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Tensions Between Sandinistas And Nicaraguan Church Hierarchy May Be Winding Down

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According to reports on Oct. 21 in Managua, tensions between the Sandinista government and the Nicaraguan Church hierarchy appear to be winding down. A commission consisting of representatives of both sides convened again on Oct. 20, the second such meeting in the past month. Although the meeting took place behind closed doors, and the official statement released afterwards was rather brief, local analysts claim that progress is being made, albeit slow and cautious. The statement indicated that both sides agreed to meet on a monthly basis, agreements established at the Sept. 30 meeting were ratified, and concrete proposals about "themes that cause tension" were discussed. Relations between the Church hierarchy and the Sandinista government reached a critical point when Bishop Pablo Antonio Vega and Monsignor Bismarck Carballo were expelled from the country a few months ago due to their open support for the Nicaraguan contras. Soon thereafter, President Daniel Ortega invited the bishops to join government officials at the negotiating table, and Vice President Sergio Ramirez met with Pope John Paul II in Rome. Next, upon arriving in Managua, Rome's new ambassador to Nicaragua Monsignor Pablo Giglio said the time had come for dialogue between the Sandinistas and the bishops. Many local analysts claim Giglio is in large part responsible for the "thawing out" of relations between the two sides. At the September meeting, he performed as mediator.

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