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Nicaragua: Notes On 11th Anniversary Celebration Of Revolution

by Deborah Tyroler

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MANAGUA, 18 JUL (NOTIMEX).- LA CELEBRACION POR EL DECIMO On July 19, 1979, the Somoza dictatorship was ousted by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Anniversary celebrations during the FSLN's 10 years of rule were spectacular affairs, drawing hundreds of thousands to Managua and other cities. The 11th anniversary was expected to be a relatively subdued affair. Although President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro announced that July 19 would be "maintained as a holiday," the government scheduled no celebrations, nor did the president respond to an invitation by the FSLN to attend the festivities. Preparations for the event in the Plaza de la Revolucion, rebaptized by Chamorro as the Plaza de la Republica, were evident on Wednesday. According to Notimex, organizers expected about 70,000 people to participate in events at the plaza in Managua. Last year's crowd was estimated at 350,000. In a televised speech Wednesday night, President Chamorro said the revolution had been supported by all Nicaraguans because "we all believed that we were breaking the gate of a tyranny to enter the promised land of democracy and freedom...Unfortunately the revolution was confiscated by an exclusive party with a totalitarian ideology it had kept hidden. Instead of democracy, dictatorship rose again like a cadaver." Chamorro said "bad Nicaraguans" want this July 19 "not to signify democracy, but military dictatorship again," and asked the people to support her. "I want to teach those who only know violence the benefits of respecting (legal) rights and of brotherly love," she said. July 19: At the rally in the central plaza, former president Daniel Ortega said in reference to the 11-day strike which ended July 11, and the subsequent firing of more than 100 Managua municipal workers: "We were able to defend certain conquests of the revolution. But the struggle has not ended...about the accord between the government and the workers; (or) with those who have extremist positions, who want to renege on the accords." Ortega warned government officials to "proceed with caution because they are provoking more conflicts...Now we have to defend democracy against those who want to return to Somocismo." He added that extremists within the government "want to see our heads roll, but if any heads roll it will be theirs." In an apparent attempt to draw people away from the Sandinista rally, Nicaragua's only TV station, government-run Channel 6, scheduled continuous movies throughout the day, including "Batman," "The Fly" and "Crocodile Dundee." AP said that movies and rain did not sway the crowds, "estimated by reporters at about 40,000." (Basic data from Notimex, 07/18/90; AP, 07/18/90, 07/19/90)

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