

1-25-2001

PLC and Sandinistas Nominate Presidential Candidates

LADB Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen>

Recommended Citation

LADB Staff. "PLC and Sandinistas Nominate Presidential Candidates." (2001). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/8801>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiCen by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

PLC and Sandinistas Nominate Presidential Candidates

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Nicaragua

Published: 2001-01-25

The governing Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC) has nominated Enrique Bolanos, who recently resigned as vice president, as its candidate in the November 2001 presidential election. The Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional (FSLN) nominated party secretary general Daniel Ortega. Both nominations are expected to be ratified later in the respective party conventions. At the party mini-convention held at President Arnaldo Aleman's El Chile estate on Jan. 14, 400 PLC members chose former Vice President Bolanos as the party's presidential candidate and Jose Rizo Castellan the vice presidential candidate. The ticket will be ratified at the party convention Jan. 28.

Before his nomination, Bolanos abandoned his reticence about the issue that so divides the Sandinistas. While vice president under Aleman, Bolanos kept his distance from the controversial PLC-FSLN political pacts. But in December, he said he would be willing, as president, to negotiate additional political reforms with the Sandinistas. Shortly after the November 2000 mayoral elections, in which the FSLN dominated in major cities, Ortega announced that he intended to run for president this year. The announcement raised objections among Sandinistas who favor a thorough renovation of the party.

Sandinista National Assembly Deputy Monica Baltodano urged the party to choose a less divisive leader (see NotiCen, 2000-12-07). Former President Ortega (1979-1090) lost the elections of 1990 and 1996. In December 2000, Ortega's brother, former army chief Gen. Humberto Ortega, also urged him not to run. Humberto Ortega, like Baltodano and others, sees a better candidate in Herty Lewites, who won the mayoral election in Managua last year. Gen. Ortega said it would be even more difficult for Victor Hugo Tinoco to unify the voters and asked him to drop out of the running as well. He asked Tinoco and Ortega to support a ticket that would be more likely to win in November.

Later in December, the head of the Movimiento de Unidad Nacional (MUN), retired Gen. Joaquin Cuadra, said he would be willing to stay out of the race in favor of a candidate heading a grand alliance in opposition to both a governing-party alliance and a Sandinista alliance. MUN, which is still trying to get official recognition as a party from the Consejo Supremo Electoral (see NotiCen, 2000-10-19), includes militants from the former contra forces and is looking for more support from them. "A new confrontation between two opposing blocs, between Sandinistas and anti-Sandinistas, will bring nothing new to the nation and even provoke instability," said Cuadra. Nevertheless, several parties are considering electoral alliances.

El Movimiento de Unidad Cristiana (MUC) and the FSLN have been holding talks, and on Jan. 17, just before the FSLN primary, the two parties signed an alliance. The most important pre-election accord so far is the one signed in September 2000 by the FSLN and Agustin Jarquin's Union Social Cristiana (USC) in support of Sandinista mayoral candidate Lewites. On Dec. 5, former comptroller general Jarquin announced his intention to seek the FSLN nomination, although he did not participate in the FSLN election. While there was no agreement between the two parties on

a combined ticket, Jarquin apparently thought he could find a place on the FSLN ticket and it was widely assumed that he would take the vice presidential position. Fraud charged in FSLN vote

On Jan. 21, the FSLN nominated its candidates. Some 400,000 Sandinistas were eligible to vote in the internal election held nationwide. As expected, Ortega won the primary, but amid accusations of fraud. The FSLN's electoral commission gave 70% of the vote to Ortega, while Tinoco and Alejandro Martinez shared the rest. Tinoco said the process was riddled with errors and irregularities. He claimed that accreditation of observers from the Tinoco and Martinez factions was delayed at the official voting centers (Centros Sandinistas de Votacion Popular, CSVP) and that many voting places received half or fewer of the 200 ballots they were supposed to receive. At least 30% of the CSVPs changed locations without notice.

The daily El Nuevo Diario reported that the vote count in three "clandestine" CSVPs it found in Managua favored Ortega. Observers representing the other candidates were not present at those centers. Furthermore, the shortage of ballots appeared only in the official centers, said Tinoco, while the clandestine CSVPs each received the allotted 200 ballots or even more.

Edwin Castro, president of the party's electoral commission, admitted errors in the voting but said overall it was a "resounding success." He said he had no knowledge about a computer loaded with false election tallies that was allegedly substituted for another machine in the FSLN's Managua computer center. "We have a deep fear that this vote has problems of legitimacy," said third-place candidate Martinez. Sandinista ticket still uncertain The exact configuration of the Sandinista ticket is still uncertain. Jarquin, who was nominated in mid-January as the presidential candidate of the USC, apparently expects to join a combined FSLN-USC ticket.

Sandinista sources quoted by El Nuevo Diario said that Ortega moved decisively to take the nomination as a way to consolidate his hold on the party, hold off a surge for any other candidate, decline the nomination at the party convention in February, and impose candidates of his choosing. Whatever the outcome, the nominating process has intensified internal party divisions.

In mid-December, some party militants challenged the candidacy for re-election of three Sandinista legislators who opposed Ortega's candidacy Baltodano, Jose Gonzalez, and Angela Rios. They were given 24 hours to respond or be barred from nomination for re-election. Gonzalez complained that the official notification arrived on Sunday when there was no possibility of answering. The written challenge cited the failure of the three to abide by a party agreement to back the PLC-FSLN pacts. Specifically, the challenge charges them with voting against the constitutional and electoral reforms included in the pacts and passed by the Assembly in 1999 (see NotiCen, 1999-12-23). Baltodano said that if she were in violation of party orders, the FSLN was bound by its own statutes to kick her out of the party. "But they have not done that, therefore they cannot trample on any of my rights," she said. Baltodano said the challenge, filed by obscure party members, originated with party leaders Ortega, Castro, and Lenin Cerna, who oppose opening the party to change.

Ortega lashed out at Baltodano and others he calls "moderates," for allegedly seeking support from the rich. On his intention to run again, he said, "My pre-candidacy is not negotiable." The three

legislators said even if they were kicked out of the party, the FSLN had no power to deprive them of seats in the Assembly.

-- End --