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by Deborah Tyroler
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[The following report is based in part on an essay dated 10/03/89 by Lisa Haugaard, Election Watch Project, Central American Historical Institute (CAHI). (CAHI is an independent research group in Washington DC, affiliated with the Instituto Historico Centroamericano, Managua. The Institute can be contacted at the following address: Central American Historical Institute, Intercultural Center, Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057.] The National Opposition Unity (UNO) is often portrayed by the US government and in the US media as "the" opposition coalition running the gamut from right to left. However, as of Oct. 3, eight of Nicaragua's 20 opposition parties with legal status were running presidential candidates outside the UNO coalition. Until recently, UNO was comprised of 12 parties and two political organizations without legal status. Although the Nicaraguan Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Nicaragua give UNO a rather broad-based appearance, the two parties have reportedly moved away from traditional political agendas and bases of support. Next, the four most conservative parties of the coalition dominate UNO activities and political pronouncements. The centrist Popular Social Christian Party (PPSC), headed by Mauricio Diaz, dropped out of UNO in late September. The remaining 13 organizations of the coalition consist largely of spinoffs from the Liberal and Conservative parties. As of Oct. 3, eight of Nicaragua's 20 opposition parties with legal status were running candidates outside the UNO coalition. On the center-right are the Social Christian Party (PSC) led by Erick Ramirez; Democratic Conservative Party (PCD); Social Conservative Party; Liberal Party of National Unity; and the newly formed Central America Unity Party. These parties have not joined UNO in part because they wished to avoid being associated with UNO's US-contra connections. The PCD would have a lot to lose if it became one among many in UNO, having won 14% of the national vote in the 1984 elections. The PSC has been distancing itself from UNO's main parties since its association in the 1984 elections with the alliance's previous incarnation, the Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinator. Economic austerity measures and the Nicaraguan government's concessions within the context of the Esquipulas peace process have irritated parties to the left of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The Popular Action Movement (MAP), which has two seats in the National Assembly, the Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT) and the Revolutionary Unity Movement (MUR) are all fielding candidates in the February 1990 elections. Results of polls conducted in August by the left-of-center Itztani Institute and the PPSC-affiliated Manolo Morales Foundation indicated that 37% to 38% of voters support the FSLN, while 28% remain undecided. The Manolo Morales poll showed UNO support running at 20.9%. The Itztani survey tallied only 3% for UNO, and 4% for UNO's vice presidential candidate, Virgilio Godoy.

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