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[Mauricio Diaz is president of the Popular Social Christian Party (PPSC), and was elected to represent domestic opposition parties on the National Reconciliation Commission, created under the auspices of the 1987 regional peace accord. Reproduced below are excerpts from an interview appearing in the April 1989 issue of Pensamiento Proprio, a publication of the Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research of Central America and the Caribbean-CRIES, Managua.]

PP: Do you believe it is possible to hold fair elections in Nicaragua? Diaz: The PPSC maintains that favorable conditions have come about both domestically and internationally that allow the democratic struggle to go forward. This creates conditions that allow us to free ourselves from the idea held by some opposition sectors that someone from outside the country will come and do us the favor of getting rid of the Sandinista malaise. The opposition and government must act responsibly in order to reach an agreement which will satisfy both sides in matters related to the conditions for holding elections. PP: Does the opposition have a policy of forming electoral alliances? Diaz: After the signing of the Esquipulas II accords [in August 1987] the bloc of 14 parties was formed. This unity was born as a kind of sum of the opposition's intrinsic weaknesses. At a given moment, opposition forces had to come together around demands for constitutional reforms. Within the bloc, there is a discussion about whether the political struggle here is for reforms or for the elimination of Sandinismo. The PPSC considers it necessary to fight to reform the Sandinista regime as much as possible. We do not think it is feasible to annihilate the model or the experience developed over the years of the Sandinista revolution. Ideally, in order to confront the FSLN we would all come together under one presidential candidate and a slate of national unity candidates for the various government positions. Is this possible? We are in a stage of indefiniteness. Personally, I have my reservations that the opposition will go into the elections united. Nevertheless, it is necessary to work for complete opposition unity. When I say this, I am referring to the opposition inside the country. We reject the idea of becoming a political base for leaders of the Nicaraguan Resistance [RN]. Despite all manner of valid criticisms, there is an opposition with credentials in Nicaragua that could attempt to create an option to Sandinismo. In these years of crisis, society has changed. Some social strata have been displaced and there has been a change in the style of the anti-Sandinista political leadership, too. The visits by RN leaders last year showed that there was more expectation than impact generated by them in Nicaraguan society. PP: Under what conditions would the parties that represent the middle classes, like the PPSC or the Liberals, make an alliance with business sectors? Diaz: At this time, the struggle is not between bourgeoisie and proletariat. More to the point, Nicaragua needs to enter into reconstruction. This will happen by creating a genuinely democratic process in order to guarantee a lasting peace that would allow society to develop. There is no chance for lasting peace without this. In any case, we have not contemplated an alliance with businessmen such as those in COSEP [High Council for Private Enterprise]. At given moments of confrontation with the FSLN government, we have found common ground with these sectors and with the local Marxist-Leninist left. It suits us to create an electoral alliance based on ideological interests and kindred doctrines, where the whole Social Christian family, for
example, could arrive at agreements in order to confront the FSLN. But there is still a long way to go. PP: What led the parties represented in the National Assembly to ally themselves with non-parliamentary forces? Diaz: In Nicaraguan history, the United States has always applied a "big stick" policy. I maintain that inside the country, there is also a "little stick" policy being applied by the FSLN to the opposition. The Sandinistas, as the majority in the legislature, did not develop a policy of alliances capable of generating respectful relations with the parliamentary opposition. To the FSLN, we are all agents of the US embassy and accomplices of imperialism. They also promoted a kind of political scabbing or strike-breaking in the parliament by treating the deputies differently. The FSLN took on the task of breaking up an opposition which had entered the 1984 elections with a nationalist spirit, thereby causing uncertainty in the more traditional political parties. The serious opposition saw it necessary to seek alliances outside the National Assembly. PP: Why not promote alliances among the parties represented in the National Assembly? Diaz: We could not form a common platform. Our party has good relations with the Liberals, but it is almost impossible to arrive at programmatic political agreements with factions and tendencies in which there is extraordinary competitiveness and personalism. PP: Why is the opposition united when it comes to presenting demands to the FSLN but weak when it comes to forming an electoral alliance? Diaz: There are internal divisions among the parties but the opposition as such is not divided. The weak link is the breaking up into factions and the strong point is the common proposals. Faced with a party as strong as the FSLN, the best thing to do is to think about one single electoral front. Is this viable? We have our reservations, but these create the possibilities to come up with new options. PP: However, the elections are approaching and the opposition has not been able to elaborate a governmental program that would give it legitimacy at home and abroad. Diaz: This is part of the nature of Nicaraguans. It can even be seen as a quasi-anthropological problem. The same thing happened with the FSLN. They did not have a program when they began their struggle against Somoza and they had to adjust their 1969 program to the dynamics of 1978 and 1979. A situation like that will happen. There will be surprises. Soon, the public will get to know a program, or a number of programs. Depending on who the opposition candidates are, the blocs and tendencies will be formed. The candidates must satisfy our members and share our party's political line. The clock is running and the people continue to be frustrated by the opposition's slowness in offering concrete formulas. It is not just a question of criticizing the FSLN's errors, but also one of offering a platform for a government which would exclude no one.

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