Nicaragua: Centrist Current Within F.s.l.n.

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Category/Department: General
Published: Friday, February 21, 1992

On Feb. 6, 18 former government officials, parliamentary deputies, and intellectuals of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) submitted a document titled "Reflections on a National Project" to Luis Carrion, member of the party's national directorate. Co-authors of the document include Rafael Solis, Edmundo Jarquin, William Hupper, Reynaldo Tefel, Fernando Guzman, Francisco de Asis Fernandez, Domingo Sanchez, Raul Venerio, Gilberto Guzman, Bernardo Chamorro, Julio Valle Castillo, Vidaluz Meneses and Carlos Aleman Ocampo. Solis, an alternate FSLN deputy in the National Assembly, told reporters that the new "project" described as a centrist, social democratic current within the party, hopes to exercise a decisive influence on the FSLN in the future. According to Solis, the centrist faction is part of a larger effort to help the party break out of "paralysis" dating from its 1990 electoral defeat. In comments to reporters, several persons identified with the centrist current insisted that they are not interested in sowing division within the FSLN, but rather in searching for "points of convergence" with the government, the Nicaraguan Opposition Union (UNO) party coalition, and the private sector in an effort to foment "renovation and change" within the Front. Document authors propose institutionalization of democracy and economic reorganization as Nicaragua's principal objectives at the present time, and declare support for many of the economic policies adopted by President Violeta Chamorro's government. Members of the new FSLN faction have already held meetings with private sector representatives, government officials, and UNO coalition parties. On Feb. 17, Daniel Ortega, former president and FSLN secretary general, took on-the-air phone calls at the pro-Sandinista Radio Ya. Ortega said the new centrist group represents a threat to party unity, and he criticized proponents for seeking to develop separate links with the government. According to Ortega, those who are now "calling themselves liberals and are accusing us of being orthodox" are the same people who in the past rejected all criticism and tried to block attempts to expand freedom of expression within Sandinista ranks. In reference to the centrist group's proposals to develop closer ties with UNO and the private sector, Ortega insisted that "Sandinismo has but one commitment,...to the popular sectors." He added that any new definition of what the FSLN stands for should come through "the actions and attitudes adopted by our members in the face of the social and economic problems confronted by the population." The centrist group, said Ortega, is mainly comprised of Sandinistas with middle-class backgrounds who "sit around talking instead of going out and doing things to help the poor." [Basic data from El Nuevo Diario (Managua), 02/06/92; Barricada (Managua), 02/07/92; La Prensa (Managua), 02/07/92, 02/12/92; Agence France-Presse, 02/17/92; Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias-Spanish news service EFE, 02/18/92]