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Nicaraguan National Assembly Approves Amnesty For All

by Deborah Tyroler

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Late on March 10, the National Assembly approved by a 72-6 vote an unconditional amnesty for "Nicaraguans, resident or not in the country, who committed crimes against the public order and the interior and exterior security of the state and common crimes connected thereto." Also included in the amnesty are Nicaraguan military personnel and civilians who have committed crimes "in pursuing or investigating" offenses against the state, and to Nicaraguan bureaucrats or public employees who have committed abuses of their positions ranging from embezzlement to misuse of government property. The law has been criticized for its open-ended starting date. According to the March 11 issue of *La Prensa*, "Until it is published by the official journal of the government, it represents a veritable invitation to commit crimes. If it is not published until the end of April, Nicaragua could be plunged into a dangerous period of anarchy, since any crime could be legally committed." National Assembly president Carlos Nunez described the amnesty as a "legitimate defense" by the Sandinista National Liberation Front against any "political vengeance" after it cedes power April 25 to the National Opposition Union (UNO). "There are hotheads among the UNO leadership who seek power so they can impose a scorched earth policy" against the Sandinistas, Nunez said. "They are already threatening to make us pay," he added. Other Sandinista officials pointed out that UNO had leveled charges against the Sandinistas for allegedly looting government institutions and said the opposition was "setting the stage for repressive measures" against them. (Basic data from AFP, 03/11/90; New York Times, 03/12/90)

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