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In a recent interview with the New York Times, Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez said he will advise President Bush during an Oct. 19 meeting at the White House to modify its policy toward Nicaragua. Regarding the February 1990 elections in Nicaragua, Gonzalez said, "They offer a way out. I therefore think it much healthier politically to gamble that they will work rather than gamble that they won't work and create obstacles." Gonzalez noted that Nicaragua had invited representatives of the international community to observe all phases of the electoral process. "[Former president Jimmy] Carter has already been there. He can stay there until the elections. I'm sure no one will stand in his way." Next, the Spanish leader said that while he did not expect Washington to provide enthusiastic support for easing up on Nicaragua's current leaders, "It's a question of rationalizing its options. Instead of keeping the contras in an armed situation, let them be repatriated. After all, they are voters and citizens whatever their ideology." On Panama, Gonzalez asserted that under no circumstances should the US intervene militarily to oust Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega. "We must seek a Panamanian solution which involves respect for the popular will. But not only respect for the popular will expressed in elections, but also respect for civilian power. A civilian government must be able to decide what happens to the armed forces." Gonzalez said that the Panama Canal treaties must be respected "because this doesn't affect a government or a regime, but a people and even a continent." He added, "It would be a historic error to violate the canal treaties." (Basic data from New York Times, 10/16/89)

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