

Ortega Says No to Dialogue, Clings to Power through 2021

By Wilfredo Miranda Aburto / Maynor Salazar (Confidencial)
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He buries negotiations with the Civic Alliance and says that he will not call early elections



Commander Daniel Ortega delivering his speech to supporters on the 40th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution. Photo: Jorge Torres / EFE

The dictator challenges the international community and the sanctions. Unilaterally offers “electoral reforms within the framework of the law”

HAVANA TIMES – Commander Daniel Ortega closed the doors Friday to the national dialogue with the Civic Alliance, while reiterating that he is not willing to hold early elections. Instead, the Sandinista strongman emphasized that he will be stay in power at least until after the November 2021 elections, in defiance of the sanctions and the international community.

With that decision, the dictatorship deepens the national crisis further by ignoring the demand of 21 countries of the Organization of American States (OAS), which demanded the return of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to the country, and resume political negotiation to carry out an electoral reform leading to early elections.

A defiant Ortega asked: "Dialogue with whom?" "With the peasants, with the workers, with small businessmen, with the artisans, with the small, medium and large producers, with all those willing to work for peace and for economic and social production in this country. That is the only dialogue that makes sense. The only dialogue that has a place in the historical circumstances of Nicaragua."

By ending the political dialogue with the Civic Alliance (currently stalled), Ortega closes the only official window of dialogue with the opposition. On Thursday, the Civic Alliance proposed to the regime to resume negotiations on July 31 to address the call made by the OAS General Assembly, held in June in Medellin, Colombia, for "a serious dialogue, in good faith, effective and sincere." The opposition Alliance sent a letter to Foreign Minister Denis Moncada and the Apostolic Nuncio, witness of the negotiation.

A repeat of 1990?

"Ortega's intransigence is put in evidence, despite the international call and the desire of the broad majorities of this country who want a prompt solution to the crisis. Once again, as in 1990, in the same plaza he emboldens himself and makes a historical mistake," laments Juan Sebastian Chamorro, member of the Civic Alliance.

Jose Pallais, another negotiator of the Civic Alliance, has a different point of view. He believes that Ortega "did not definitely close the doors to negotiation," but that he has not yet made a decision about it.

"He cannot provide financing or jobs with the current policy of his Government," expressed Pallais, who added that "the solution to the crisis must go through a national understanding. "There is a contradiction (in the discourse). To strengthen national stability and confidence in the economy is not feasible with that dialogue only with his party base."

A wink to the private sector?

The lawyer and former opposition deputy, Eliseo Nunez, said that, in his speech, Ortega was careful not to close the doors to dialogue, although it seemed the opposite. According to Nunez, the dictator ended up accepting that reforms are needed, the economy needs to recover and that he is desperate to find an arrangement, under any disguise, with the private sector.



Sandinista sympathizers bound for the celebration of the Sandinista Revolution. Carlos Herrera / Confidencial.

“This is a wink to the private sector. He told them “let’s go back to the previous model,” which coming from him seems a major blunder, because the private sector has too many problems to return to that and I am not referring to ethical problems, of which it has a lot. Furthermore, it would be a matter now of joining a Government that killed a lot of people and made disasters,” said the former legislator.

Nunez believes that the private sector does not want to risk exposing themselves to the sanctions which are affecting Ortega and his inner circle. “I don’t see any big entrepreneur in this country risking his own neck to defend Ortega. There are more reasons than ethical and political ones to not return to the previous model. He is desperate,” he explained.

Enthroned through 2021

After saying the political negotiation with the Civic Alliance is over, the dictator said “that in due time elections will come in 2021.” “And we, then, are already prepared to win those elections. Electoral reforms and adjustments will be made, but within the framework of the law and the Constitution. For what? So that nobody will come here to complain afterwards that we steal the elections,” said Ortega with irony.

The electoral reforms “within the framework of the law” intended by the Government are limited to the current legally constituted political parties, all of them puppet

organizations subordinated to Ortega, such as the Liberal Constitutionalist Party (PLC) of Arnoldo Aleman.

Under this logic, organizations such as the Civic Alliance and the Blue and White National Unity (UNAB), which do enjoy citizen approval as representatives, would be outside of these supposed electoral reforms. On repeated occasions, representatives of the regime have stated that both the Alliance and the UNAB lack legal status to be taken into account in these electoral reforms.

“Many are repeating that the elections have to be held now. What do they want? That we sweep them away and they will come out saying then that we stole them,” said Ortega, in a mocking tone. “But, also, that is not (contemplated) in the Political Constitution or in the law. The Constitution is clear and mandates elections in November of 2021,” insisted the Sandinista caudillo.



Photo: EFE

Pallais said that the dictator intends to demonstrate firmness before his base and transmit strength where weakness exists. To this negotiator of the Civic Alliance it appears logical that Ortega would want to reach until 2021. However, he insisted that the reality of the country is completely different to the pretensions of the strongman, since Nicaragua “cannot withstand him until that date” with a wrong economic policy, without stability, without confidence, confronted with his main economic partners, such as the United States, Canada and Europe.

Sanctions bother him

Much of Ortega's speech—which lasted 34 minutes—was focused on criticizing international sanctions, especially those of the United States, suffered by officials of his regime. Before the caudillo himself mentioned the subject, priest Antonio Castro “requested that the impositions cease, the Magnisky and the Nica Act.”

Castro asked the extreme right wing preacher of Donald Trump, Ralph Drollinger (special guest to the party rally) to intervene with the US Congress to stop the sanctions, since the evangelical (preacher) was presented as a Bible professor of United States congressmen.

“A State cannot sanction another State. A State that acts in this way is committing crimes of an international nature. It is untenable. Anyhow. Who suffers? The people suffer,” said Ortega.

“The patience of Job”



Photo: EFE

In his speech, the president accused of committing crimes against humanity, said that he tried to have “the patience of Job”—the biblical character—when faced with

the civic rebellion. However, he said he had a "limit." That is how he justified the police and paramilitary repression which left 325 dead and thousands of wounded.

"After the loss of lives, economic drawdown, unemployment and the attempted coup d'état, which they wanted to call a popular insurrection, we had patience (...) And we had the patience of Job, but everything has a limit. It was discovered that there was no popular uprising. That they were the same interests as always, those who murdered Sandino, who came together to try to overthrow the people's government," stated Ortega.

He closed his speech by cheering the 40th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution, but establishing, according to him, the "first anniversary of the defeat of the coup d'état."