

cc Sir C

①

010



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister  
Agree that we  
should show the  
Nicaraguans how  
democracy works?  
Dear Charles, CD 13/7.

3 July 1985

Yes - I wonder what  
they will make  
of question time  
not

Nicaragua

We have received a request from the Nicaraguan National Assembly for a multi-party delegation to visit London in the autumn to study constitutional procedures. The Governments of Germany, France, Italy and Sweden are likely to receive the delegation, which will include representatives of four political parties ranging from the Sandinista Front to the opposition party, the Independent Liberals.

The Nicaraguan Government are committed to producing a new constitution within the next two years after wide consultation with other parties. The purpose of the proposed visit to Europe is to gather information on a variety of constitutions as background for their own drafting. Other delegations will visit Latin America and Socialist bloc countries. The Nicaraguans have no experience at all of parliamentary democracy and, although it would be unrealistic to expect a visit to the UK to have a decisive influence on the future shape of their constitution, it will provide an opportunity to emphasise the importance we attach to the development of pluralist political structures in Nicaragua and to offer practical advice on the practices and procedures of parliamentary democracy.

If we agreed to receive the Nicaraguan delegation the Sandinistas might try to exploit this to confer a degree of respectability on their hitherto spurious commitment to political pluralism. But to turn them down would be inconsistent with our own firm position on the need for the Sandinistas to live up to this commitment; and it would be seen as a rebuff by the democratic opposition in Nicaragua. Moreover, a refusal to receive the delegation officially would not prevent a visit which could then be exploited by the Opposition here. The Foreign Secretary therefore considers that we should agree to arrange a suitable programme here for the Nicaraguan Group. This could be done by the COI, to ensure that we retain some control over their activities. We would not envisage them meeting any Ministers. Our limited involvement could be explained to the Americans on the basis that we were encouraging the Nicaraguans in their professed wish to strengthen their democratic system: an objective which we support.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq  
10 Downing Street

RESTRICTED

FILE

RM



cc: PG

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

4 July, 1985

NICARAGUA

Thank you for your letter of 3 July about the request from the Nicaraguan National Assembly for a multi-party delegation to visit London to study constitutional procedures.

The Prime Minister agrees that we should arrange a programme for the group. She hopes it will include a visit to Prime Minister's Questions where they should learn a certain amount about how democracy works.

(C.D. Powell)

P.R. Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

RESTRICTED

BR