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Nicaragua: Library Director In Leon Orders Burning Of Books By Nicaraguan Authors

by Deborah Tyroler

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On July 4, director of the public library in the city of Leon, Fernando Nunez, ordered the burning of about 50 books by Nicaraguan authors described as subversive, anti-democratic, and the like. Many of the books tossed into the bonfire were authored by members or supporters of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Among the books incinerated in Leon were "Paciente e Impaciencia," 1989 winner of the Casa de las Americas prize, by former interior minister Tomas Borge; "Canto Cosmico" by former culture minister Ernesto Cardenal; and, "Castigo Divino" by former vice president Sergio Ramirez. In a public statement released on July 11, Venezuelan intellectuals condemned the public book burning. Jose Ramon Mejia, president of Venezuela's Pen Club, said: "Democracy presupposes the free expression of ideas, creativity in the literary field, and the right to disagree in the arena of ideas. These precepts do not correspond to bonfires which try to burn thought, as was done in the Middle Ages." Alfonso Quintero, executive director of Venezuela's National Library, said the incident was extremely serious because it constituted an attack on the free circulation of ideas and the essence of democracy. [Basic data from Notimex, 07/11/90; 07/09/90 report by Nicaragua Network (Washington, DC; Managua)]

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