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## The Central American Crisis Reader

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at times eclectic account of the military purges, the book is also important because it is an example of the *samizdat* literature that has been smuggled into the West.

Vitaly Rapoport is a Red Army veteran now living in New York City, while Yuri Alexeev is the pseudonym for a writer still living in the Soviet Union. Both are Russian patriots, indignant at the defeats and outraged by the horrifying casualties their country suffered in 1941. They are sympathetic to the Red Army, reserving their ire for Stalin and the political leadership that they hold expressly responsible for the debacle of 1941.

The book is not without flaw. The very nature of *samizdat* makes documentation sketchy. The condemnation of Stalin and the Party will scarcely startle the Western reader, yet the details of the army purges and the character portraits of the victims and the perpetrators cancel out the volume's shortcomings. This is an important book, both for understanding the decisive front of the Second World War, and for analyzing the complex relationship between Party and army that plays so crucial a role in the modern Soviet state.

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Leiken, Robert S. and Rubin, Barry,  
eds. *The Central American Crisis*

*Reader*. New York: Summit Books, 1987. 718pp. \$24.95

Wiarda, Howard J. *Finding Our Way? Toward Maturity in U.S.-Latin American Relations*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1987. 286pp. \$27.50

Wiarda, Howard J. and Falcoff, Mark. *The Communist Challenge in the Caribbean and Central America*. Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1987. 249pp. \$24.75

Three cheers for three outstanding books! For the informed public policy or international relations professional who has for the past decade or so avoided the seeming quagmire of obscure history and confusing relationships that the Central American crises represent, this collection of volumes will go a long way toward easing anxieties. The authors and editors of these books provide a sober and balanced evaluation of the proximate causes of today's strife, without losing sight of their audience: foreign policy specialists in the United States. As a result, they have skillfully avoided the increasing pitch and downright "clientelism" to which Latin Americanists frequently fall prey as they offer policy prescriptions that ignore American political realities.

Messrs. Leiken and Rubin have provided us with the most comprehensive collection of relevant documents and articles available. Their dense volume is divided thematically, with chapters such as

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"The Revolution in Nicaragua" and "The War in El Salvador," and appropriate subheadings that provide the reader with a variety of useful perspectives for examining the current crises. It is not difficult, for example, to understand the traditional Nicaraguan disdain for American policy in the region when we read Henry Stimson's words that "in no way have we transgressed upon the sovereignty and independence of the government of our sister nation," even as U.S. Marines occupied Nicaragua for the third time in 15 years.

Similarly, the editors treat us to a most convincing sequence of documents that should make it clear to all but the most close-minded idealists that in 1979 the Sandinistas had much more in mind than a "mixed economy" with an "open political system," as they had assured the Organization of American States in exchange for formal recognition.

Admirably, the editors have refrained from excessive embellishment of the documents and articles, attempting instead something all too unusual in foreign relations literature: to let history speak for itself.

For analysis and policy prescriptions, there are few books better than Wiarda's *Finding Our Way?* The thesis of his work is that despite the harsh rhetoric of President Reagan and his key advisors on Latin America, U.S. policy since 1981 has gradually become more pragmatic, sophisticated and nuanced than the media and foreign policy elite have dared acknowledge. As one of the

professional staff members of the bipartisan Kissinger Commission on Central America (to which he devotes one chapter), Dr. Wiarda is well-placed to comment on the successes and failures of Reagan administration policy in the region, and he is evenhanded in his approach. The first half of his book is overview material, which draws on his previous and well-respected body of scholarship; the book's real value is its latter half, in which he offers a tantalizing peek into how American foreign policy is made in the late 20th century. The roles of "think tanks," the media (which, in the author's words, "tend to share the counter-cultural view that the United States is among the major causes of the world's problems"), and bureaucratic politics are presented alongside those of more traditionally accepted players, such as Congress and public opinion, to show how foreign policy paralysis has become the rule rather than the exception. In Dr. Wiarda's opinion, though, the Reagan administration was remarkably successful at overcoming this paralysis with regard to Central America. He credits "the increased military preparedness . . . the restored economy, the renewed confidence and faith in ourselves and our system" that President Reagan ushered in.

From this assessment of recent American policy, one moves in the third book to an equally sober analysis of the challenge that has driven that policy from the start: the perceived communist threat to the

Caribbean and Central America. In this volume, Dr. Wiarda teams with Mark Falcoff to provide a collection of essays which consider the Moscow-Havana role in communist expansion in the region. Among their contributors are Jiri and Virginia Valenta, who have provided the best analysis available of Grenada in 1979-1983. Their chapter is particularly useful in its breakdown of Soviet policy into its component parts: policy toward revolutionary regimes (Cuba and Nicaragua), progressive regimes (Mexico and Panama), "bourgeois-liberal" regimes (Venezuela and Costa Rica) and reactionary regimes (El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras). Described here is a more systematic and sophisticated foreign policy approach, with different means to achieve different ends throughout the region, than that suggested by more traditional analyses of Soviet western hemisphere policy.

Chapters by Marc Falcoff on Cuba's policy of revolution-for-export and an excellent offering by Ernest Evans on the changing strategies of revolutionary movements in Central America round out this important study, perhaps the best in a fairly recent explosion of literature on the subject.

These three books provide ready access to a most comprehensive span of documentation and analysis. Indeed, if the reader is not an expert on the region but a generalist in

foreign policy, this collection is really all he needs.

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Lowenthal, Abraham F. *Partners in Conflict: The United States and Latin America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987. 240pp. \$10.95

Economic and demographic changes in Latin America's major nations have altered U.S. interests in the region. Especially, argues Professor Lowenthal, with respect to Mexico, Brazil, and the Caribbean Basin, whose current roles in both hemispheric and world economic affairs have simply bypassed North American policy thinking.

Professor Lowenthal offers details on trade, production, finance, and development in these three subregions. In clear, restrained passages, he reviews the recent history of U.S. policies toward Latin America which presidents since Franklin D. Roosevelt have offered as foreign policy centerpieces. These policies, he concludes, barely survived their authors' terms in the White House. He believes that they were couched in corrective-reformist terms and failed to address the emergence of several Latin American nations as important world economies. A corollary theme is the long-standing debate between those who favor Uncle Sam in the activist or interventionist mode, and those who