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Nicaragua: Interview With Eduardo Molina, Democratic Conservative Party Leader

by Deborah Tyroler

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[Eduardo Molina, a leader of the Democratic Conservative Party (PCD) and a deputy in the National Assembly, is considered to be one of the foremost representatives of Nicaraguan neo-conservatism. The Conservative "family," as it is called, stands out in Nicaragua as a traditional locus of political power. At present, the "family" is divided into at least three quarreling factions. The PCD was established in 1979, and is a direct descendant of the now defunct Conservative Party, one of Nicaragua’s two traditional parties. The party was divided into four factions before the 1979 revolution. Party leaders include Rafael Cordova Rivas and Clemente Guido. In the 1984 presidential elections, Guido received 154,324 votes or 14% of the total. The PCD gained 14 seats in the National Assembly in the elections. Three leading party activists attempted to boycott the 1984 elections, and were accused of having accepted bribe offers from the US Embassy. On the following day, the three formed a party faction, called the "non-officialist PCD." Other PCD members, including several deputies in the National Assembly, left the party in 1984 to form the Conservative Party of Nicaragua (PCN). The PCN, founded in 1984, is affiliated with the Conservative International Party. The PCN is one of the four parties pertaining to the Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinator ("Coordinadora"). By 1987, the PCN was effectively two organizations under the same title, one led by millionaire businessperson Rappaccioli and the other by Miriam Arguello. Party following is limited. The following interview appeared in a 05/28/89 report by the Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research of Central America and the Caribbean-CRIES, Managua.]

CRIES: What are your thoughts on the current process leading up to the February 1990 elections?
Molina: They are elections that the [Central American] presidents are in agreement with, but not the opposition. If a process of talks with the government were begun, maybe the election date could be changed to mid-1990, or better yet, to November. The government should have listened to the opposition so that all contending parties would be satisfied with fighting it out in February. CRIES: But the opposition has had 10 years to organize itself and was demanding that the elections be moved up... Molina: A more long-range vision is necessary since we must take into account that we are human beings living in society. In political affairs, we must think about social and human factors. In 10 years of revolution, democratic channels have been closed, as they were during the Somoza era. The political parties came out from under a military dictatorship of the right and we went under one of the left. We must acknowledge that there is participation in political life, but the Sandinista Front took advantage of the sacrifices made by different political forces to overthrow the dictatorship and it autocratically took power and limited democracy. But the opposition has put up a good fight against "Sandinismo." We are blocking the establishment of a Castro-style one-party system that the FSLN has wanted to impose. We are breaking out of captive political pluralism, i.e., one strong party with peripheral parties that only serve to play at politics, and we try to prevent the "PRI-ization" of Nicaragua. [PRI, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, has long been the nearly monolithic ruling party of Mexico.] CRIES: To what extent has the war imposed by the United States limited moving ahead with democracy? Molina: The war is not just a result of US policies since the [Nicaraguan] government, too, has encouraged aggression against private enterprise by confiscating
lands, houses, and businesses. The Sandinistas used violence in their zeal to impose their political system on us. CRIES: What policy program alternatives does the opposition have to offer? Molina: The best alternative consists of forming an opposition in favor of unity, national reconciliation, reconstruction, self-determination, and non-interference by the superpowers in Nicaragua's internal affairs. We must prepare our own poll watchers as well so that the Sandinistas will not be able to steal the elections from us. CRIES: How will the opposition participate in the elections? Molina: If it goes in divided, it will lose the presidency but win a majority in parliament and the Sandinistas will have many difficulties in governing. I think that coalitions could take part. The Democratic Coordinator, the workers' parties, and the Conservatives do not know with whom we will form a coalition. CRIES: What election promises will the Conservatives make? Molina: We are thinking of offering God, order, justice, morality and nationality. And as far as the economy goes, there will be fresh meat and food for everyone and we will plant "cordobas" in order to harvest dollars. CRIES: Is Conservative unity possible? Molina: There are...possibilities. Before, only one Conservative Party was legally recognized. Now, negotiations can be held in satisfactory conditions because we are on an equal footing as legally constituted parties. Conservatism is the biggest political movement because we have parliamentary, extra-parliamentary, and armed battle fronts. CRIES: Will Fernando Aguero be the one to unite all Conservatives? [Aguero is a self-exiled Conservative leader who plans to return to Nicaragua. Before 1979, he led the Conservative Party and established a power-sharing arrangement with Somoza. He is blamed for having led a 1968 opposition march into a trap resulting in many deaths at the hands of the National Guard.] Molina: To the extent that he is interested in negotiating, we could unite. Aguero is an important man and it would be interesting to talk with him. Hopefully, God will enlighten him and give him this ability. We still have not determined the parties' real leaders, and we are involved in an internal power struggle. We are leaving aside the question of taking governmental power for the time being because the Nicaraguan parties are divided into factions. CRIES: What do you think of the new media law? Molina: Legally, on paper, it allows for freedom of expression, but laws are applied by people. This said, it will be the Sandinistas who decide if freedom of expression is limited or extended.

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