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Nicaragua: Contra Command & Domestic Opposition Parties Hold First Formal Meeting To Form United Front

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On April 9-10, contra leaders and leaders of Nicaragua's domestic opposition parties met in Guatemala City to discuss means and ways to form a united front for the February 1990 elections. According to the Washington Post, representatives of the contras and 15 opposition groups agreed that changes in Nicaragua's electoral code and media legislation proposed by the government were inadequate, and that the opposition should present a single candidate. Contra leader Adolfo Calero said, "The idea on both sides is to form a great, broad, national coalition to defeat the Sandinistas. That is our goal." Andres Zuniga of the Liberal Party said, "It will be difficult to unify, because we have a history of internal strife, but if we are thinking of the Nicaraguan people, it is something we must do. History will blame those who do not unify. The Sandinistas will stay in power, we will lose the elections and no one will blame the Sandinistas." In an interview with the Post, contra military chief Enrique Bermudez largely blamed the US government and his own political allies among the contra forces for the contra army's current situation. He said, "I do not know if it is because of arrogance or incapacity, but the United States does not know how to negotiate. To negotiate, the United States pressures its allies and not its enemies. They cut our aid, but allow the Sandinistas to continue to receive more than $500 million a year in Soviet and Cuban aid. "I think we in the military fulfilled our obligations, but we lost on the political front, where we did not have great capacity...We were defeated in Washington, not on the field of battle." (Basic data from Washington Post, 04/12/89)

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