Nicaragua: Interview With Erick Ramirez, Leader Of Social Christian Party

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[Erick Ramirez heads the Social Christian Party, member of the rightist Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinator (CDN), and of the "Group of 14." Although his anti-Sandinista credentials are impeccable, during a recent visit to Managua, a National Endowment for Democracy delegation did not meet with Ramirez. Instead, the Endowment representatives preferred to consult with other Social Christian factions. In late May, representatives of all Social Christian splinter groups met with exile factions, and signed an agreement described as the first step toward opposition unity. Summarized below are excerpts from an interview appearing in the 05/20/89 issue of El Nuevo Diario, provided by Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research of Central America and the Caribbean-CRIES, Managua.] Diario: In 1984, your party decided to boycott the elections. How do you perceive the situation leading up to the 1990 contest? Ramirez: The political scene is going to be very dynamic. Practically all the parties will run, but I don't think the recent electoral legislation reforms provide adequate conditions. During the 1984 election period, there were four sets of modifications made to the rules, the last coming into effect just three weeks before election day. We will continue to demand major changes to the electoral legislation. However, there are organizations which call themselves part of the opposition which ran right away to the National Political Parties Council (CNPP) to register. They openly raced each other to present their documentation, and of course they did not demand the establishment of adequate conditions for the elections. I think these people are serving the government in its game of dividing the opposition. Two or three Social Christian parties with similar names and symbols would cause confusion among the electorate, and that would...benefit the Sandinista party. Diario: One decision made in response to opposition demands for electoral reform is that one of the five Supreme Electoral Council members be a distinguished citizen, noted for his or her impartiality. Do you think this will give balance to the Council? Ramirez: This is a difficult matter. A magnifying glass will be needed to find a person in this country who could respond to the expectations of both the opposition and the government...If such a person is found, we will advance a lot in the coming election period. Diario: Do you think it is possible to form blocs based on common ideological positions for the 1990 elections? Ramirez: All possibilities for forming a broad-based opposition alliance must be explored, but if this does not happen, efforts must be made to form groups with common programmatic positions. There is a possibility for a centrist alliance, and we believe that either of those two options could come about if there is the political will and if personal ambitions are set aside. This will be difficult, because there are too many pressures, too much outside interference, too much money in the way, too many paper leaderships, and there are even journalistic distortions, because some in the press have been bought by political leaders. Diario: How do you perceive the FSLN? Ramirez: In our judgment, the FSLN has been suffering from an accelerated erosion of its support. With the economic and social crisis at home, and the international pressure, it becomes immediately clear that the government has lost popular support. Its possibilities for keeping itself in power are noticeably reduced. The governing party has been obliged to begin a process of opening up..., ostensibly with the aim of reducing domestic pressures and of trying to recover an image...}
of being in favor of democracy. The climate developing now before the elections is a result of the presidential summit meetings. It is also a way to gain time in order to see if it is possible to regain the initiative...and search for options that would allow them to hang onto power. Diario: What future do you see for the leftist and ultra-leftist parties? Ramirez: None. The FSLN, with its leftist vestments and with the professed marxist-leninist ideology of its national directorate, has been putting forward the ideological positions of the left in a negative way. If the leftist and ultra-leftist parties run in the elections, I don't think they will stand a chance... Diario: If your party nominates you as a presidential candidate, would you accept? Ramirez: ...If the party gives me the great honor of being a candidate for the President of the Republic, I am willing to accept, and accepting would of course mean being ready to go into the elections if an opposition alliance around one candidate is achieved. What the PSC has rejected is the imposition of candidacies. There must be free choice in a democratic and pluralist way among the opposition.

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