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Nicaraguan Politicians Of Diverse Political Persuasions Excited About Prospects For Peace

by Deborah Tyroler

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In Nicaragua, politicians of diverse persuasions, Sandinista and opposition, say a real possibility of peace exists. "Without doubt, this is the most interesting moment in the entire eight years," said Carlos Huembes, who heads the Democratic Coordinator, an anti-Sandinista coalition of political parties, business groups and trade unions. Jaime Wheelock Roman, member of the FSLN director and Agrarian Reform Minister, who has been addressing party faithful across the country, told one audience that Nicaragua was passing through "extremely important moments." He said, "A few months ago, the future of the country was more aggression. Today a new possibility is being opened." Under the accord, Central American countries must stop aiding the US-backed contras, whose military campaign has kept Nicaragua in turmoil for five years. Central American governments contending with rebel movements must negotiate a cease-fire, issue an amnesty, end press censorship and guarantee full political freedom. Rev. Bismarck Carballo, director of the Roman Catholic radio station, and who was expelled from Nicaragua after the station was closed in Jan. 1986, returned Sept. 12. His station is expected to be back on the air in a few weeks. Editors of the opposition newspaper LA PRENSA, which was shut in June 1986, are impatiently awaiting permission to resume publication. Nearly all the senior Sandinista leaders have made absolute public promises that Nicaragua will comply with every detail of the accord. They have indicated that they are preparing to free thousands of prisoners and find a formula to negotiate a cease-fire with the contras. Only Interior Minister Tomas Borge, who is responsible for internal security and press censorship, has refrained from detailed comment. Borge's office has said he is not giving interviews for the time being. The opposition placed its seal of approval on the accord last week in a speech by Enrique Bolanos Geyer. Bolanos heads the country's principal business federation and is among the most articulate and uncompromising Sandinista opponent in Nicaragua. In a speech to more than 1,000 business people at a convention in Managua, Bolanos hailed the accord as "the successful culmination of our struggle." "There is a commitment signed by President Daniel Ortega which obliges him, among many other things, to give Nicaraguans back our rights to a free press and to complete freedom of spoken, written and televised expression, along with our unrestricted right to meet and demonstrate in public," he said. "And as if that were not enough," Bolanos continued, the accord will be monitored by a National Reconciliation Commission "providentially, for us, headed by his eminence Miguel Cardinal Obando y Bravo." "I think the Cardinal sees himself as the one who is finally going to fix this mess," said an opposition member of the Legislative Assembly. "He thinks that now is the time and he is the man." "November 7 is the day the lid comes off," said Mauricio Diaz Davila, who represents opposition political parties on the Reconciliation Commission. "On November 8, we take to the streets." Diaz is receiving a great deal of attention recently. As the fourth member of the Commission, he could wield decisive influence. Obando y Bravo is an outspoken critic of the Sandinistas. Vice President Sergio Ramirez represents the government, and the other commission member, Dr. Gustavo Parajon, a Baptist cleric, is considered sympathetic to the Sandinista regime. When President Ortega selected Diaz to represent the political opposition, other opposition leaders quickly denounced him and his Popular Social Christian Party as crypto-

Sandinistas lacking genuine opposition credentials. However, Diaz has said he would align himself with Cardinal Obando. "He is carrying a double-edged sword," one member of the Legislative Assembly said, adding that Diaz's political fate depended on his behavior on the Commission. The Popular Social Christian Party was formed in 1977 by left-leaning youths within the Social Christian Party, which is affiliated with Christian Democratic parties in other countries. Among the causes of the split was the dissidents' insistence that the party support armed struggle against the Somoza regime. Diaz, a law school dropout who has devoted much of his life to politics, has led the party since 1983, winning support from both pro- and anti-Sandinista factions. At an interview in his office in Managua, he said, "I wouldn't call Nicaragua a dictatorship, but we have a regime based on force, a militarized society." Diaz said the Sandinistas have decided to accept democratization because they can no longer pay the price of continued war and economic decline. The party leader said that he would press the government to return properties it confiscated illegally and that he would urge the release of thousands of prisoners, including members of the defeated National Guard. Yet, he also allowed that he would not "dare to ask for pardons for people proven to have personally committed gross crimes." Diaz urged the contras to declare a unilateral cease-fire. He said that would give the commission moral authority to demand the same from government forces. He said he will insist that the Sandinistas live up to the accord. "Can they withstand it?" he asked. "I have my doubts. The free press puts them in great danger. But I really think they have no alternative. (Basic data from NEW YORK TIMES, 09/12/87, 09/15/87)

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