Minister says contras cannot win civil war

(Continued from page 1)

"The success of the Reagan administration has been to sur-
nounce our country economically and militarily, with the intention of limiting our people's ability to defend," she explained.

But the contras cannot win the war only with US aid, she asserted.

"The contras do not have a social base, nor a political pro-
gressor, she claimed. "They have nothing to offer the Nicaraguan people. They may continue to ex-
cept, but they don't have the capacity to overthrow the government."

"If the Reagan administration has the will to overthrow the Nicaraguan government, its only option is direct military interven-
tion," she continued. "The fact is that neither Nicaragua nor the US can do it.

Three US interventions in Nicaragua have very clearly failed, she pointed out. "A fourth intervention will not work. It is completely unrealistic for the US to continue its very frustrating policy."

The Nicaraguan people have the determination to defend their country, according to Marie-Perez, who left her family to join the Sandinistas at the age of 16.

Marie-Perez discussed a num-
ber of other topics:

- Leading the country. "Our biggest mistake is that in 1979, after the overthrow of the dicta-
torship, we found ourselves con-
fronting great expectations from the people and from ourselves," Marie-Perez said. "We thought we could fix things in a few years."

A country cannot recover in seven years, especially when it has to defend itself against an ag-
ggressor, she said. "We have made mistakes in our political decision process, in economic decisions, in our social decisions," she ad-
mits.

For example, the state bureauc-
yy has become too large," she said. "We need to reduce it and make it more compact."

But some of these mistakes oc-
curred as an outgrowth of our insecurity as administrators," she explained. "We have never really been prepared to make economic decisions. We will struggle to correct these mista-
kes."

- Religion. "We consider reli-
ton to be a private matter of all citizens," Marie-Perez said. Although Nicaraguans are predomin-
lantly Catholic, "each citizen is free to believe in a religious faith that the clergy played an instru-
mental role in overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship, the pointed out. "In fact, some priests died in actual combat," she said.

"We are very proud to be able to show that the revolution and active Christian faith do not con-
tradict each other," she said.

She claimed that Nicaragua ex-
perienced a remarkable economic and social change. "The clergy have been an instrument in Nicaragua, she said. "We believe that private enterprise has a role to play," she commented.

She also believe that state enter-
prise has a role to play. Trade unions must have the right to participate in economic development, she said. "We also believe that state enter-
prise must redetermine its benefits to the Nicaraguan people. That is why exportation is nationalization."

"On the other hand, no busi-
nessman is going to tell you, 'I have a factory that doesn't make a profit,' " she explained. "The businessman has to make a profit. But his profits must be in pro-
portion to the needs of the Nicara-
guan people."

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