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Deborah Tyroler

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Nicaraguan Opposition Coalition Debates Platform; Notes On Discussion Of Single Candidate Choice

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Aug. 22 in Managua, representatives of 12 parties in the National Opposition Union (UNO) convened to debate the coalition's campaign platform for the February 1990 elections. According to a document containing major features of the platform obtained by the AP, the UNO would return confiscated land and abolish the military draft if elected. Next, the coalition supports maintenance of government control over foreign trade, while removing such controls in the domestic market. The UNO states that its "Government of National Salvation" is committed to protection of private property and, workers' rights to unionize, participate in managing enterprises and share profits. The coalition's government would also advance the literacy campaign. Regarding distribution of agricultural land, the document says "to the poor and middle-income peasants will be guaranteed the legitimate property of the land they have in their possession...To the dispossessed of the countryside, they will be given state land with the right to acquire it for free as their legitimate property," the platform states. The document continues: "to peasant families who have been dispossessed, inasmuch as is possible, their farm will be returned, or they will be compensated with another (farm)." The final version of the UNO platform was expected to be released later this week. In addition, the coalition is expected to announce its candidates for president and vice president this week. Among those most frequently mentioned as possible candidates are Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, Enrique Bolanos Geyer, and Virgilio Godoy Reyes. Chamorro, whose family owns La Prensa, is perceived as a possible Nicaraguan counterpart of President Corazon C. Aquino of the Philippines, i.e., a person capable of uniting the opposition in a broad, symbolic campaign. However, her health is unstable, and according to the New York Times, "many opposition leaders question her grasp of detailed issues." Bolanos, a businessperson and former chief of the strongly anti-Sandinista Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), is perceived to be a capable and aggressive speaker and campaigner. According to the Times, "many opposition members express concern about Bolanos' image as a member of Nicaragua's traditional landowning class." If the UNO opts for an established or traditional politician, the most frequently mentioned possibility is Godoy, long-time leader of the Independent Liberal Party. Potential alternatives to Godoy include Luis Sanchez Sancho of the Nicaraguan Socialist Party, Miriam Arguello Morales of the traditional Nicaraguan Conservative Party and Mauricio Diaz Davila of the centrist Popular Social Christian Party. (Basic data from New York Times, 08/19/89; AP, 08/22/89)

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