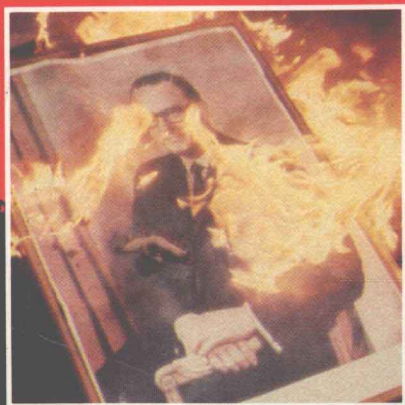


"Anyone seriously interested
in contemporary Nicaragua
will have to read this book."

—NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, front page

NICARAGUA



REVOLUTION IN THE FAMILY

WITH NEW MATERIAL ON THE *CONTRA*

SHIRLEY CHRISTIAN

NICARAGUA

REVOLUTION IN THE FAMILY



VINTAGE BOOKS
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MAJOR FIGURES

Many names figure in this book, and since most English-speaking people think that Spanish names are incredibly confusing, some explanation is in order. In fact, Spanish names are very logical and provide much more information about the person than do English names. It is customary to use both the father's and mother's last names, so the typical full name will appear as one given name and two surnames. But there are exceptions, most of which have to do with personal preference. Some people do not use their mother's name except on legal documents, and it is often dropped on second reference in newspapers and other printed material of general circulation. In addition, some people use both a first name and a middle name along with two last names; this makes four names. And some use both a first and a middle name, but only their paternal surname. Finally, when a woman marries she usually drops her mother's last name and adds her husband's last name, meaning the one he received from his father.

All of this can best be demonstrated with one family that figures prominently in this book. Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, whose murder in 1978 unified Nicaraguans against the Somoza regime, was the publisher of the newspaper *La Prensa*. His “last name” in the English sense was Chamorro, his father’s family name. Cardenal was his mother’s family name. In addition, he was one of those Nicaraguans who use both a first and a middle name—Pedro Joaquín. His older son, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Barrios, inherited his father’s given names as well as his father’s paternal surname and received his second surname, Barrios, from his mother. Her name is Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. She uses just one given name, Violeta; Barrios is her maiden name and Chamorro her married name.

The following list of major figures in the book, both Nicaraguans and other nationalities, should further help to clarify the name situation by presenting the “last name” in bold-faced letters. It does not pretend to include everyone of importance but rather to identify those who figure in the book over extended periods or those who should be recognized in order to follow the events.

Bayardo Arce Member of the Sandinista National Directorate, influential in ideological and foreign affairs questions

Enrique Bermúdez Former Nicaraguan National Guard colonel and prominent military member of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), the largest anti-Sandinista guerrilla force

Tomás Borge A founding *comandante* of the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (FSLN), member of its National Directorate, minister of interior

William P. Bowdler Special U.S. envoy, directed 1978 mediation between Anastasio Somoza Debayle and opposition, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs 1980–1981

Adolfo Calero Portocarrero Democratic Conservative Party leader and opponent of Somoza, later opposed Sandinistas, went into exile 1983, became military and political leader of the Honduran-based Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN)

Rodrigo Carazo President of Costa Rica 1978–1982

Ernesto Cardenal Priest who actively assisted Sandinista Front during its guerrilla days, Christian Marxist, minister of culture

Fernando Cardenal Jesuit priest, brother of Ernesto, advocate of

liberation theology, held various Sandinista government posts, including minister of education

José Francisco Cardenal Building contractor and president of the Chamber of Construction, went into exile in 1980, one of the founders of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN)

Luis Carrión Cruz Member of Sandinista National Directorate, vice-minister of interior

Alfredo César Businessman who joined FSLN as combatant during insurrection, later president of the Central Bank, went into exile 1983

Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal Publisher of *La Prensa*, murdered 1978

Carlos Fernando Chamorro Barrios Younger son of Chamorro Cardenal; editor of Sandinista newspaper *Barricada*

Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Barrios Older son of Chamorro Cardenal, co-editor of *La Prensa* until moving to Costa Rica at the end of 1984

Violeta Barrios de Chamorro Widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, member of government junta 1979–1980

Xavier Chamorro Cardenal A younger brother of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, publisher of *El Nuevo Diario*

Jaime Chamorro Cardenal Another younger brother of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, business manager of *La Prensa*

Arturo José Cruz Member of *Los Doce* (the Group of Twelve), later president of the Central Bank, member of the government junta, ambassador to the United States, led opposition coalition in the 1984 presidential campaign

Joaquín Cuadra Chamorro Member of the Group of Twelve, later minister of finance

Joaquín Cuadra Lacayo Son of Cuadra Chamorro, key leader in Sandinista internal front during insurrection, later chief of staff of Sandinista Popular Army

Miguel d' Escoto Maryknoll priest, member of the Group of Twelve, later foreign minister

Enrique Dreyfus President of the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) 1979–1983

Juan José (Johnny) Echeverría Brealey Minister of public security of Costa Rica 1978–1980

Thomas O. Enders U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs 1981–1983

Steadman Fagoth Müller Miskito Indian leader, went into exile in Honduras 1981 and began to lead other exiled Miskitos in armed actions against Sandinista army in Atlantic Coast region

Carlos Fonseca Amador Principal founder of the Sandinista Front of National Liberation (FSLN), killed by the National Guard 1976

José Esteban González National coordinator of the Permanent Commission for Human Rights of Nicaragua, went into exile 1981

Luis Herrera Campíns President of Venezuela 1979–1983

Colonel Federico Mejía Nicaraguan National Guard director for a day and a half after the departure of Somoza Debayle on July 17, 1979

Uriel Molina Parish priest who played a major role in the intellectual formation of guerrilla leaders for the FSLN during the Somoza years, later a leading exponent of liberation theology and director of the Valdivieso Center for Ecumenical Reflection

Carlos Nuñez Member of Sandinista National Directorate, president of Council of State

Monsignor Miguel Obando y Bravo Roman Catholic Archbishop of Managua, elevated to Cardinal in 1985

Daniel Ortega Saavedra Member of Sandinista National Directorate, member of junta 1979–1984, elected president November 4, 1984

Humberto Ortega Saavedra Member of Sandinista National Directorate, minister of defense and commander of the army

Luis Pallais Debayle First cousin of Luis and Anastasio Somoza Debayle, key figure in Liberal Party affairs prior to fall of Somoza regime

Robert Pastor Latin American specialist on the National Security Council during the Carter administration, 1976–1980

Edén Pastora Gómez Sandinista *comandante* who captured the National Palace in August 1978, went into exile 1981, began armed actions against the FSLN in 1983 as military leader of the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE)

Carlos Andrés Pérez President of Venezuela 1975–1979, major figure in the Socialist International

Leonel Poveda Prominent military figure in the Sandinista Southern Front during insurrection, later held various government posts, went into exile 1982

Lawrence Pezzullo U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua 1979–1981

Sergio Ramírez Mercado Civilian member of the FSLN, key strate-

gist in political aspects of the insurrection, later member of the government junta, elected vice president 1984

Ismael Reyes President of the Red Cross and president of the Chamber of Industry, went into exile 1983 after government intervention in the Red Cross and confiscation of his factory and other property

Brooklyn Rivera Miskito Indian leader, went into exile 1981, later joined anti-Sandinista forces in Costa Rica led by Edén Pastora and Alfonso Robelo

Alfonso Robelo Callejas Business leader at the forefront of opposition to Somoza rule from 1974 onward, member of the government junta 1979–1980, went into exile 1982, became political leader of the Costa Rican-based Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE)

Henry Ruiz Member of Sandinista National Directorate, minister of planning

Jorge Salazar Arguello Private farm and business leader slain by state security agents in 1980

Augusto César Sandino Liberal general in the Liberal-Conservative wars of the 1920s, subsequently opposed U.S. Marine intervention, executed by National Guard firing squad in 1934

Mauricio Solaun U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua 1977–79

Anastasio (Tacho) Somoza García The first Somoza to rule Nicaragua, became National Guard director in 1933, assassinated 1956

Luis Somoza Debayle A son of Somoza García, succeeded his father as president, died 1967

Anastasio (Tachito, later Tacho) Somoza Debayle Youngest son of Somoza García, succeeded his brother and ruled Nicaragua until his overthrow in 1979, assassinated in Paraguay 1980

Anastasio (Tachito) Somoza Portocarrero Eldest son of Anastasio Somoza Debayle, National Guard officer during the 1978–1979 insurrection

Victor Tirado Mexican-born member of Sandinista National Directorate, prominent during insurrection but considered least influential of the nine *comandantes* once in power

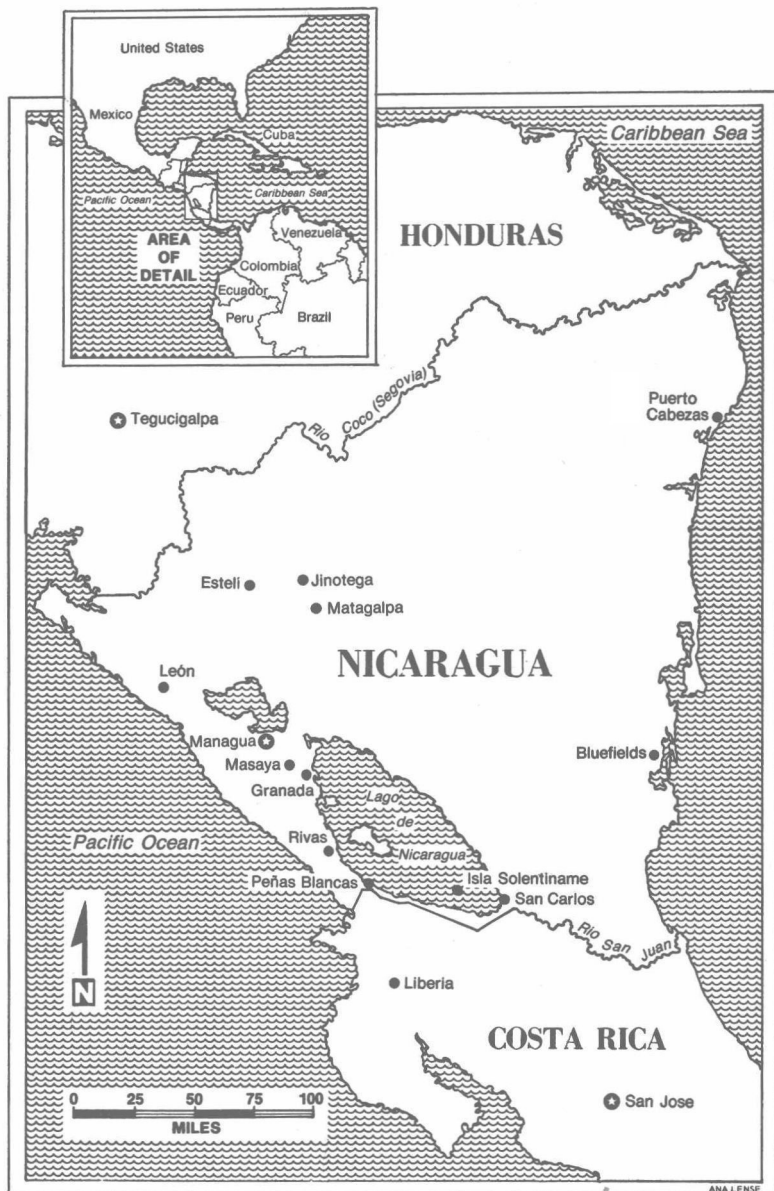
General Omar Torrijos Panamanian strongman until his death in a plane crash in 1982

Carlos Tünnermann Bernheim Member of the Group of Twelve, later minister of education, then ambassador to Washington

Francisco Urcuyo Maliaño President of Nicaragua for a day and a half after the departure of Somoza Debayle on July 17, 1979

Viron P. Vaky U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs 1978–1980

Jaime Wheelock Román Member of Sandinista National Directorate, minister of agriculture



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NICARAGUA

1

THE BAGGAGE OF THE PAST

1821 to 1941

In his eighty-second year, the past almost caught up with Leopoldo Salazar Amador. As the rebel forces fighting under the banner of the Sandinista National Liberation Front moved into the Matagalpa region of north-central Nicaragua in February 1979, they ambushed and killed Federico Davidson Blanco, another of the original officers of the Nicaraguan National Guard and a participant in the killing of Augusto César Sandino in 1934. Shortly thereafter, Salazar decided to flee the country, partly out of fear that the Sandinistas planned to seek vengeance against all former Guardsmen and partly because, when Sandinista guerrillas set up camp on his farm, Salazar got into a scuffle with some of them and was slightly hurt.

In Costa Rica, just before Christmas 1983, I met Leo Salazar and was struck by the way his life—with relatively little design—had been

caught up in the significant events of Nicaragua's twentieth-century history. The writing and rewriting of history has left us with confusion about cause, effect, and motivation in a past marked by almost continual warfare between and within political parties and by frequent foreign interventions, including the on and off presence of U.S. Marines over a twenty-four-year period. Salazar, while admittedly having his biases, offers a view of how many of the principals thought at a crucial time in Nicaraguan history. Although aware of the critical way people later came to view events of that period, he explains them mostly in the light of the past, not the present.

That is why I decided to use his story to help set the stage for this book, to blend the personal recollections of a still marvelously alert mind with the published accounts and interpretations of Nicaragua's yesterdays. Even those who may see in him the remnants of a misguided old order will find that his account unmasks many of the abstractions created by the passage of time.

Nicaragua is one of the least populous countries in Spanish America, with only about three million people in 1984. Most of them are clustered within a relatively small area on the Pacific side of the country. The vast department [province] of Zelaya on the Atlantic, or Caribbean, Coast, contains more than half of Nicaragua's land, but it is an almost unpenetrated region of timber and gold mines inhabited by fewer than three hundred thousand people. Once part of the Miskito Indian kingdom that was a British protectorate for two centuries, the region is inhabited primarily by Miskito Indians and descendants of black migrants or slaves from Caribbean islands. The people on the populous Pacific side are either whites, descended from Spaniards or other Europeans, or are *ladinos*, of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry.

Nicaragua, then, is a small society and an inbred one, or really two such societies, one on the Pacific side, the other on the Atlantic. It seems you could easily count all of the last names in the country, though having the same last name does not automatically put two people on the same side of any issue. People who slander one another, conspire to destroy one another politically or economically, or threaten to shoot one another are often cousins, or married to cousins. Frequently, first cousins are married to each other. The justifications that are usually offered for such close marriages are that they keep landholdings in the family or that they protect descendants of the old Spanish families from marrying beneath themselves, although this

doesn't explain why such marriages are common among the poor as well as the affluent. A blood or marital connection does sometimes cause people to temper their feuds before they become mortal. Making a disparaging remark about another person to almost anyone is dangerous because the person you are talking to could be his relative and childhood friend. On the other hand, saying something good about the third person may bring a detailed accounting of an indiscretion he committed twenty years earlier. At times the greater political and social questions seem irrelevant.

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Nicaragua, beginning soon after independence from Spain in 1821, were marked by warfare between the two political parties that then dominated public life throughout Central America—the Liberals and the Conservatives. The main philosophical difference between them was their attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church, with the Conservatives, in general, believing the Church should have a lot of influence in government, and the Liberals thinking it ought to confine its interests to the soul. Sometimes the Liberals talked about social reform, but not a great deal. The Liberals were also identified more with the supposedly modernizing world of commerce while the Conservatives were identified more with big landholdings and feudalism, though there were Conservatives who were merchants and Liberals who owned large tracts of land.

The warfare was not generally related to these differences in philosophy. Rather, it was about power and the possibilities that power offered for enrichment. The two groups functioned more like tribes or armies than political parties, and those who aspired to public office needed the talents of a warlord more than those of a political thinker. The two parties had individual capitals, which each considered the national capital. León, the second largest city, was the Liberal stronghold, and Granada was the Conservative center, but the warfare between them ranged all over the country. Managua was eventually selected as the center of government in the hope that it might prove a neutral site. In large measure it was this inability to resolve Conservative-Liberal disputes peacefully that brought foreign intervention, either by governments or adventurers. In general, it cannot be said that the United States government found either the Liberals or the Conservatives more to its liking. Like the Nicaraguans themselves, it tended to find the personalities more compelling.

In 1855 the Liberals hired an American adventurer, William Walker, and his small mercenary army, to fight on their side against