicaraguan elections took place without Cruz on November 4. Earlier the Independent Liberals voted to pull out. La Prensa was not allowed to publish that decision and Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Tribunal ignored it. Ortega and the Sandinistas won 63 % of the vote, but inaguration ceremonies in January were ignored by every hemispheric leader except Castro.

I spoke with Cruz shortly after the election. I expected that he would be very despondent about prospects inside Nicaragua. Again he surprised me. He told me of an increased willingness of various individuals within the Coordinadora to stay inside Nicaragua and to try to press their demands as far as the system would allow.

In addition, he argued that President-elect Ortega should be given a period of grace. All the parties that had participated in the elections plus those in the Coordinadora which did not, had agreed to begin a national dialogue. The view that Ortega, now given electoral authority, would lead the Sandinistas on a more moderate course was also shared privately by Alfonso Robelo.

They were both wrong. Censorship increased significantly right after the elections. Opposition leaders were increasingly harrassed especially if they tried to leave the country for a time. By mid-January the national dialogue was over. Dialogue with the government was relegated to the National Assembly whose agenda was totally under the control of the Sandinistas.

In January I closed down my operation at ADA. We had run out of money, my partner of four months had left in disagreement over Nicaraguan policy, and my health was bad. For two and one-half months, I thought little of Nicaragua and spent my time seeing doctors and attempting new remedies to an old and increasingly unmanagable muscular disease.

On March 19, significantly improved, I went to a meeting of five Democrats and one Republican who were concerned about the direction of U.S. Nicaraguan policy. It was convened by Penn Kemble, who has many titles and affiliations, but is best described as one of the keepers of the flame of the Henry Jackson wing of the Democratic Party.

We began to trade different proposals. I wrote the first. It was a complicated piece of legislation which would have likened human rights and negotiations conditionally on both the contras and the Salvadoran government. Bernie Aronson, a political consultant and former speech writer for Mondale and Carter, wrote the second. His was a sense of the Congress resolution that layed out a set of expectations about the behavior of the Sandinistas, the contras and the Salvadoran government with the suggestion especially in the case of the Sandinistas that action would be taken by Congress if these expectations were

not met.

Before we could get very far, the President acted on the resolution which Congress had provided in the last legislation of 1984 which would release $14 million. He cloaked his policy in the rhetoric of negotiations and elections. It would be built around the ~~April~~ March San Jose declaration which had been organized by Arturo Cruz.

But they were only new words. The White House and the State Department had failed to involve any new Congressional actors in the shaping of its approach to Congress.

Personally I was relieved. It had been done so badly that I did not have to reconsider my own position. In the one week of time available to lobby on this resolution, I lobbied against it. But I was always careful to tell my liberl lobbyist colleagues that I was lobbying against this bill, that I could imagine legislation with aid to the contras that I could support.

The vote took place on April 24th. The Senate after receiving a letter from the President at the eleventh hour pledging only humanitarian aid and with strong promises on human rights and negotiations voted narrowly, 51 to 47, in favor.

The House voted four times. First it defeated outright the President's request for $14 million through the CIA. It then voted ___ to ___ in favor of the Barnes-Hamilton resolution which denied funds to the contras, but had a clear policy statement recognizing the Sandinistas as a threat and providing funds for Nicaraguan refugees and Contadora.

Then by two votes it defeated an amendment to this resolution which would have provided the $14 million to the contras, through AID. Even strong supporters of aid to the contras -- Representative Dante Fascell and Representative John Murtha -- voted against it because it only offered money, no clear policy.

Then in a stuning reversal, only 128 members supported the Barnes-Hamilton position on final passage. Republicans would not support it because they wanted direct aid to the contras. Very liberal Democrats would not support it because they did not want anything at all. They saw no reason for the House to take a position on Nicaragua and especially no reason to pass a bill that might lead to a compromise with the Senate leading to direct aid to the contras.

One of those members who had voted with the 128 came up to me right after the vote. "Cameron," he said leaning right into my face, "That is the last time I vote for your pal Ortega." He told me others of the 128 felt the same way.

It was also announced during the debate that Ortega would soon thereafter travel to Moscow to seek aid. To many members, that was a direct slap in the face.

But the other was more important -- the failure of the House to pronounce a coherent policy on Nicaragua. The next day I read in the paper that Representative Dave McCurdy (D-OK) would reverse his position the next time because he wanted an affirmative policy toward Nicaragua to meet the challenge of the Sandinistas towards their neighbors and their own people.

On April 26, the group which I had come to call the Contra Support Group met to reflect the vote. We were joined by Alfonso Robelo. Robelo's views and mine coincided. We thought the Administration and Congress should postpone any action until the next fiscal year, that is, after October 1, 1985. That was not the mood of the rest of the group.

And in the weeks that followed, we found it was not the view in Congress. The Senate wanted to bring up the issue again right away. The leadership in the House postponed consideration of the Foreign Aid Authorization Bill for fear that the Republicans would add aid for the contras.

On May 9, our group met with Representative Dave McCurdy. He had already introduced new legislation which would have provided aid to the contras though

the Agency for International Development. The others in our group promised support.

For the first time I was deeply troubled. This was no longer an intellectual game of trying to come up with the perfect piece of legislation that everyone would reject. McCurdy had drawn up legislation which had incorporated many of our ideas. And he wanted to hear ~~own~~ ~~own~~ ideas.

Sitting in his foyer afterwards, I suddenly realized that the vote was no longer in question. The only question was under what conditions would the House vote aid and by what margin. I was now part of an enterprise that would give aid to the contras.

I was in peril of my liberal soul. Before leaving McCurdy's office I called Representative Matt McHugh's office and asked urgently for an appointment for the next day. I had been working with Matt who was one of the most energetic members of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee since 1978. He is liberal in his values, but reasonable, he wants to see things work.

The next afternoon with some unease, I explained to Matt and his aide, Gary Bombardier, what I had been doing. To my relief, it was apparent very quickly that Matt was sympathetic to my efforts. We both believed that the Congress and the Executive had, through pulling and tugging, arrived at a reasonable and workable policy for El Salvador. He was being criticized in his District for supporting military aid to El Salvador.

He also was not in principle opposed across the board to the idea of aid to the contras. But he could only imagine supporting aid if it was provided in the context of serious efforts to negotiate with the Sandinistas. In sum, a two track policy of pressure through the contras and negotiations.

The Monday following, I informed Ann Lewis, the National Director of ADA, that as a matter of conscience I had to spend the rest of the month working to achieve a compromise on policy towards Nicaragua. I fully expected that she

would ask me to resign right then. Instead, she suggested that I go on leave.

Leaving her office, I felt an enormous sense of relief. I could now think and say what I thought. The next step was to find out what that really was. The next day I wrote the "Cameron position." It had four key elements:

1. Non-lethal aid would be provided, not only for the rest of the fiscal year, but for the first quarter of the next fiscal year.

2. A new special Ambassador would be selected to pursue negotiations with Nicaraguans on two subjects: internal negotiations and a Contadora treaty.

3. The President would be required to send a letter to the two intelligence committees "outlining what the Administration knows about human rights violations to the contras, about who is responsible and a course of action to be taken to cleanse the military leadership of the contras so that is free of the taint of Somocismo and of those who have been guilty of major violations of human rights...."

4. The CIA would not administer aid, but it would provide intelligence to the contras on the movements of the Sandinista army.

I showed my paper and discussed it with the five liberal staff members I have been working closely with over the past four years. All to a man disagreed. All believed there was either a negotiating strategy emphasizing Contadora or a military strategy emphasizing the contras with the aim of overthrowing the Sandinistas. None believed in a two-track strategy. One was very blunt: show me one case in which military pressure has brought a communist revolutionary state to negotiate a settlement with its opposition, just one. And he mentioned the invasion of Russia by the allied in 1918 and support of the White Army and pressure on Chinese Communists. He continued, "We have two choices. We can stop the contra program and the Sandinistas will remain in power. Or we can continue it and the Sandinistas will remain in power."

I still have no answer to that simple recital of history. I simply believe that a two-track strategy offers the only possibility of preventing ever and wider war in Central America.

On May 17, I gave a copy of my paper to Dave McCurdy's aid. On May 23, McCurdy summoned the group to review his new legislation alternative before he began discussions with the Republican leadership. It had incorporated three of my four major points taking the human rights language word for word. It provided $27 million in non-lethal economic aid in three installments over a nine-month period and laid out a policy statement emphasizing negotiations between the U.S. and Nicaragua, support for Contadora, and negotiations between the government of Nicaragua and its opposition.

One major change was to remove AID as the administering agency and place the responsiblity in the State Department. In the bill's final form, it did not name an agency, but excluded the CIA and Department of Defense.

I also fought for language which would require the President to return to direct bilateral negotiations with the Sandinistas. I was still looking to expand support into the liberal ranks of the House. McCurdy and the others were dubious, but in the end it was shelved because the appropriate legislative language could not be found. There was, however, a requirement that the contras -- now called the democratic resistance -- be willing to negotiate as a condition of aid.

I was now committed: the negotiations requirement and the language on human rights made it possible for me to support the legislation.

Writing my own position paper had also made me aware of facts that previously I had only been dimly aware of. The Administration was moving towards a new policy. And it had gotten there not by its own internal processes, but by the actions of two Central Americans, one Salvadoran and one Nicaraguan who had moved the Administration to a policy that envisions less than the overthrow of the Sandinistas.

In 1984 the Administration would not mention the idea of dialogue between the Nicaraguan government and its opposition. To do so would give credence to

dialogue in El Salvador which it then opposed.

Enter Napoleon Duarte. Duarte made dialogue acceptable when he invited his rebels to meet him at La Palma in his United Nations speech last October 9. Next Arturo Cruz godfathered the San Jose proposal of March 1, 1985. That declaration does not call for an overthrow, but for a national dialogue leading to new Constitutent Assembly elections. In this proposal, President Ortega could only be removed as a result of a plebicite.

The human rights dialogue formula was working in El Salvador. The Administration was now moving towards a similar position in Nicaragua and seemed to be paying more attention to what Central Americans thought about their own countries. That was new to me.

On June 4th, Congress returned from the Memorial Day recess. McCurdy appeared before the Rules Committee to seek a rule on the Supplemental Appropriations Bill that would allow him to offer his amendment. The evening before in a marathon session with the Republican leadership, White House officials, and conservative Democrats, McCurdy had worked out the final language.

When I finally read the language on June 4th, I found that the human rights language acknowledging a special responsiblity to curb the abuses of the contras had been removed. Shortly thereafter I ran into a lobbyist from Common Cause who asked what side I was lobbying for. With great anger and frustration directed at no one in particular, I said, "I don't know, I don't know."

I sent in a card to McCurdy who was on the House floor. I told him that if I were to have any credibility left after the vote, it would be because of the human rights provision. Human rights conditionality was not only my trademark, it was my calling. He was sympathetic, but also clearly exhausted after the marathon session the night before.

But there was also more. The Speaker decided that McCurdy would not be

allowed to offer the amendment. A provision would be made in the rule for debating the Supplemental that would allow the Minority leader to offer an amendment. But he could not designate McCurdy as the author. McCurdy, therefore, lost exclusive control over the language of the bill.

The next day I found that minority leader Michel's amendment had stripped the requirement that the contras be willing to negotiate with the Sandinistas. That night out group met again with McCurdy. McCurdy listened to our frustration and reported that other members, including Republicans, were disturbed that the negotiations requirement had been removed.

He put in a call to the White House and asked that efforts be made to restore that language. The person at the White House agreed he would try.

But I knew better. In most cases, amendment language can be changed up until the last moment, but not in this case. I made repeated calls on Thursday and always came up with the same answer.

There is no other way to say this. I was miserable and frightened. Not only had I betrayed my former position, my closest allies, but I felt I had betrayed myself. And worse, the House Republicans' insensitivity to these concerns meant we (except at that moment it was no longer we) would lose votes.

I saw one hope: A Presidential letter clearly laying out U.S. Nicaragua policy including negotiations and human rights. But I did not know how to get it. The Republicans were happy with the legislation and the majority White House staff involved were satisfied.

When situations like this have arisen before, I go to the House of Representatives and wander around. I go to the Democratic lobby, to the House restaurant, to member's offices I am working with and in this case working against.

Around four I went to McCurdy's office. When I went in someone told me the President's office was on hold waiting for McCurdy to return. That was my

chance. Dave and I had already discussed the letter and he thought it was a good idea. I put a copy of the letter the President had sent the Senate on April 24th underlining the key human rights section.

When he came in, I quickly reviewed what we needed. In his call, the President first thanked Dave and then described his policy as one promoting negotiations, reconciliation and support of the democratic center against the extremes of the right and left. Dave said Mr. President, I am glad to hear you say that; it is exactly the kind of policy we need to win the vote next week.

And one more thing, Mr. President. We need a letter saying exactly those things plus one more thing you wrote to the Senate in your April 24th letter. And Dave read the President the human rights paragraph which acknowledged a special U.S. responsiblity to promote human rights with people who seek our assistance.

I felt much relieved. I still had to see the letter before I would feel any sense of real ease, but I had gotten lucky once again by finding where the right place was at the right time.

If that letter came and it really did not ennunciate a new policy I knew we would win.

Just then I remembered that I needed to talk to Representative Michael Barnes's staff director on a matter related to Nicaragua. When I called Nancy Agris, the secretary to the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, who is far more than a secretary, answered. She informed me that it was her birthday party that I was interupting and that I should come right over. Remembering that Mike would be opposing the amendment next week and that he and his staff felt very sternly about it, I meekly said, "Are you sure I'll be welcome?" Nancy responded that such a question was an insult and she would not answer it.

I spent the next hour in a very comfortable conversation with long time friends who the next week would be on the other side of a very nasty issue.

That was a very important hour, and I have brought it back time and time again to memory since the vote when I have encountered much different reactions.

Later that night I returned to McCurdy's office to discuss with his Administrative Assistant an op-ed piece Dave was submitting to the Post and what we should recommend be in the President's letter. Early Friday afternoon, we communicated those ideas to the White House.

On Tuesday, July 11, the letter was released in a press conference on the White House lawn held by Representatives Michel and McDade, two Republicans, and Representatives McCurdy and Fascell, two Democrats. From my point of view it was perfect.

The votes occurred the next day. I was now prepared or at least I thought I was prepared to lobby. Dave took fifty copies of the letter with him to the floor. He would sit for a while and then get up and talk with one, two or maybe three members, always leaving a copy of the letter.

I thought the first vote would be close. It was offered by Representative Edward Boland, former Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and it would have merely restated current law which prohibits any CIA role and continue it in effect until Congress repealed it. Otherwise, it would lapse October 1st. What it did to this bill was to prevent intelligence sharing with the contras.

It was not close. It went down ____ to _____. Apparently, the letter had done the trick. Time magazine wrote:

> Reagan's most effective step in changing congressional minds was a declaration that U.S. assistance was not designed to overthrow the pro-Moscow Sandinista regime, but to pressure it into coming to peaceful terms with its domestic opposition. In a letter to Oklahoma Democrat Dave McCurdy, who helped shape the compromise bill, Reagan said, "My Administration is determined to pursue political, not military solutions in Central America."

There was no reason to lobby now. It would only pour salt into the wounds of many people who I have admired and respected ~~for many years~~. The

vote on final passage was ____ to ____.

The next day, Thursday, June 13, I went to speak to Ann Lewis. The topic was in my mind "my reintegration or departure from ADA." What I had done I had done on my own time, without pay and without assistance from the ADA office.

So I thought reintegration was possible.

I was wrong.

To begin with, she had not understood my originial declaration a month earlier. I had told her that I felt that I had to explore to see if a compromise was possible. By compromise I understood something in-between the Administration's position and the position of the House leadership, a compromise which would involve aid to the contras. She had understood something other than ADA policy which is opposed to the position of the House leadership.

She asked me if I had lobbied for Michel (the Michel amendment). My first thought was that it was only the Michel amendment because Tip O'Neill had prevented McCurdy from offering the amendment. Instead I said, I supported Michel but I did not lobby for it. I told her about the human rights and negotiations conditionality being stripped from the bill.

She said I was playing word games with her. She reported a conversation with Representative Barney Frank, President of ADA and her brother, that I had lobbied for Michel. From her point-of-view, the distinction between support and lobbying was meaningless.

But to me, it was and is not. And I could not communicated the difference and she could not hear it. To her, I had been for the House Republican leader's amendment on the principal human rights issue of the year. No other considerations, no other nuances mattered.

I reminded her that I had told her a month previous that the outcome was

not in question, only the policy that surrounded it. She replied that it was also clear that in January, 1984, Walter Mondale would loose in November 1984 but that the fight had to be waged.

At that point I knew that there was nothing more to say. We saw things too differently. We talked vaguely about trying to work some arrangement so I could continue to work on El Salvador and Guatemala where there were no major disagreements.

I left the office feeling that I had been fired. The next day, Friday June 14th, I told her I would resign. And on June 19th, my 42nd birthday, I submitted my formal resignation and thereby ended a nine and one-half year association with ADA.

I asked in the beginning of this narrative if I had changed my mind. I had. I agree with the President's letter. It states a policy that is good for the United States and good for Nicaragua. It is also good because of the process that gave birth to it, seven weeks of lengthy negotiations between the Congress and the Executive.

The most important paragraph in the President's letter was the third one:

> Just as we support President Duarte in his efforts to achieve reconciliation in El Salvador, we also endorse the unified democratic opposition's March 1, 1985 San Jose Declaration which calls for national reconciliation through a church mediated dialogue. We oppose a sharing of power based on military force rather than the will of the people expressed through free and fair elections. That is the position of President Duarte. It is also the position of the Nicaraguan opposition leaders, who have agreed that executive authority in Nicaragua should change only through elections.... (we) do not seek the overthrow of the Sandinista government or to put in its place a government based on supporters of the old Somoza regime.

Those are remarkable statements for a President whose Administration in 1983 made private assurances to the Honduran military that it was seeking the Sandinistas overthrow, that this operation would not be another Bay of Pigs,

and was not bothered at all by its association with civilian and military elements of the old Somoza regime.

The President is also in effect calling now for an historical compromise in which guerilla forces in each of Nicaragua and El Salvador will surrender their arms in exchange for amnesty and a guaranteed and equal participation in the electoral process.

Members of Congress and opinion makers like myself are in this formula making a lot of bets which are risky: 1) that the President's letter is believable; 2) the main contra force, the FDN, can be reformed and will settle for less than overthrowing the Sandinistas; 3) that the Salvadoran government is negotiating in good faith and 4) that either the Sandinistas or the Salvadoran guerillas are prepared to make an historical compromise.

The FDN in theory at least, is now subordinate to a new, more broadly based United Nicaraguan Opposition, which includes FDN leader, Adolfo Calero, but also Arturo Cruz and Alfonso Robelo. But whether Cruz and Robelo, who have both acknowledged the human rights abuses of the FDN in the past and who want a political solution will be able to share real authority with Calero and the FDN military leadership is still very much in doubt.

In the final analysis, I have come to believe that as in El Salvador, the only way to move toward peace and justice in Central America is to work with the Administration. They have considerable leverage over the FDN. They have shown they will use it. They did in El Salvador in 1983 and 1984, in bringing about reformation of the military which in turn made dialogue possible.

In the Salvador case, the Salvadorans had to act too. President Duarte was assisted in his efforts by moderate Salvadoran army officers, notably General Adolfo Balndon, the Army Chief of Staff. Nicaraguans will have to act if the new policy is going to work. Cruz and Robelo will have to convince Calero and his associates to share power and to make reforms.

The three of them will together have to create a movement that the International community beyond the Reagan Adminisration and the U.S. Congress will want to support in seeking dialogue with the Sandinistas. They are just at the beginning.

I believe if they are successful, then in time a more moderate faction within the Sandinistas will gain ascendancy and seek an accomodation with the opposition.

That is what I believe now and why I supported legislation providing arms to a movement which has been seeking to overthrow a sovereign government. Others with no less and no more knowledge than I, believe the Sandinistas will never surrender one iota of power, that they would prefer to be overthrown than compromise. And for that reason they stood by the principle that the U.S. should not assist the overthrow of sovereign governments.

It is a view that I still respect. But what the Sandinistas decide is beyond our control even with our pressure. Where I hope my longer term allies and associates will join my new allies and associates is in keeping the pressure on the Administration, the Salvadoran government and Nicaraguan resistance.