

22 FEB. 1985

RODGERS: Konstantine Custino-
vitch (?), on the recommendation
of doctors will not be taking
part in this meeting. Soviet
officials took the unusual step
of openly and officially confirm-
ing to western reporters that
Chernenko is ill, that admission
suggests the rest of the ruling
Kremlin politburo has finally
concluded they can no longer hide
the obvious, or the possibility
Chernenko may never return to
work.

All week long other politburo
members have been invoking
Chernenko's name in the hope he
might muster the strength to put
in the obligatory pre-election
appearance before this weekend's
voting. It has now been 57 days
since the Soviet President last
appeared in public, but Chernenko
is still standing for a parlia-
mentary election Sunday. And
when these Russians go to the
polls they will be voting for
him, sick or well.

The ruling Kremlin politburo
would have liked nothing more
than for Chernenko to have
appeared today, in his absence
they may now have to decide
whether to let things drift, or
consider something that's never
happened here before, the
possibility of a Soviet leader
resigning because of ill health.
Walter Rodgers, ABC News, Moscow.

ABC WORLD NEWS TONIGHT - 7:00PM
Nicaragua

PETER JENNINGS: From the
Soviet leadership to the leader-
ship in Nicaragua. In California
today, Secretary of State Shultz
said it is immaterial to the
United States, whether the
Communist threat, as he put it,
in Nicaragua ends through
negotiation, internal reform, or
the collapse of the Sandinista
government. Mr. Shultz was
echoing President Reagan, who
last night came very close to
advocating that the Sandinistas

should be over thrown. As John
McWethy reports, a major change
in the administration's public
posture in Nicaragua is now very
clear.

JOHN McWETHY: As the Presi-
dent left for a weekend at Camp
David, he said all he wanted for
Nicaragua was peace. At his
press conference last night,
however, he talked a much tougher
line, saying that he wanted to
change Nicaragua's government to
"remove its present structure".
He was asked repeatedly if that
didn't really mean he wanted to
overthrow the government there.

PRESIDENT REAGAN: ...not if
the present government there
would turn around and say
alright, if they'd uncle, alright
come on back into the revolution-
ary government, and let's
straighten this out.

McWETHY: The President's
remarks last night, as he urged
Congress to fund the so called
Contra guerillas, whose stated
goal is the overthrow of Nicara-
gua's government, where in sharp
contrast to how he has dealt with
the issue before.

PRESIDENT REAGAN: We are not
doing anything to try and
overthrow the Nicaraguan govern-
ment. Let it be clear as to the
American attitude toward the
government of Nicaragua, we do
not seek its overthrow...

McWETHY: Because the US has
had only limited success in
influencing Nicaragua's behavior,
government sources say policy has
now changed. That the President
is demanding Nicaragua's Marxist
government ratically alter its
ways, or failing that be replaced
one way or the other.

SEN. PATRICK LEAHY: Clearly,
if negotiations fail in Nicara-
gua, then he has indicated that
he would wish to go further. I
think he's trying to reshape
debate, repackage the proposal.
It's clear that Congress is not
going to put its stamp of appro-
val on the old package.