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Nicaragua: Interview With Guillermo Putoy, Head Of Social Democratic Party (psd)

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[In 1984, as one of four political parties under the Nicaraguan Democratic Coordinator (Coordinadora), the PSD refused to participate in the elections. The PSD, one of 13 parties and political organizations under the National Opposition Unity (UNO), is running Violeta Barrios de Chamorro for president in the Feb. 25, 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.: Has your party had any problems in organizing itself for political rallies and other activities? Putoy: We have had some minor problems, isolated cases. Things are much better now.

Q.: Where does your party stand in the ideological continuum within UNO? Putoy: Right at the center. My party has been a stabilizing influence within UNO.

Q.: What is the FSLN's margin of popularity? Putoy: Each day it loses support...Maybe it still has about 33%.

Q.: Some say the opposition has about 35%. Do you agree? Putoy: We all have more than 50% if we stay together.

Q.: What proportion of the vote do you anticipate in February? Putoy: I think our victory will be clearly defined about 60% for us and 40% for the FSLN.

Q.: If the FSLN wins the elections, do you think the US should normalize relations with Nicaragua? Putoy: If the FSLN holds free and fair elections and it wins, the world should respect Nicaragua's option and the US should normalize relations with Nicaragua.

Q.: Which political sectors are represented in La Prensa? Putoy: La Prensa reflects the feeling of the simple, humble people of Nicaragua, which is very critical.

Q.: Was the National Dialogue important? Putoy: It was an effort made by the president and the opposition. We all support the results. It helped advance the Tela meeting in the right direction.

Q.: What demands supported by your party were not met in the Aug. 4 agreement with the government? Putoy: The independence of all powers, especially the separation of the state and the party. Existing presidential powers are not democratic.

Q.: What is the role of the contras after the Tela Accords? Putoy: It has been said that they should not demobilize until February 1990. I don’t see anything wrong in that, because if we hold free and fair elections, there won't be any more war in Nicaragua. The government shouldn't worry if the contras remain where they are until then.

Q.: Why the proliferation of political parties in Nicaragua? Putoy: There are two reasons. Firstly, after the revolution some people supported the FSLN and others did not [who belonged to the same party]...And secondly, there were divisions caused by leadership conflicts. Everyone wanted to be a leader.

Q.: What happened at the recent meeting of the Socialist International...? Putoy: We were invited by some parties that belong to the Socialist International. I am referring to the Venezuelans who wanted us to join. But it is difficult to negotiate with the Europeans. Our admission was postponed but our trip was successful because we made a lot of contacts.

Q.: Do you believe other parties represent the Social Democratic political position? Putoy: There are other new parties asserting that they have the same ideology, but they are unable to develop the kind of contacts that we have.

Q.: Former President Reagan used to say that Nicaragua was a communist dungeon.
Do you agree? Putoy: If he ever said that, he was right because the truth is that Sandinista leaders are communists...Today, the FSLN doesn't have the same kind of support from the communist bloc and it cannot continue with the same kind of political thought because of the economic crisis. The Sandinistas know they need to be accepted and that's why they have been introducing all the democratic changes. Q.: What is your perspective on US government financial assistance to the Nicaraguan Resistance? Putoy: The idea was to change the Nicaraguan government because it was a totalitarian dictatorship. The financial help that is being offered today is only humanitarian help to keep the Resistance in Honduras until February. They served a function and some of them died defending a good cause. Despite the Tela Accords, I believe the contras could stay where they are until February. They are no longer a threat, and will never be a threat if the elections in Nicaragua are fair and free. Afterwards, they will be dismantled. Q.: How would your party solve the country's economic crisis? Putoy: Firstly there are European countries that want to help if Central America becomes more democratic. Secondly, if everyone, all the young people, returns [to Nicaragua] and works the land, the future will offer hope...

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