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Deborah Tyroler

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by Deborah Tyroler
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[The interview reproduced below took place prior to the last week in September, when the Popular Social Christian Party withdrew from the opposition party coalition, known as the National Opposition Unity (UNO). The interview was distributed by the Nicaraguan Embassy, Netherlands (The Hague, Netherlands), via GeoNet, a commercial computer network. One of the GeoNet systems ("GEO2"), employed by users in the United Kingdom and members of international non-governmental organizations, routed the interview on 10/17/89 to Peacenet, a non-profit computer network based in San Francisco, Calif.] Q.: What is the role of the Nicaraguan Resistance [contra movement] after the Tela summit accords of Aug. 7? Diaz: My party has always been critical of the contra option and always condemned President Reagan's military doctrine against the Sandinistas. We believe the contra project strengthened the FSLN [Sandinista National Liberation Front]...Reagan was both the Sandinistas' worst enemy and their best ally because he allowed the transformation of Nicaragua into a type of victim of Yankee imperialism. Therefore, we have made it clear to State Department officials and Congresspersons that we demand a US policy more in line with reality. There were some who told us, "The Sandinistas are communists and one day they will kill your ass." But those hardliners have changed their minds after seeing the corruption of the top contra political chiefs. The contra army will have to submit to the Esquipulas II Accords and ensuing agreements requesting its demobilization. Its members should participate in the electoral campaign hand in hand with the opposition. We don't believe the contras are the guarantors of the Esquipulas and Tela accords, since they represent the worst option: terrorism. That is the official position of my party. Q: In your view, is UNO's position similar? Diaz: UNO doesn't have an official position on the matter. But it is high time that those who have supported the contras change their ways as a new reality is emerging. The Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinator has been weakened and so have the hardliners within the UNO. Likewise, the COSEP [Superior Council of Private Enterprise] does not have a strong voice within UNO. You will find various political tendencies within UNO as well as a centrist line calling for a realistic and modern program. Nicaragua has changed. There are new faces and new names as well as a new economic and social structure... Q.: If the contras do not comply with the Tela accords, how would your party react? Diaz: Those who have said they won't comply are speaking empty words. As an empire, the US needs to find an honorable solution to the political and military defeat of the contras. Let us not forget the US is an empire and empires are in the habit of imposing their will. In all of history, this is the first time that a country like [Nicaragua] imposed the rules of the game and managed to isolate, both in the region and worldwide, an aggressive US foreign policy. The fate of the resistance is tragic. They were designed not to win but to apply pressure. Now that the objectives for which they were created were not achieved, they are abandoned by all. This is because their presence destabilized all of Central America, but particularly Honduras and Costa Rica, who finally grew weary of them. After a while, what was once a business arrangement for [Honduran] President [Jose] Azcona and some of his military chiefs, became a loss of prestige, an army within an army. It was difficult for the Honduran government to say the contras exist...in fact, but did not exist in a legal sense. All of these things
have contributed to the debilitation of the US strategy of low intensity conflict. Q.: Was the national dialogue [between the Nicaraguan government and opposition parties, concluded on Aug. 4] important? In what way? Diaz: It was important in that it demonstrated the UNO is not the political arm of the contras, nor does it represent the political viewpoints of the likes of Enrique Bermudez or Adolfo Calero. The accords signed at the conclusion of the dialogue were a death warrant for the contras. Bermudez's reaction on the following day was one of surprise and rage. Within the UNO there are different political currents: the leftovers of the Democratic Coordinator, that is the extreme right, and parties like ours, in the center. The Sandinista government says we are center right, but I think we are center left within the UNO. There is no political space in Nicaragua for struggle from the extreme right. The UNO program has to be a modern, popular one and it has to look towards the future...

Q.: Can you explain the proliferation of political parties in Nicaragua after 1979? Diaz: It's a natural phenomenon. In Spain there were 40 political parties during the transition period from Franco to democracy. In Nicaragua, personal ambitions have played a major role...The military option as a pressure point also led to the emergence of new political parties corresponding to or supportive of that option. After 1990, the strong parties will survive, the rest will die a natural death.

Q.: What is the difference between your party and the Social Christian Party? Diaz: Philosophically speaking, there is none. We have different tactics. Erick Ramirez wants to participate [in the electoral process] as a single party. We believe it is better to join UNO, because a single party runs the risk of disappearing. Q.: Would you say the Sandinistas are all Marxists? Diaz: The FSLN is like a mosaic. It has orthodox and pro-Soviet Marxists, atheists (a minority), a great many social democrats and even more pragmatic-type Marxists. The FSLN is not an orthodox communist party. The Sandinistas have proven to be pragmatists...The old bourgeoisie is very much pro-Sandinista and the FSLN has had to protect all those antagonic forces it represents. Q.: Do you believe the basic conditions have been put in place for opposition parties to participate in the electoral process? Diaz: The problem is that the [Aug. 4] accords take time to be implemented. It seems that some are afraid to tolerate the opposition's rights to a fair democratic game. Recently, we had a meeting in Boaco and members of the security apparatus incarcerated some of our activists and others were taken by a battalion. We are looking into that so that those mistakes are corrected. The FSLN has to be clearer about the rules of the game and make sure everyone knows and implements them.

Q.: Some contras have said that they will continue operating as a military force... Diaz: I don't believe they will be able to continue operating without US assistance. Q.: How do you feel about US (covert and overt) financial assistance for the opposition? Diaz: We believe none of that will promote Nicaragua's democratization. Accepting financial assistance from the US has been harmful to the opposition. It split some political parties. That kind of help should be rejected. Technical assistance is another matter, like the type we receive from an...institute headed by Walter Mondale and Jimmy Carter. Q.: Do you agree with the way the Supreme Electoral Council will distribute foreign financial assistance [for candidates and parties]? Diaz: Yes...The FSLN, being pragmatic, doesn't mind accepting money from whatever source. This should be regulated, however, in a more efficient manner. Any money which comes in clandestinely is bound to be misused. Q.: What is your position on the US economic embargo against Nicaragua? Diaz: I have said that I am against it because it affects the anti-Sandinista private sector. Q.: How would you solve the country's economic crisis? Diaz: In the short term, a government of national reconstruction and national unity, which would include the FSLN, is needed. A new political pact is also necessary for 1990. Obviously, foreign investment will be required for the country's reconstruction. For example, Japan is willing to assist the government after [fair] elections, regardless of who wins. Also, the opposition should ask the US government to normalize relations with Nicaragua. Q.: If the opposition were to win, what would
happen to the Popular Sandinista Army? Diaz: Something should be negotiated with the Defense and the Interior Ministries, so that the Sandinistas themselves dismantle the military apparatus. Q.: Has your party had problems in exercising its freedom to organize? Diaz: A few problems, but I don't think they are institutional. Q.: In your view, which political viewpoints does La Prensa represent? Diaz: The newspaper is trying to maintain a pluralistic outlook. Its role is very important in strengthening the political debate. It should adopt a different, more lenient attitude toward the FSLN than it did in 1984. Q.: What do you think of the surveys published in La Cronica? Diaz: The first survey ever conducted here was in December of last year. It reflected Violeta Chamorro's great popularity...as well as the fact that the FSLN is more popular than the opposition. The results of this survey are similar to those conducted by La Prensa, the Central American University (UCA) and the government. It has become very clear that the FSLN has lost the support of about 40% of Nicaraguans, but only a fraction of the latter support the opposition. The rest is no man's land. It is also clear that Daniel Ortega is perceived as a strong leader by many Nicaraguans. I trust the objectivity of these surveys, and I think they are useful in making decisions. I predict that the FSLN will likely win [in February] with 55% of the vote, and the rest will vote for the opposition.

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