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Nicaragua: President Of Supreme Electoral Council On Technical Aspects Of Election Preparations

by Deborah Tyroler

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The Supreme Electoral Council (SEC), charged with oversight and organization of Nicaragua’s electoral process, including voter registration and the Feb. 25, 1990 balloting. In an interview published in the Sept. 1 issue of Barricada, official newspaper of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), SEC president Mariano Fiallos Oyanguren addressed several technical aspects of the electoral process. Financing: Funding derives from the national government budget. Donations and taxes will be placed in a special electoral budget account. Fiallos said, "To the extent we receive foreign financing, the amount derived from taxes will be reduced." As of early September, said Fiallos, Nicaragua had received $3.5 million from foreign donors. West Germany and Spain contributed $1.6 million and $250,000, respectively, for computer equipment. Sweden donated $595,000 for technical assistance, equipment, and other materials. Finland provided $685,000 for paper, and Switzerland, $150,000 for computer equipment and paper. Canada chipped in $40,000. US-based groups Quest for Peace/Quixote Center and Nicaragua Network donated $250,000 for pens, pencils, and felt markers. "The operations that will eat up most of the budget are voter registration and the voting itself. For instance, for the registration, 50,000 Nicaraguans have to be mobilized to staff the 1,393 polling stations during the first four Sundays in October. In addition, as a result of the Aug. 3-4 agreements..., we have the responsibility of mobilizing and paying travel expenses for all parties' poll watchers between 20,000 and 30,000 people." Prevention of multiple voting: "Voting must occur in the same neighborhood in which the citizen registers. This means that everyone registers in her/his neighborhood, in front of neighbors and political party observers. No one can vote anywhere else but at their registration location. "On the document to be given to citizens who register there will be a seal, a stamp, which will make it useless for voting twice. In addition, indelible ink will be used with the additional guarantee that the finger will first be cleaned with acetone in order to prevent certain tricks that have occured in other countries where people put grease or vaseline on their finger so that the ink can't penetrate. "Observers: "The CSE, the Foreign Ministry, and the political parties through the CSE can invite and accredit observers whose functions are the following: observe, see what is happening, inform themselves, and draft a report for the organizations they belong to in line with the agreements that those bodies have made with the CSE and the government. "There will two kinds of observers. Official ones are those who belong to the teams sent by the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Accredited ones are those that belong to delegations sent by governments, political parties, and other non-governmental organizations...Other interested persons and journalists can also observe as long as they meet requirements of the Immigration Department. They will not be considered official observers..." (Basic data from 09/12/89 report by Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research of Central America and the Caribbean-CRIES, Managua)

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