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Nicaragua: Interview With Virgilio Godoy Reyes, President Of Independent Liberal Party (pli)

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[The PLI participated in the 1984 elections, with Godoy as its presidential candidate. The party is a member of the National Opposition Unity (UNO). Godoy was selected as UNO's vice presidential candidate for the 1990 elections. The interview below, which took place prior to the last week in September, 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 after the Tela Accords? Godoy: If the democratic process occurs and, as the Tela Accords stipulate, the Resistance army in Honduran territory actually demobilizes, the contra troops that remain in Nicaragua will also join the civic struggle, as long as all their democratic rights and guarantees are also fulfilled. In that case, the Resistance should contribute to a new model of coexistence based on fair play for all. Otherwise, the contras still in Honduras will not be able to join those in Nicaragua and the civil war will continue. Q.: What is your opinion regarding US government financial assistance to the Nicaraguan Resistance? Godoy: The important thing is that after the Reagan-Gorbachev summit...and ensuing contacts, that kind of assistance tends to disappear. Naturally, this doesn't mean that legally and morally that kind of help is wrong as a matter of principle, regardless of who gives it to whom, or who is the recipient. Q.: What do you think about the fact that some members of the Nicaraguan Resistance have vowed to continue fighting even if the US refuses to continue helping them? Godoy: One possible interpretation is that the Nicaraguan Resistance exists independently of the United States. Another is that the US is not the only source of financial assistance it gets. Another interpretation could be that the Resistance wants to make sure the possibility of US financing no longer exists before it decides to join the civic struggle. Q.: In what way was the National Dialogue important? Godoy: Even if the talks were the results of the government's urgent need to have more bargaining power in Tela, the accords made it evident that the main obstacle... to national reconciliation has always been the FSLN and that, once again international influence forces the government to come to the negotiating table...[I]t is clear that dialogue yields better results than war does. We can only hope the government will comply this time. Q.: Would that kind of dialogue be possible if Nicaragua were a communist dungeon? Godoy: The National Dialogue doesn't define the nature of the Sandinista government. I believe the Sandinistas are totalitarian, militarized, massified and depersonalized. Still, that should not be an obstacle to accepting the fact that the accords were positive, but they will not change the nature of the government's strategic goal a "transition" from capitalism to socialism. Isn't the Soviet Union a socialist state despite the democratic changes it has adopted? Isn't the Polish government totalitarian despite Jaruzelski's democratic changes? And aren't East Germany and Bulgaria, which have given legal status to other political parties besides the communist party, also totalitarian regimes? In Nicaragua, democratic changes have come about after strong foreign pressure. Q.: Do basic conditions for your party to participate in the electoral process exist today? Godoy: I believe some advances have been made, especially regarding attaining fair electoral
results. That is important, but it isn't all. We have yet to see the right kind of freedom and justice to prevail throughout all the electoral process. In Nicaragua, one party, the FSLN, has a monopoly over television and direct and immediate access to the radio network. Only the FSLN receives a generous amount of state subsidy for nearly 40 written publications. Q.: What other demands did your party have that were not fulfilled? Godoy: The need to resolve the State-Party-Army confusion. The government refused to discuss the issue of an independent TV station or the general amnesty for all. Also the right to vote for those Nicaraguans who live abroad. The Supreme Electoral Council and regional councils are biased in favor of the FSLN, and there is inadequate control of the official party on the National Council of Political Parties. Q.: What is your opinion regarding the US economic embargo? Godoy: I must confess that I never truly understood the sense of that measure. Partly because the US market only accounted for one-third of our import-export industries for over 30 years. Also because other sources of trade exchange were always open to Nicaragua as alternatives. It is estimated that merchants traveling to Miami circulate about $100 million both ways and cash remittances from family members abroad bring about $120 to $150 million annually to Nicaragua. If one takes all of this into account, the conclusion is that the embargo should end. Q.: How would your party solve the country's economic crisis? Godoy: There is evidence that the economic crisis corresponds to the political crisis, so the first cannot disappear without resolving the second. It is imperative to recover the loss of trust and bring confidence to the common Nicaraguan so that he may feel this is a country worth living in and invite those who left to come back. Also, the cost of supporting a highly unproductive army should end. Q.: Why the proliferation of political parties after 1979? What happened to the "historic parallels"? Godoy: Nicaragua has been a country historically torn by extreme violence. Civil wars gave birth to the first political parties that emerged here. Deep down, the proliferation of political parties is due to the definition and redefinition of a political system that has not been able to come to terms with itself. The world wars, but especially WWII, stimulated the emergence of new political parties. Inefficiency and the power game are the basis for their internal divisions. The historic parallels still exist and Nicaragua is, to a large extent, still conservative and liberal at heart. Q.: Has your party had problems in exercising its democratic right to organize itself for political action? Godoy: Frequently. State security agents harass our activists...or other activities are organized to curtail our own. Q.: Why is your party participating in UNO? Godoy: Because we feel that is the best way to confront the FSLN. Q.: In your view, which social sectors are represented in La Prensa? Godoy: My feeling is that La Prensa doesn't reflect the opinion of any particular social sector and even if its historic tendency had been conservative, it tries to give space to different opposition parties. I myself have never felt it reflects my point of view. Sometimes they have defended me, others they've attacked me. Q.: What is your opinion regarding published opinion polls in Nicaragua? Godoy: I can say that I know the experts in charge of these surveys were professionals with experience in conducting surveys in various countries. It's also important to say that political polling is new in Nicaragua and people who answer questions are afraid because they do not know where the surveys will end up. Still, the results were positive because they point out electoral preferences. Thirty percent are votes for the opposition and 40% are undecided, which means that the government has already lost the elections because that 40% undecided are people who were afraid to tell the truth. In any event, surveys are useful because they provide information on where a political party really stands. Q.: What is the FSLN's margin of popularity? Godoy: People identify the FSLN as primarily responsible for the crisis in Nicaragua and its popularity has greatly diminished. Q.: What results do you anticipate in the elections? Godoy: If the elections took place right now, I would say the results would be two to one in favor of the opposition, or exactly the reverse of what happened in 1984. Q.: If the FSLN wins the elections, do
you think the US government should normalize relations with Nicaragua? Godoy: As far as I can understand, and according to international rules, the US government has "normal" relations with the Sandinistas.

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