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Nicaragua: Sandinista National Liberation Front Concludes Campaign With Huge Rally

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Wednesday evening, the Sandinista National Liberation Front closed its campaign with a rally in Managua described as one of the largest gatherings in Nicaraguan history. AP said it was "comparable in size to the mass of people that greeted Pope John Paul II in 1983." Estimates of the number of participants range from "over 100,000" (AFP) to "about 300,000 (AP) to 500,000 (Nicaragua Network). A Notimex correspondent reported that in addition to the crowds waiting for President Daniel Ortega at the lakeside Revolution Plaza, Nicaraguans were lined up on the northern highway out of Managua for five kilometers to welcome him. In addition, said Notimex, "thousands" of teachers, nurses, doctors and others accompanied Ortega and his entourage into the city. AP reported that Ortega was elated by the "immense throng," jumping and waving to the crowd as he arrived on a truck. In his speech, Ortega said that a win by the FSLN on Feb. 25 would bring US respect for Nicaragua after a decade of contempt. He added, "It is a respect that has been won with blood...We expect the United States will have the wisdom to establish a respectful relationship with Nicaragua." Ortega equated the opposition with the detested Somoza dictatorship and the contras. "We will present them with a complete bill," Ortega said of the opposition, using a line that has become a catch-phrase for both sides in the campaign. He then mentioned that the opposition's "debt" would be forgiven. "We do not need to exchange an eye for an eye nor a tooth for a tooth because they are already knocked out. They are already on the canvas, the count has reached 20 and they can't get up," he said. Ortega asked God to give him "wisdom to be fair, to govern and to forgive." Next, the president denied that democratic reforms sweeping Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had anything to do with his government's decision to hold early elections (originally planned for November this year). "That is simply not true, because there has always been a multi-party system here since the (Sandinista) revolution was born," he said. "The communist or capitalist models do not apply here, only the Sandinista model belongs to the Nicaraguans." [Basic data from AP, AFP, Notimex, Nicaragua Network (Washington, DC), 02/21/90]

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