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EXTERNAL OPPOSITION POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

The political leadership of the external opposition has been effectively incapacitated for most of the period since January by the issue of Arturo Cruz -- does he stay or go? In the end, he went; the opposition is arguably better off for it. The issue became entirely a matter of personality contests and imposition of individual wills, virtually devoid of programmatic political content, and it prevented, for the entire period of the dispute, progress on developing an agreed Democratic Resistance political program, which to date has not gone beyond the four-year-old Blue and White Book and the January 1987 agreement on objectives between UNO and BOS. With Cruz' departure, it is now possible to effectively implement the reforms he advocated, and we have:

-- The emergence of a potential single leader, widely recognized as such, in Pedro Joaquin Chamorro.

-- Support throughout the Resistance for a process of change, leading to the unified resistance, with a single army, and broadly representative of the diversity of the opposition to the Sandinistas.

-- The possibility of developing action programs, particularly in the international relations field, which are not hamstrung by political infighting and represent a broad consensus within the leadership.

-- There are increasing indications that Alfredo Cesar will see reason and sign on with the Resistance on more realistic terms.

There are pitfalls remaining, however. Arturo Cruz' departure with a whimper rather than a bang left his rivals feeling themselves in a position of relative strength, and there is the danger that they will exceed themselves in their effort to obtain representation on the new Resistance Directorate.

-- The major threat is a Directorate-packing effort, in which Calero allies in the major political parties would effectively give him a majority in the Directorate. While this reflects Calero's close contacts throughout the Nicaraguan political system, it also might become so blatant as to prompt other necessary elements to refuse to play. Robelo has already said he would not (and from all indications has not intended to be a member of the new Directorate since the initiation of the "transition period"); Cesar undoubtedly would not either.

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-- This can be countered by working with the individual party leaders, both in Nicaragua and in exile. Factions in the individual parties will have a veto power; the unspecified selection process for Directorate members from each party requires that politics of consensus be practiced.

-- The key to resolution of this issue is to avoid the polarization that would result were it allowed to become one in which "true Nicaraguan nationalists" could unite against "foreign impositions".

Selection of the Indian representative to the new Directorate will be both a controversial and an expensive proposition.

-- The Hondurans have not yet been persuaded that an assembly to select an Indian representative should be held soon; their spokesman, Lt. Eric Sanchez, who is the original source of most Honduran viewpoints about the Indian problem, has expressed his view (technically correct) that an assembly is not called for until 1988.

-- Somewhat less than a third of the Indians can be considered followers of Rivera, and his control over even that portion is tenuous. Some of his commanders are already negotiating directly with UNO/South.

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