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HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLICY WRONGS

**UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN
THE CREATION AND OVERTHROW OF THE SOMOZA REGIME**

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Honors Research Project
Under the Direction of W. Michael Weis
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On the morning of January 10, 1978, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, the chief opponent to the government of Nicaraguan President Anastasio Garcia Somoza, began his usual drive through the streets of Managua, still ravished from an enormous earthquake six years earlier. Suddenly, a green pickup truck obstructed the path of his Saab, and forced Chamorro to the curb of the road.¹ Three gunmen then jumped out of the truck, carrying a machine gun and a rifle and proceeded to fire eighteen shots into the car at point-blank range, pummelling Chamorro.² This incident resulted in a watershed for American Foreign Policy towards Nicaragua. Anthony Lake, Director of Policy Planning in the United States Department of State under President Jimmy Carter, stated that after Chamorro's death, "Nicaragua began to emerge from the ranks of small Central American nations with whose dictators the Carter administration had an uncomfortable, ambiguous relationship."³

Looking back on the situation, questions remain. Why, under Carter, did the United States initially support Somoza, a man notorious for human rights abuses? Furthermore, what events caused a change in policy, toward Nicaragua, and how real was that change? The events in Nicaragua between 1977-1979, indicate that the Carter Administration based its foreign policy, not on a new approach, human rights, but rather on an old obsession -- order and stability. This obsession can also be seen in U.S. policy toward Nicaragua in the early part of the century. While some Carter Administration officials concerned themselves more with issues of human rights, and democracy, they clashed, with

those more concerned with order, stability, protection of U.S. property, and communism. This struggle proved detrimental to the administration's policy toward Nicaragua.

In recent years there have been many works published on the Sandinistas and the fall of the Somoza dynasty. Few works center on the change in U.S. policy toward Nicaragua. Two stand out: Condemned to Repetition, by Robert Pastor, and Lake's Somoza Falling. Pastor served as a policy expert toward Nicaragua for the National Security Council, (NSC) under Carter.⁴ These books do not delve deeply into the ironies and contradictions of the Carter Administration's foreign policy (due probably to their close association with the administration). Furthermore, they do not look into the early history of Nicaragua, in particular, the rise to power of the Somoza dynasty. It remains crucial to look at the U.S. foreign policy toward Nicaragua not only for understanding the current situation in that country, but also to gain insight on foreign policy in general. But, in order to understand fully the circumstances surrounding the Carter Administration's policy vis-a-vis Nicaragua, one must consider the ascent of the Somoza dynasty.⁵

THE EARLY YEARS - 1823-1927 CIVIL WAR AND THE ENTRANCE OF THE UNITED STATES

The United States' entrance into Nicaragua began in 1848. At this time the British maintained a foothold in the country, around the Mosquito Coast. In 1848 miners discovered gold in California. This in turn created a U.S. desire to secure

transportation routes across Central America to the Pacific Coast. The subsequent desire led in 1850 to the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, which assured that any canal or railroad across the Central American isthmus would be under joint U.S. and British control.⁶

In 1855, William Walker went to Nicaragua at the request of the Liberals, and helped to defeat the Conservative government. He proceeded to name himself president, legalize slavery, and make English the official language. To Nicaraguans, Walker embodied everything hated about the United States. Nicaragua never forgot the "invasion" of Walker.⁷ For the next thirty-six years, the Conservatives controlled Nicaragua.

Stability, of sorts, symbolized the early years of the Conservative reign. The Conservatives constructed railroads, began operating gold mines, and attracted European immigrants into the country. Most importantly for the economy, an agrarian reform took place which expanded coffee production, and introduced bananas.⁸

Prosperity increased United States interest in Nicaragua. North American banana growers (led by the Standard Fruit Company, and United Fruit Company) began to lay the foundations which eventually led to their notorious domination in the twentieth century. In addition, the building of the Panama Canal made Nicaragua important to U.S. interests, as the only alternative canal route.⁹

Fear over U.S. expansion through the region, prompted

Liberal General, Jose Santos Zelaya to oust the Conservatives from power in 1893.¹⁰ Zelaya ruled for the next sixteen years, often at odds with the United States. Zelaya firmly believed in Central American union, a type of United States of Central America, and saw the U.S. as an immediate threat to his interests.¹¹

The less-than-amicable relations continued. By the end of the nineteenth century, Zelaya began to turn his regime into an open dictatorship, and began to modernize his armed forces.¹² In addition to repression, Zelaya perpetuated his reign through rigged elections. He promised elections, and delivered, though according to one account, "voters were once given their choice of three candidates, 'Jose, Santos, or Zelaya.'" ¹³ By 1900, it became clear to U.S. policy makers that only force could remove Zelaya from power.

Nicaraguans assumed that the United States would build a canal in their country. Thus, in 1902 when the U.S. decided on Panama as the canal site, Nicaragua suffered a major setback. U.S. - Nicaraguan relations continued to decline rapidly. Zelaya turned to the Japanese to build a canal. In addition, Zelaya started canceling U.S. concessions in the country, and began to turn to countries such as Great Britain for loans. When in 1907 Nicaragua attacked Honduras and began to display its desire to be a major actor in Central America, the United States decided to remove Zelaya.¹⁴

In October of 1909, Juan J. Estrada, the military Commander

at Bluefields, led four-hundred Conservatives into revolution against Zelaya and the Liberals.¹⁵ The United States under President Theodore Roosevelt, responded by sending four hundred U.S. Marines into the region.¹⁶ Zelaya managed to seal his own fate in the revolution by capturing and executing two American citizens who Estrada had hired to set mines and blow up Zelaya's troopships. The executions of American citizens, "gave the United States the excuse it wanted to break openly with the Zelaya regime."¹⁷ The U.S. broke off all diplomatic relations with Zelaya and on August 20, 1910, Juan Estrada who was immediately recognized by the U.S., took over the reigns of Nicaragua, and Adolfo Diaz became Vice-President.¹⁸

Estrada pursued a policy which weakened rather than strengthened his hold on the government. He created three centers of power: The Ministry of War, headed by General Luiz Mena, The Ministry of the Interior, headed by Jose Maria Moncada, and Leadership of the Assembly, which went to Emiliano Chamorro. Estrada intended these positions as rewards for his top aides, but in reality this caused a struggle for power.¹⁹

Realizing his power base weakened, Estrada began to eliminate his opposition. He limited the power of the Assembly, and drove Chamorro into exile. Estrada then pursued a course which affected all aspects of Nicaraguan life through the twentieth century.

To curtail War Minister Mena's (his chief rival) power, Estrada approached the United States with a plan to transform the

Army into an "'apolitical' force trained and organized by American military advisors."²⁰ Before these plans could be implemented, however, Mena's officers staged a coup, and forced Estrada to resign. Adolfo Diaz became president, and accepted the American proposal to implement Estrada's plan of reorganizing the army. The plan called for "the creation of 'a small disciplined regular armed force, American Army officers to be the instructors.'" This became the first U.S. attempt to reorganize the Nicaraguan Military.²¹

In 1912, General Luis Mena, Secretary of War under Diaz, launched an attack against Diaz. Following a plea by Diaz, the United States sent in Marines to Nicaragua for the purpose of thwarting this Liberal revolt.²² For the next twenty-two years, U.S. Marines, remained in Nicaragua, essentially revoking Nicaragua's Independence. With the help of the Marines, Diaz defeated Mena and assumed the presidency.

The presence of U.S. Marines in Nicaragua severely affected the Nicaraguan military. The assured security which American forces provided led to the decline in not only the army's number, but also in its ability. The Conservative regimes of this period depended upon American support for their survival, and the United States used this dependence to greatly strengthen its political and economic controls over the country.²³

The U.S. profited from its dominance in Nicaragua. The Bryan-Chamorro Treaty of 1914, fulfilled a long time U.S. objective of securing canal rights in Nicaragua. In exchange for

\$3 million, the U.S. gained exclusive rights to build a canal through Nicaragua, as well as possession of the Corn Islands. The U.S. began to employ "legal" means of ensuring dominance.²⁴

In 1917, with the United States' blessing, Emiliano Chamorro became president. During the same year, the Lansing Plan solidified Nicaraguan dependence upon the United States. The Lansing Plan bound Nicaragua economically, for it enabled the State Department to force loans upon Nicaragua which benefitted U.S. banking interests.²⁵

In 1923, Conservative Carlos Solorzano, became president, while a Liberal, Juan Batista Sacasa assumed the Vice-Presidency. Sacasa's faction included a former automobile salesman, and toilet inspector, Anastasio Somoza Garcia. While in the United States, Somoza proclaimed to have had a political conversion to liberalism, and thus returned to aid Sacasa. Somoza eventually became the most influential figure in Nicaraguan history.²⁶

The U.S. planned on withdrawing the Marines from Nicaragua in 1925, but President Solorzano asked the U.S. to suspend those plans, which the U.S. agreed to do. In return, Solorzano agreed to once again move forward with the plans to create a U.S. trained National Guard. In February 1925, the State Department gave Nicaragua the blueprint of the plan which called for replacing the entire armed forces of Nicaragua. Placed in charge of this Guard was ex-army officer, Major Calvin B. Carter. With Carter in place, the Marines left on August 4, 1925.²⁷

Just three weeks after the Marines left, a serious crisis

erupted as Chamorro once again made a bid to lead a revolution. At this time, the National Guard remained weak, and it appeared that Solorzano might be defeated. Chamorro demanded that he be appointed Minister of War, and with the National Guard unable to stop him, Solorzano conceded.²⁸ Although Solorzano remained President, the real control of Nicaragua, "was now in the hands of General Emiliano Chamorro."²⁹

The departure of the Marines exposed a major problem. After American military dominance between 1912-1924, "there had been little change in Nicaragua. It still remained a country unprepared for democracy, with a penchant for revolution."³⁰ The United States withdrew the Marines, and in their place left a very weak National Guard.

The U.S. made it clear that any Chamorro-headed government would not be recognized. However, on January 16, 1926, because of "health" reasons, Solorzano resigned in favor of Chamorro.³¹ In May of the same year, the Liberals launched yet another attack, this time at the Eastern city of Bluefields, in which they seized the governor, and looted an American-managed National Bank. Chamorro responded by sending in the National Guard, which stopped the uprising.³²

The revolution continued to spread across Nicaragua. Meanwhile, reports surfaced that Sacasa and the Liberals received arms and soldiers from Mexico, much to the chagrin of the United States. Nicaragua was once again in a state of flux, and as a result the U.S. sent a new charge', Lawrence Denis to the scene.

Denis believed that "Nicaragua was in for a cycle of revolutions unless Chamorro agreed to a settlement acceptable to the Liberals." The Marines returned to Nicaragua.³³

Two sides eventually emerged in the revolution. The Liberals insisted that Juan Batista Sacasa be president, while the Conservatives, with U.S. support, favored Adolfo Diaz. The two sides met on the U.S.S. Denver where they reached only one agreement. As a result of this agreement, Chamorro resigned and U.S. backed Adolfo Diaz replaced him as president. The Liberals countered by setting up a "Constitutional Government" of their own, headed by Sacasa. The country began to move towards anarchy, and U.S. President Calvin Coolidge, and Secretary of State Frank Kellogg decided on full scale U.S. intervention.³⁴

When the Marines left in 1925, the Nicaraguan National Guard replaced them as peace keepers. The Guard proved too weak to handle the country's revolution. The United States did not want to send in the Marines again and looked for a viable alternative. President Coolidge decided on sending Henry L. Stimson to mediate a peace settlement.

THE STIMSON MISSION

Henry L. Stimson, a Harvard Law School graduate, entered the public life as District Attorney in New York. After an unsuccessful run at governor of New York, he eventually served as a Colonel in World War I. In 1926, Stimson worked briefly in South America mediating a dispute between Chile and Peru.

Stimson now turned his attention to Nicaragua.³⁵ The New York Times reported that "the designation of Mr. Stimson is generally interpreted as a 'super' representative in that country."

Although having little knowledge of Nicaragua, Stimson nonetheless embarked on his mission energetically. The State Department reported that the purpose of the mission was "to get information . . . as to the entire situation in that country for the use of this Government." In addition, Stimson had to follow the policies of the U.S. which included the protection of Americans, and safeguarding the Canal route and naval base rights acquired by the United States through treaty. In the eyes of the United States, the Nicaraguan Civil War directly threatened American interests.³⁶

Stimson arrived in mid-April, 1927. His task centered on determining who the rightful president according to the Nicaraguan Constitution was. Besides this riddle, other aspects such as humanitarian concerns, as well as the fact that the planting season approached with important implications for people's diets, and the nation's economy, made ending it quickly an urgent matter. Coolidge gave Stimson full power.³⁷

After conferring with both sides of the war, as well as the public, Stimson quickly obtained an overview of the situation. He found that "the military situation was one of deadlock. Both armies fought well on the defensive; neither possessed the disciplined organization for effective continuous offensive action." Stimson realized that without U.S. assistance, the

situation could never peacefully be resolved. To his surprise, however, both sides sought American assistance in ending the deadlock.³⁸

Stimson favored a U.S. supervised election in 1928 to end the conflict. He saw certain conditions necessary however, to reach this end, and he now turned his attention to these prerequisites. First of all, peace and general amnesty had to be obtained. Second, in order to ensure this peace, a complete disarmament of both sides had to happen. Finally, the key to all of this according to Stimson, lay with the creation of a new and impartial police force, "to take the place of the forces which the government was in the habit of using to terrorize and control elections."³⁹ This last condition shaped Nicaraguan history for the next fifty years.

On April 22, Nicaraguan President Adolfo Diaz sent Stimson an outline of proposed peace plans. The memorandum called for: Immediate peace, and delivery of arms to the Americans; general amnesty, and return of exiles, and confiscated land; Participation in Diaz's cabinet by representative Liberals; U.S. training of a Nicaraguan constabulary; U.S. supervision of the 1928, and subsequent elections; and temporary continuance of the U.S. Marines to enforce the plan. The plan also called for Diaz to remain president until the 1928 elections. Stimson believed that "only through his remaining in office was an immediate peace settlement possible." Armed with Diaz's and thus the Conservatives peace plan, Stimson sought the Liberals'

response.⁴⁰

Stimson did not believe that Sacasa and the Liberals would accept the peace plan. He therefore decided to take a hard-ball approach, notifying Sacasa that U.S. policy of supporting Diaz was non-negotiable, and the only hope for Sacasa was to agree on supervised elections in 1928.⁴¹ Stimson knew that he had to include the Liberals in the peace plan, but he also had to remain stern, making them realize that they did not really have a choice. On April 30, Sacasa sent representatives to meet with Stimson aboard the U.S. ship Preston.⁴²

Aboard the Preston, the Liberals agreed to several points. They agreed to U.S. supervised elections. They also recognized a U.S. zone of influence extending to Panama. Finally, they agreed not to make any treaties with Mexico.⁴³ However, as the New York Times reported, although the name of President Diaz had not been brought up in peace discussions, the "continuance of President Diaz in office will be a stumbling block in the way of a successful outcome."⁴⁴

Indeed, the meetings ended because the Liberals told Stimson that they had progressed as far as they could without getting rid of Diaz. Ironically, the Liberals told Stimson that Diaz represented the most acceptable Conservative to them. The problem centered on pride and principle. They fought him for months, and to support Diaz now was impossible. The representatives informed Stimson that further negotiations must take place with General Jose Maria Moncada's, Sacasa's Secretary

of War, and field commander, and besides Sacasa, the most important Liberal.⁴⁵

On May 4, Stimson met with General Moncada at Tipitapa, a small village on the river connecting Lake Managua with Lake Nicaragua to discuss peace plans. Moncada frankly admitted to Stimson that "neither he nor any Nicaraguan could, without the help of the United States, end the war or pacify the country. . . ."⁴⁶ Although this was the case, Moncada still refused to support Diaz. Stimson, however, informed Moncada that "the retention of President Diaz during the remainder of his term is regarded as essential to that plan and will be insisted upon."⁴⁷ Although he still did not support Diaz, Moncada agreed to recommend that the Liberals stop fighting.⁴⁸ Finally, on May 12, 1927 Stimson received a letter from Moncada, "signed by him and by all of his chieftains except General Augusto Ceasar Sandino formally agreeing to lay down their arms. . . ." which seemed to end the war⁴⁹ The fact that Sandino refused to surrender seemed inconsequential at the time.

Stimson left Nicaragua on May 16, a jubilant victor. The final truce which the State Department disclosed to the New York Times called for the American supervision of Nicaraguan affairs, including the organizing of a native police force. In addition the U.S. agreed to supervise the 1928 elections.⁵⁰ Stimson reflected on his accomplishments by declaring that "The final announcement of a settlement met with general demonstrations of joy and satisfaction in Nicaragua."⁵¹ Stimson felt that he had

done a noble thing. He succeeded in ending the civil war and attaining stability in Nicaragua.

Not everyone approved of the plan. Ironically, at the beginning of his mission, a New York Times editorial said that a Stimson settlement "would go far to silence criticism, and to refute the charge, so widely echoed in South America . . . that the sending of our Marines to Nicaragua was a sinister development of 'American Imperialism'."⁵² The Stimson mission merely revoked much of Nicaragua's independence because the U.S. forced its will upon the country. In addition, the Mission marked a turning point in U.S. - Latin American relations, because it began the precedent of the United States training Latin American police forces. For Stimson, the mission also represented a turning point, as it led to him becoming Secretary of State. In the end, Stimson's mission failed to even produce lasting peace, because although civil war had ended, guerilla warfare soon began.

THE REBEL - AUGUSTO CEASAR SANDINO

Following the departure of Stimson, Augusto Ceasar Sandino launched a revolution that lasted for six years. Sandino's goal centered on the expulsion of the United States from Nicaragua. Sandino fled to the mountains to hide, and began his war.

The six year conflict between Sandino and the National Guard commenced on July 16, 1927.⁵³ On this date Sandino attacked the Guard at the city of Ocotal. Although the Guard easily crushed Sandino and forced him back into the mountains, this conflict

marked a watershed for Sandino's forces. Sandino learned that he had to use ambushes and sudden raids to be effective. From this point on in the war, Sandino only attacked "when the odds were heavily in his favor - when he clearly had the advantaged of surprise, cover, and superior firepower."⁵⁴ In essence, this marked the beginning not only of guerilla war, but also of the Sandinistas.

By the end of 1927, the ordeal of capturing Sandino began to embarrass the U.S. In China, an army unit had been named after him, and in Moscow he received praise. In the United States, (just as Che Guevera would be in the Sixties) Sandino became a hero of the Left. The Americans decided to launch a major strike against "El Chipote," Sandino's base in the mountains.⁵⁵

Following wave after wave of U.S. air strikes, a united ground force consisting of the National Guard, and United States Marines set out for El Chipote. When the forces arrived, Sandino was long gone, reportedly fifty miles away.⁵⁶ Just as in Vietnam almost forty years later, the United States began to realize the difficulties in waging a war against guerrillas who enjoyed the popular support of local peasants.

Following the Nicaraguan election of Jose Moncada in 1928, U.S. policy began to change. At this time the United States embarked on a plan to replace the Marines with the National Guard as quickly as possible.⁵⁷ The "Nicaraguaisation" of the war now began.

Sandino, meanwhile, concocted a plan for a coup in

Nicaragua. He wrote to other Latin American heads of state informing them of his plans. In addition, Sandino requested a loan from Mexico to which ends he went to that country to meet with its government. However, upon arrival in Mexico, he discovered that at the instruction of the United States, Mexico had double-crossed him. Sandino remained isolated in Mexico, not meeting with the President for months. When the two finally met, the Mexican government refused to help. The U.S. reported Sandino's exodus as a clear retreat, and temporarily succeeded in stalling his troops.⁵⁸

By 1931, it became increasingly clear that the National Guard, even with U.S. support, faltered in its attempts to contain let alone destroy Sandino.⁵⁹ Coinciding with this, the United States Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson, announced plans in 1931 to reduce the number of Marines from 1,500 men to 500 men. The policy of withdrawing the Marines accelerated in 1932 when Franklin D. Roosevelt became president of the United States, and initiated his "Good Neighbor Policy," with a promise to refrain from intervention and interference in Latin America.⁶⁰

On January 1, 1933, a Liberal President, Juan B. Sacasa became president of Nicaragua. In addition, Sacasa's nephew-in-law, General Anastasio Somoza Garcia took over his new post as Jefe Director (commander) of the National Guard. The next day, the last U.S. Marines left the country. In six years 132 Marines died in action, a figure less than the total number of

Sandinistas killed in a single battle at Ocotal.⁶¹

After the Marines left, on February 2, 1933, Sandino flew to Managua to meet with Sacasa. That same night, Sacasa and Sandino signed a peace settlement in which Sandino ended his war. In addition, Sandino agreed to gradually turn in his arms. In return, the Sandinistas received full amnesty, a tract of land to form an agricultural colony, permission to retain an army of 100 men, and a promise that the Sandinistas would be given employment preference on all public works projects in the North.⁶² The war officially ended.

Not everyone liked the settlement. Somoza was furious that Sacasa had granted Sandino any concessions. Somoza believed that Sandino had stashed away the majority of his weapons for future use against the National Guard.⁶³ Tensions between Sandino and Somoza increased when Sandino (who had now retired to his agricultural colony) began proclaiming that the National Guard was unconstitutional, and refused to surrender his weapons. As the end of Sacasa's term approached, a power struggle emerged between Sandino and Somoza.⁶⁴

Somoza then launched a plan to arrest and kill Sandino. He informed his conspirators that they had full support from the U.S.⁶⁵ On February 21, 1934, as he left President Sacasa's house after a dinner, Guardsmen kidnapped Sandino, his father, and two of his aides. The Guardsmen took Sandino to an airfield, and shot him to death.⁶⁶

The assassination of Sandino helped solidify Somoza's

control over the National Guard, ultimately leading to his control of the country. First, he not only eliminated a possible political rival, but also gained support from the Guard, which hated Sandino. In addition, Somoza openly encouraged the Guardsmen to take part in widespread corruption. This action further isolated the Guard from the citizens of Nicaragua, making them as dependent on Somoza as he was on them.⁶⁷

THE RISE TO POWER OF ANASTASIO SOMOZA GARCIA

Anastasio Somoza Garcia was the son of a well-to-do coffee grower. Known as "Tacho," Somoza had been educated in the United States, where he met and married Salvadora Debayle (Juan Sacasa's niece). He returned to Nicaragua in 1926, to help the Liberals in the civil war.⁶⁸ Following the assassination of Sandino, Somoza consolidated and tightened his grip over the National Guard, and began his ascent to power.

By the end of 1934, Somoza finally admitted that he had ordered the assassination of Sandino, something strongly believed anyway. Somoza also announced that he intended to run for president in 1936. Somoza was never prosecuted for his first admission, and his desire to become president remained in danger because the Nicaraguan Constitution banned him on two counts; as a relative to the current president and as Jefe Director of the National Guard, a supposedly a-political force.⁶⁹ Somoza assured Arthur Bliss Lane, the U.S. Minister in Nicaragua, however, that he "would take no violent action whatever against

President Sacasa. . . ."70 Lane, however, was very skeptical because Somoza also promised not kill Sandino.

By May of 1935, Somoza began campaigning for President even though the Nicaraguan Constitution forbade any such activity until six months prior to a Presidential election. Sacasa began placing responsibility on the United States because they had created the National Guard, and now Somoza was using its power to disobey the Constitution. Minister Lane believed that the U.S. might possibly consider some course of action noting "I am prepared to admit that the United States' prestige may suffer in Latin America temporarily should Somoza become president."<71 Somoza began to take advantage of the United States' policy of non-intervention.

Somoza had to deal with the Constitutional barriers preventing him from becoming President. He maintained control of the Guard and possessed the military ability to take over, but he would not be seen as the legitimate president. Somoza planned to have a constituent assembly called to elect him provisional president. Sacasa informed the U.S. that this was unconstitutional and hoped the United States would not recognize Somoza in such a scenario. Lane replied by simply stating that the U.S. did not consider options which had not yet happened.⁷²

By August of 1935, Somoza made it clear that he definitely intended on being the next president, and told Lane that "there was nobody in Nicaragua who could prevent it."⁷³ Lane informed Cordell Hull, now the U.S. Secretary of State, that if any

obstacle impeded Somoza, "he could not, in my opinion, be depended upon to keep his word, many times given to me, that he would not use violence."⁷⁴ Somoza realized that attempts to legitimize his campaign stalled, so he determined to simply take the presidency.

By late September, the situation in Nicaragua began to reach a crisis level. Lane discovered that members of the National Guard planned to demand Sacasa's resignation, but at the last minute, Somoza stopped the Guardsmen.⁷⁵ On the other side, the Executive Committee of the Liberal Party, along with several Nicaraguan municipalities, demanded that Sacasa order Somoza to resign.⁷⁶ Sacasa knew that Somoza aspired to take his job, but he also knew that the forced resignation of Somoza would lead to a civil war. Once again he pleaded for U.S. assistance, citing the fact that the Americans had created the Guard. Lane informed him of the U.S.' refusal to intervene in the crisis.⁷⁷

By February of 1936, a gas crisis engulfed Nicaragua. A mob consisting of chauffeurs and other workers had taken to the streets.⁷⁸ Sacasa believed that the Guard had instigated the movement by the chauffeurs for political reasons. This indeed may be true as many members of the mob called for Somoza to take over as President of Nicaragua.⁷⁹

The gas crisis demonstrated how powerless Sacasa was. Somoza controlled the only force in Nicaragua with the capability to quell the riot, and thus Sacasa remained at his mercy. As a result, in May of 1936, Sacasa sent a personal letter to

Washington explaining his situation, and blaming the United States. Sacasa wrote that since Somoza took control of the National Guard, "he has been usurping the functions which belong to me, as Commander in Chief of the Army, disregarding orders emanating from my authority."⁸⁰ He went on to say that he had no military support to defend his legitimately elected government and without assistance from the United States, "blood will probably be shed, anarchy will reign . . . and latent communism . . . will find a favorable field in which to develop. . . ."⁸¹ Once again the U.S. cited its policy of non-intervention, and non-interference in the region and refused assistance. By the end of May, the revolution was in full swing, and Somoza's forces had possession of the electric light plant, and all strategic buildings in Leon.⁸²

By the end of May 1936, Somoza's men controlled virtually all of Managua and Leon. Thus on June 9, 1936, Sacasa and Vice President Espinosa resigned their posts.⁸³ Somoza in a move to "legitimize" his power, called for December elections, which he easily won.⁸⁴ The Somoza dynasty was born.

Historian Richard Millett writes that, "The major share of the responsibility for Somoza's seizure of power . . . must rest with the United States."⁸⁵ The United States left Nicaragua with the National Guard to police the country. When Somoza began to use this institution to gain power, the U.S. did nothing to stop him. Without the U.S., Sacasa remained helpless to defend his regime, and Somoza took over.

A DYNASTY TAKES OVER - FROM SOMOZA I TO SOMOZA III

Anastasio Somoza Garcia ruled from 1936-1956. He implemented a formula to maintain control, which comprised of three objectives: maintaining support of the National Guard, co-opting important domestic power contenders, and cultivating the Americans.⁸⁶ This last ingredient meant basically doing everything the U.S. asked, to the point where "The Ambassador ranked as the second most powerful man in the country, and, at times, as the most powerful."⁸⁷ On the night of September 20, 1956 a young poet, Rigoberto Lopez, shot Somoza four times. U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower flew in several American physicians, but Somoza still died.⁸⁸

The assassination did not kill the dynasty. With the death of his father, Luis Somoza automatically seized the presidency, while his brother Anastasio Somoza Garcia II used the National Guard to assure that any political opponents stayed out of the way.⁸⁹ Luis promoted such programs as public housing and education, social security, and agrarian reforms.⁹⁰ The U.S. under John F. Kennedy and his Alliance for Progress sent more aid to Nicaragua. The Alliance, however, ended up hurting Nicaraguan citizens, because the government put the money into projects which benefitted the oligarchy. Cotton fields replaced grain fields, and the Nicaraguans began to "lose their capacity to feed themselves."⁹¹ The situation grew worse, and by 1967 a new guerilla organization, the National Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN or Sandinistas) began operations in revolt against the

government. In 1961, the group had adopted the name of the country's most famous nationalist hero, and their actions eventually led to the collapse of the Somoza dynasty in 1979.⁹²

Following his brother's death in 1967, Anastasio Somoza Garcia II became the third, and last Somoza to rule Nicaragua. He differed from his brother in that he relied heavily on military power to protect his rule. In addition, he replaced the skilled technicians, (which Luis placed in charge of the economy) with his friends who lacked economic skills.⁹³

The election of Richard Nixon to the White House, pleased Somoza. Nixon and Somoza both saw the Communist threat in the hemisphere the same way, and neither wanted to see it spread. Nixon undertook a visit to Latin America in 1958, in which the then Vice-President encountered hostile demonstrations protesting his visit. Nicaragua did not greet him with such hostility, and so he "considered Somoza a firm American ally, deserving of all possible support."⁹⁴ Nixon named Turner Shelton as Ambassador to Nicaragua, and he and Somoza soon became friends.⁹⁵ From Nixon, the Somoza dynasty enjoyed a relationship in which Washington granted its fullest support and favor. In April of 1971, the Nixons entertained Somoza at a private dinner, while in 1972 Somoza contributed one-million-dollars to the Nixon campaign.⁹⁶ In his autobiography, Somoza related of Nixon that "I consider myself his friend."⁹⁷

While he enjoyed a "good time" abroad, internally Somoza's support deteriorated. In 1971 Somoza's term came to an end. Of

course he wanted to stay in power, so he reached a political agreement with his former rival, Fernando Aguerro. Under this agreement, a three-man-junta of Aguerro, and two Somoza representatives assumed power.¹⁰⁶ In theory, Somoza no longer held power, but the appearances deceived no one.

This plan suffered attack from two sources. The church issued a statement indicating that it wanted to see a whole new system, and that this new government merely reenforced Somoza's hold on the country.¹⁰⁷ The second attack came from Pedro Joaquin Chamorro. Chamorro, through his newspaper LaPrensa, (the leading opposition newspaper of Somoza in Nicaragua) insisted that Somoza would still rule through the use of the National Guard. Furthermore, Chamorro believed that Somoza simply planned on running again for President in 1974.¹⁰⁸

DEVASTATION AND CORRUPTION - THE 1972 EARTHQUAKE

On December 23, 1972, disaster struck. The city of Managua shook, the result of a devastating earthquake which ravaged the city. Within minutes, the city lay in shambles. The official death toll reached ten-thousand people. An additional twenty thousand suffered injuries, and three-hundred-thousand people of Managua found themselves homeless.¹⁰⁹ Reflecting on the situation Somoza declared the situation "the worst moment in the history of Nicaragua"¹¹⁰

Immediately following the earthquake, the U.S. pledged full support. Nixon phoned Somoza, and informed him that the U.S.

planned to put forth an all-out effort to aid Nicaragua. Medical supplies, bulldozers, and other items arrived at a tonnage rate.¹¹¹ Somoza, of course, thanked the U.S. declaring that Nicaragua would "always be grateful for the aid which came from so many countries, and particularly the United States of America."¹¹²

In the days following the earthquake, chaos and corruption ran rampant. The National Guard, who had the duty of maintaining stability, left in search of their families. On their way, the guardsmen proceeded to loot automobile dealerships, and appliance shops while ignoring pleas for help.¹¹³ Somoza later claimed that only **some** looting took place by a **few** officers, but this was by **no means** the norm (emphasis added).¹¹⁴ The people of Nicaragua saw things differently. In addition, the food sent by the United States remained at the airport away from the hungry and homeless. Not until four days after the earthquake did food begin to be distributed.¹¹⁵

While Managua suffered from the earthquake, Somoza profited handsomely. The United States sent thirty-two-million dollars in government funds, plus over one-hundred-thousand dollars from private sources. Of this, the Nicaraguan Treasury accounted for only sixteen-million-dollars.¹¹⁶ No one doubts where the rest of the money went. In 1974 one estimate placed Somoza's worth at \$400 million.¹¹⁷ Somoza argued that some people "claimed that international relief was exploited for my own personal gain. Nothing could be further from the truth."¹¹⁸

Somoza also profited from other aspects of the rebuilding process. He and his cronies decided where all of the new housing and buildings were built. He invested in demolition, earth moving, heavy equipment, construction materials, real estate, and housing. Somoza had a hand in every aspect of the rebuilding process, and "His greed and his willingness to take advantage of his compatriots' suffering seemed boundless."¹¹⁹

Somoza's actions during the crisis alienated the citizens of Nicaragua. Because he virtually ignored the business class, they became enraged at Somoza to the point where the "'social contract' between the Somozas and the independent businessmen had been broken."¹²⁰ The press highlighted the rage. One report positioned members of Somoza's relief team, hungry, thirsty, and tired around his pool while he ate a three-course-meal, offering them nothing, not even a glass of water.¹²¹

During the crisis, Somoza once again assumed power. In 1974, an election occurred, and of course Somoza won by a landslide. This election did not go without protest, as Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, and twenty-six other Opposition leaders signed a petition declaring that both Somoza, and his opponent (who Somoza hand picked to oppose him) should be disqualified on Constitutional grounds. This motion failed to move the Electoral Tribune which rejected it.¹²² On August 31, 1974, the day before the election, in a sadly humorous move, LaPrensa ran a headline titled: "Candidates who won tomorrow's election."¹²³ Upon election, Somoza revised the Constitution, ensuring his rule

until 1981.

On December 27, 1974, the Sandinistas struck back. They raided a dinner party and kidnapped several individuals of the government. The group demanded one-million-dollars in ransom, the release of Sandinista prisoners, a public broadcast and publishing of a message from the F.S.L.N. to the people of Nicaragua, and a plane to take them to Cuba. Somoza complied with all of these demands.¹²⁴ Somoza had underestimated the strength of the F.S.L.N., and in a fit of rage, declared a state of siege. This raid by the Sandinistas led Somoza to employ sick violations of human rights, (which will be discussed later) in which the National Guard sought to destroy the F.S.L.N. By 1976, Nicaragua displayed an increasingly "impoverished, divided, corrupt. repressed, and angry society."¹²⁵

HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLICY WRONGS -- THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION TAKES OVER

When Carter took office in 1977, he placed human rights at the center of his foreign policy. Raised in the South, Carter saw firsthand the travesty of racism. He drew on this experience in placing human rights on his agenda, declaring that the United States "has been strongest and most effective when morality and a commitment to freedom and democracy have been most clearly emphasized in our foreign policy."¹²⁶ Carter saw human rights as the most effective way to deal with totalitarian ideologies. He criticized past Administrations under which "military dictators were immune from any criticism of their oppressive

actions."¹²⁷

In a speech aimed at oppressive dictators, Carter ordered to "'Give your people freedom to worship, to express themselves, to shape their own destiny, to vote, to live in peace, and to live in freedom.'"¹²⁸ Speaking on behalf of Carter, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher promised concentrated attention to the "violations of integrity . . . officially sanctioned murders, tortures, and detentions without trial."¹²⁹ Carter wanted a tough human rights policy.

Somoza exhibited all of the ugly traits which Carter pledged to work against. In June of 1976, hearings took place before the House of Representatives, Subcommittee on International Organizations. The issue at hand -- human rights abuses. Nicaragua failed miserably. An exiled Nicaraguan historian, Edelberto Torres, reported several abuses by Somoza. These included: rapes of women, castrations of men, application of electric prods, karate chops to the stomach, and when the victim "vomits blood they force him to clean the floor with his tongue," mechanical extraction of the nails one by one, and finally, being thrown from a helicopter.¹³⁰ The House Report also included testimony that political prisoners experienced "innovative" tortures, such as electric shocks, fractured eardrums, pulled teeth, being hung from the testicles, having acid poured on them, and being forced to stand for nine days.¹³¹ These tortures awaited political prisoners, and by 1976, the Somoza regime desperately needed reform.

During the Carter Years (1977-1980) Nicaragua did not represent the only event in foreign policy. In fact several other situations took precedent in foreign policy. Carter and the Soviets held negotiations to consider the second Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II), deemed crucial for arms reduction in the Cold War. In addition the United States talked with the People's Republic of China in order to restore formal diplomatic relations with that country, and to break ties with Nationalist China. Carter also conducted the Middle East Peace Talks between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin at Camp David, which provided the framework for "peace" in the Middle East. In Africa, the Cubans became involved in the Horn of Africa, and conflicts in Southern Rhodesia escalated. The Soviets invaded Afghanistan, and the Iranian conflict erupted into a revolution. Most important to Carter personally, the United States conducted talks with Panama in order to transfer the rights of the canal to that country. In short, the Presidency of Jimmy Carter witnessed several crucial events in terms of foreign policy.

The Carter Administration had little time for Nicaragua at the beginning of its term. The early U.S. approach to Nicaragua consisted of general policies, formulated for foreign policy in general, and then applied to Nicaragua for specific circumstances.¹³² Concerning Latin American Policy, three of Carter's themes affected Nicaragua. First, Carter's commitment to new canal treaties with Panama meant making concerns of small

Central American countries U.S. concerns. Carter did not want the region to erupt, thus jeopardizing the treaties. Second, Carter adamantly opposed overthrowing, or for that matter interfering at all, with any established government. Finally, a third theme provided for the protection of human rights.¹³³ These last two themes, non-interference, and human rights, eventually clashed, as the Somoza regime grew increasingly brutal. Obvious contradictions exist in forcing a regime to abide by human rights, while not interfering in the country. For Carter, however, the beginning of his term saw a relatively stable Nicaragua, and thus this conflict did not yet show. On January 10, 1978, Carter and the U.S. saw the Nicaraguan situation explode.

THE CHAMORRO ASSASSINATION - NICARAGUA TAKES CENTER STAGE

Lake points out that the assassination of Chamorro demanded the attention of the seventh floor of the State Department, or rather, "the Seventh Floor, for this is where the power resides."¹³⁴ While some people claim that Somoza knew nothing about the assassination, evidence that he indeed knew exists. Just as his father did after the assassination of Sandino, Somoza claimed no knowledge of the plot, and he even produced "suspects."

The rivalry between the Chamorros and the Somozas dated back to the late nineteenth century. As mentioned earlier, Pedro Joaquin's grandfather defeated Somoza's great uncle for the

rights of Presidency. In 1926, Chamorro's father founded LaPrensa, for the express reason of publishing opposition against the elder Somoza.

Pedro Joaquin, and Anastasio Somoza II, knew each other from grammar school. The two engaged in many fights stemming from Pedro Joaquin's criticism of Somoza's father, but Somoza claims that "Chamorro never bested me. Psychologically, I think, the results . . . stayed with him all of his life."¹³⁵ Whether or not Somoza never lost remains to be seen. The conflict nevertheless continued into adulthood.

Chamorro continued the opposition that his father started, and often found himself in trouble with the government. In 1954, the elder Somoza jailed Chamorro for rebelling against the government. Chamorro found himself banished from Managua for forty months in 1956 for publishing photos of the assassination of the elder Somoza. Chamorro led a rebellion in 1959 against the National Guard which resulted once again in his jailing.¹³⁶ During the earthquake crisis, LaPrensa exposed the corruption of the Somoza regime, and in 1977 the paper's sympathetic coverage of the Sandinistas led to censorship, and a ban on Chamorro leaving the country. Although he found many enemies within the government, Chamorro seemed too prominent to kill.

Somoza hated Chamorro. By 1977, Chamorro resembled "an encyclopedia of Somoza's sins."¹³⁷ Somoza complained that Chamorro misrepresented facts and distorted truths to suit his fancy, and furthermore that he printed lies.¹³⁸ Norman Wolfson

who Somoza employed for public relations, notes that "Somoza didn't like Chamorro. Anyone who was called names and insulted . . . everyday of the week and still liked the man would be a freak."¹³⁹

Everyone demanded that Chamorro's killers be brought to justice. Somoza claims his initial reaction centered on the question: "Who could have committed this murder? I knew one thing for certain: No one connected with me or my administration had been involved."¹⁴⁰ Everyone, of course suspected Somoza, but he was shocked that people's "first inclination was that, through some means, I was involved in the death of Chamorro."¹⁴¹

Only one day after the murder, Somoza announced the arrests of four suspects. Luis Pallais, a cousin of Somoza, informed him that a reporter knew the identity of the assassin. The reporter told Pallais that a man, Silvio Pena, approached him with the news that he planned on killing Chamorro.¹⁴²

Several problems with this story implicate rather than vindicate Somoza. First of all, the reporter whom Pena told this story worked for Novedades, the Somoza owned newspaper. Why would Somoza not have been told of this plan to kill Chamorro? Somoza claims that he always worried "about his [Chamorro's] safety that I recall thinking this man should have security protection."¹⁴³ Either Somoza knew about the assassination, or he possessed incredible investigational skills. The latter assumption proves suspect when Wolfson recalls that he was "not impressed that within hours after the . . . murder, suspects were

arrested and [had] confessed."¹⁴⁴ Chamorro's widow, Violetta, told the New York Times, that "The Government claims that the case has been solved, but I hold Somoza responsible because no one does anything without permission from above."¹⁴⁵

According to Somoza, Chamorro's exposes of a blood bank operated by Pena led to his death. LaPrensa reported that the Plasmaferisis blood bank bought the blood of impoverished Nicaraguans for \$5.25 a pint, and sold it abroad for enormous profits.¹⁴⁶ Somoza states that "In reality what killed Chamorro was his extreme attack on Dr. Ramos [owner of Plasmaferisis]. . . ."¹⁴⁷ Once again, however, Somoza implicates himself. In a 1977 interview, Chamorro told the New York Times, that Somoza "definitely has interests in that company" [Plasmaferisis].¹⁴⁸ Any possible documentation of this claim went up in smoke when the building burned down. The Government blamed the fire on "communist gangs," but witnesses said that it appeared to start inside the building, and not as a result of protestors' fire bombs.¹⁴⁹

Somoza made the suspects testify on television and on radio to distance them from the government. Interestingly, Pena's attorney and brother, Renaldo Pena Rivas, claimed that the confessions resulted from torture. He also maintained that a witness who could prove Pena's innocence, had been silenced by death threats.¹⁵⁰

In his memoirs, Robert Pastor side-steps the assassination of Chamorro. He does not express his opinion explicitly. Too

much evidence against Somoza exists, however, to eradicate him completely from knowledge of the assassination. The assassination led to a nationwide strike in Nicaragua, a virtual civil war, and finally, the resignation of Somoza. Chamorro's assassination also caused a watershed for American foreign policy. Carter was forced to examine the problems of Nicaragua personally.

POLICY CLASHES - HUMAN RIGHTS VS. THE COLD WAR

Prior to Chamorro's death, contradictions in Carter's Foreign Policy began to show. As mentioned earlier, hearings held in 1976 on human rights abuses demonstrated the atrocities committed by Somoza and the National Guard. The conclusion of the hearings clarified that "a change in U.S. policy toward that regime [Somoza] is crucial to the success of democratic forces in Nicaragua."¹⁵¹ In early 1978, that change did not occur.

Following the 1976 hearings, the human rights organization Amnesty International, blasted Nicaraguan abuses in August of 1976. The report cited extensive torture, executions, political imprisonment, and other violations of the National Guard, including the disappearance of over 300 peasants. One assumes that this report, coupled with the 1976 hearings, might result in strict regulations toward Nicaragua. The opposite happened. In September, the State Department agreed to a \$2.5 million arms credit agreement, and approved of \$15.1 million in economic aid for 1978. The Nicaraguan opposition quickly pointed out that

Somoza in the past decade received twenty-million-dollars in military aid - the highest per capita allotment in the area.¹⁵² These figures together with the fact that the U.S. still trained the Nicaraguan National Guard, which committed these abuses, showed the hypocrisy of Carter's policy.

By January of 1978, disagreement among Carter's policy makers eventually led to even more inconsistencies. The State Department consists of several divisions of bureaus. Under Carter, the director of the Latin American bureau's Office of Central American Affairs was Wade Matthews, while Patricia Derian headed the human rights bureau. These two bureaus constantly argued over policy towards Nicaragua. The human rights bureau tried to make policy on a country by country basis, while the Latin American bureau looked more at the full range of relations in the Western Hemisphere.

The battle lines divided into two parties: career and non-career officers. To the career officers, those in the human rights bureau saw problems through the idealistic lens of human rights. Career officers wanted a more realistic approach, based on an increase in intervention. The human rights bureau charged that promotion drove the career officers, and pursuing human rights involved friction, angry voices, and interference with routine aid packages which could jeopardize political careers. The system also inherently demanded that all those involved with a certain topic be allowed to see any document, and offer any objections where their interests conflict.¹⁵³

Adding to the gridlock, two agencies exist in policy making, the State Department and the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC advises the President on national security matters. In addition the NSC must coordinate policy, do long-term planning, and ensure the implementation of the President's policies. Under Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski held the position of National Security Advisor. Robert Pastor served under him. The Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, also employed help, and this task went to Under Secretary Warren Christopher. As if the system did not inherently cause enough competition, the personalities of Vance and Brzezinski conflicted. Brzezinski differed from Vance in that he saw every event in terms of its implications in the Cold War. This difference eventually resulted in numerous policy mishaps.

Following Chamorro's death, Nicaragua experienced a mass strike, as the business class for the first time rose up against Somoza. Midway through the strike, the Sandinistas launched another offensive, and although their effort failed to overthrow Somoza, they nonetheless demonstrated that Somoza's hold wavered. Somoza once again responded by sending out the National Guard. Following Pedro Joaquin's funeral, the citizens began marching in the street, and eventually clashes broke out with the National Guard. The guard responded by firing machine guns into the crowd. A report by a Nicaraguan priest, Miguel D'Escoto, told the State Department that the National Guard continued to carry out "widespread murder, torture, and rape . . ." and that

"peaceful women demonstrators in Managua were beaten with metal chains. . . ." ¹⁵⁴

Once again proof existed of the atrocities of the Somoza regime, and once again Washington responded in a contradictory manner. On May 16, 1978 the Washington Post ran a story headlined: "U.S. Alters Stand On Rights, Frees Aid to Nicaragua." John Goshgo, the Post's Correspondent in Nicaragua, reported that the Carter administration cleared for release twelve-million-dollars, which "had been held up for human rights reasons." Even though reports of atrocities continued to come in about Nicaragua, the administration nevertheless released twelve-million more dollars to a regime it continually chastised for human rights abuses. Augmenting this aid, evidence surfaced that two weeks prior to this release the State Department secretly released \$160,000 in military credits to cover equipment needed by the National Guard for a military hospital. ¹⁵⁵ The administration preached one policy, but followed another.

The May aid release indicated the real motives behind Carter's Foreign Policy. One of the reasons this aid passed, involved other aid to other countries. Congressman Charles Wilson (D-Tex), a pro-Somoza voice in congress, indicated that if the Nicaraguan aid did not go through, he planned on using his influence to sponsor legislation cutting off aid to at least six other countries, including Panama, and most of Africa. Senior officials decided that the Somoza issue "had to take a clear second place to preventing serious damage to our world wide aid

program."¹⁵⁶ To the administration, Nicaragua did not constitute enough of a problem to sacrifice other interests.

During this same time, Somoza increased U.S. fears about communism. In his book Somoza states that he continually told the "State Department . . . the President, the Congress and the American people . . . that the Sandinista movement was communist."¹⁵⁷ He also tried to portray the entire Chamorro family as communist, and thus their association with the Sandinistas proved his allegations.¹⁵⁸ The Sandinistas launched an offensive in October of 1977, and then again in January of 1978, leading many "Cold Warriors" to believe that a Somoza overthrow would lead to a communist replacement. It must be remembered that Carter's National Security Advisor, Brzezinski, saw events in terms of how they affected U.S. - Soviet relations, and this affected policy decisions. The May release demonstrated the inconsistencies of human rights and the Carter administration's actual policies, but more damage occurred one month later.

SENDING THE WRONG SIGNALS - THE CARTER LETTER

At the end of June, 1978, Brzezinski sent Pastor a memorandum informing him that Carter wanted to send a letter to Somoza, encouraging him for improvements in human rights. During a June 19 press conference, Somoza pledged to improve human rights. He promised to allow the Inter-American Human Rights Commission come to investigate Nicaragua. In addition, he

pledged to allow back into the country the Group of Twelve (a group of businessmen exiled for their opposition to Somoza). Somoza also promised to consider Carter's proposal of granting amnesty for political prisoners (Somoza never did any of this).¹⁵⁹ Carter read these promises and wanted to encourage Somoza to follow up on them. Carter informed Brzezinski of his wishes to send a letter, and Brzezinski gave the duty of drafting the letter to Pastor.

Pastor did not like the idea of sending a letter to Somoza. When Pastor protested to Brzezinski, he cut him off, telling him to "Write it. Put your concerns in the memo and clear it with State."¹⁶⁰ Pastor recommended against sending the letter for two reasons. He cited the fact that Somoza did not have a good record of keeping promises, and second, he feared that Somoza would use the letter for his own advantage. Brzezinski ignored these warnings. Lake claims, he "did not want to oppose the State Department on what he saw as a relatively minor matter when he was fighting it on . . . policy in the Horn of Africa,"¹⁶¹ A reference to Cuba's presence in Ethiopia.

Mark Schneider of the Human Rights bureau in the State Department also opposed sending a letter to Somoza. When he found out about the letter, Schneider "went through the roof."¹⁶² Schneider believed that Somoza would publicize the letter in order to improve his personal standing around the world. Both the Latin American, and Human Rights bureaus in the State Department, along with Pastor, the chief NSC expert in the

region, objected to sending the letter, but Brzezinski deleted all warnings to Carter. President Carter did not know that the two bureaus in the State Department with the most knowledge on Nicaragua, and a NSC policy expert, opposed the idea of sending the letter. Brzezinski served his own interests at the expense of Carter's.

This did not end the opposition. Pastor later wrote another memorandum to Brzezinski about the dangers of sending this letter. He warned that Somoza's promises about human rights should not be translated into real actions. He also added that because of the United States's historical relationship with Somoza, any act that even appeared to support him, could antagonize the opposition in Nicaragua.¹⁶³ Once again Brzezinski ignored his memorandum.

In early July, the National Guard shot and killed twenty-six students on a hunger strike to protest the holding of political prisoners. Despite the enormity of the recent violation, on July 21, the U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua, Mauricio Solaun, still delivered the letter to Somoza praising him for his human rights pledges. In the letter, Carter told Somoza that "The steps toward respecting human rights that you are considering are important and heartening signs. . . ." Carter ended the letter by expressing his appreciation of Somoza's promises for "constructive actions."¹⁶⁴

Just as the opponents of the letter had warned, Somoza tried to use the letter for his own personal benefit. In his

autobiography, Somoza proclaims: "I was not interested in a collector's item and, without being able to use the letter publicly, that's what it was."¹⁶⁵ Somoza proceeded to arrange a meeting with his critic, Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez, and revealed to him the contents of the letter. This proved to be a crucial blunder and caused great embarrassment for Carter who considered Perez as one of his best personal friends. In February, Carter had pledged to work closely with Perez on the issue of human rights in Nicaragua. Now Perez found out from Somoza, the greatest abuser of human rights in Latin America, that Carter had sent him a letter encouraging him for human rights. Carter did not receive the warnings from his aides because Brzezinski deleted them from all of the memorandums. This did not bode well for Perez's trust of Carter.¹⁶⁶

Carter's problem did not end with Perez. A State Department Official leaked the contents of the letter to the press. On August 1, the Post reported that "Carter Letter to Somoza Stirs Human-Rights Row." More than ever the rift in the State Department turned into public knowledge. The article reported that the letter caused deep concern within the State Department, because Carter sent it at a time when reported increases in abuses of human rights, further implicated Somoza. The article went on to quote unnamed officials who regarded "the timing of Carter's letter as a case of sending Somoza the wrong signal at the wrong time."¹⁶⁷ In addition to the Washington Post, the New York Times also covered the story, with the headline, "Carter

Said To Overrule Aides to Praise Somoza."¹⁶⁸

The leak to the press further embarrassed Carter. People saw his administration embroiled in contradiction, while his foreign policy seemed misguided. Human rights activists quickly pointed out the contradictions of the administration towards Nicaragua. Not only did the letter cause several rifts for Carter, but more importantly for the future, it angered the Sandinistas who still despised the U.S. for its intervention at the turn of the century.

Why was the letter allowed to be sent? By August of 1978, Somoza made it clear that he refused to step down from power until 1981, the next scheduled election. This determination coupled with the increased strength of the Sandinistas, led many in the administration (particularly Brzezinski) to believe that Somoza represented the only acceptable alternative to Sandinistas.

A DYNASTY ENDS - THE SANDINISTAS AND THE FALL OF SOMOZA

In October of 1978, the Organization of American States (OAS) under the supervision of the United States, organized a mediation effort between representatives from the Sandinistas, Somoza, and the OAS. The Sandinista representatives called for Somoza's immediate resignation. Somoza, through his representatives, demanded that he be allowed to finish his term, while the OAS proposed that Somoza resign, and hand power over to a junta that would include members from Somoza's party and the

National Guard.¹⁶⁹ The Sandinistas rejected this mediation, and Somoza's refusal to resign led to the collapse of the talks in January of 1979.

The U.S. obviously controlled the OAS proposals. The Carter administration created this proposal which totally excluded the Sandinistas from any possible interim government. More frightening, however, the Carter administration proposed to leave the National Guard intact, the same guard who time after time, carried out some of the most gross violations of human rights in history. For the Carter administration, the threat of communism began to supersede human rights considerations.

Unfortunately, Nicaraguan citizens continued to suffer. In November of 1978, an OAS group reported that the National Guard continued indiscriminate bombing of civilians, summary and mass executions, as well as other tortures. A woman in Nicaragua related a horrifying story about the killings. The woman recalled low flying planes which started firing at the civilians, and struck her daughter. When the woman looked, she "saw only the heart and intestines of my daughter. She was broken in pieces, destroyed."¹⁷⁰ As the Sandinista offensive against Somoza increased, so too did the atrocities of the National Guard.

Even with another report of violations, the U.S. once again reversed its policy and aided Somoza. In February, the Post reported that the administration planned on cutting off relations with Nicaragua, but instead decided to employ less drastic

measures. Sanctions, basically cutting the staff at the embassy in half, simply resulted in "an ineffective slap on the wrist. . . ." The mild sanction resulted from pressure from Congress, spearheaded again by Charles Wilson, who threatened to hold up the Panama Canal treaties, and cut aid to other countries if Carter broke off relations with Nicaragua.¹⁷¹ The Carter administration was hand-cuffed in Nicaragua because of other interests.

William LeoGrande points out that Washington Intelligence sources predicted that the National Guard could defeat any Sandinista offensive. Thus, a Somoza government until 1981 looked more attractive to Washington than any situation involving the Sandinistas.¹⁷² Consistent with this argument, the administration again aided the dictator by reversing an earlier decision, and allowing a \$66 million International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan for Nicaragua without any objection.¹⁷³

The administration's predictions proved incorrect. In June of 1979, the Sandinistas launched a "final offensive" against Somoza. Any chance for a final push of U.S. support exploded on June 20, 1979, as ABC television correspondent Bill Stewart, was forced to his knees by a National Guard soldier, and shot in cold blood through the head. Unbeknownst to the soldier, Stewart's camera crew filmed the entire incident. The U.S. saw on television for the first time what Nicaraguans had endured for over forty years. This video "did more to injure Somoza's reputation around the world, even among conservatives, than

perhaps any single incident in the decades-long family rule."

Finally convinced that Somoza's days were numbered, the U.S. called for an emergency meeting of the OAS. The purpose was to try and impose a moderate solution, and avoid a Sandinista takeover. The U.S. proposed the creation of an interim government, an OAS peacekeeping force, and an international relief effort. The OAS rejected the administration's proposal, calling for Somoza's immediate resignation, a democratic government composed of representatives from the opposition groups, and free elections. The Sandinista junta (which included Velleity Chamorro, the widow of Pedro Joaquin) approved the resolution.¹⁷⁴ On July 17, 1979, Somoza fled, thus ending the forty-five year dynasty.

When Carter assumed office, he had not exactly envisioned a Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Following Somoza's overthrow, Nicaragua lay in shambles. The economy as well as human lives had suffered devastation. Although Carter requested it, Congress balked at sending immediate aid. Congress did not want to see another country fall to communism, as Cuba had in the 1960's. Needing immediate aid, Nicaragua reached an agreement with the Soviet Union, which pledged assistance. Refusing aid on the grounds of communism, congress left Nicaragua with no other choice, but to seek Soviet assistance.

In November of 1980, Ronald Reagan won the U.S. presidency. Upon taking the oath of office, one of Reagan's main priorities included weakening the Sandinista government. He began arming

opposition groups, including a group known as the Contras, to fight against the Sandinistas. Congress eventually prohibited any Contra aid. This presented merely an obstacle for Reagan who employed the CIA covertly to aid the Contras without the knowledge of Congress or the American people. In 1985 Reagan authorized Israel to begin selling U.S. arms to Iran, for the purpose of releasing seven American hostages. This money for the arms, conveniently went to feeding, clothing, and arming the Contras, again without public knowledge. The party ended in 1987, when Oliver North's televised confessions took place during the Iran-Contra Affair hearings. This did not improve U.S.-Nicaraguan relations.

Jimmy Carter's Nicaragua policy was destined to fail. He valued human rights, yet preferred Somoza to the Sandinistas. By the earthquake of 1972, the Nicaraguan people began to really see the corruption of the Somoza dynasty, which increased Sandinista activities. When Carter took office, however, the Sandinista threat still was not perceived as strong enough to cause great concern for the administration.

The watershed came with the assassination of Chamorro. A civil war broke out, and the strength of the Sandinistas began to show. Carter knew about the documented abuses of human rights, yet his administration did not want to see Nicaragua fall to the communists, and thus continued to aid Somoza and the National Guard. Besides the communist threat, congressional pressure to cut off other aid if Nicaraguan aid ended, convinced the

administration to simply continue aiding the dictator. For Carter, other issues seemed more important.

The Carter letter ended any chance for a foreign policy based on human rights. The letter forced the U.S. to take a definite stance toward Nicaragua, and the increasing strength of the Sandinistas made Somoza appear as the only acceptable option. In addition, the letter and its subsequent leak, also confirmed the fact that the Carter administration's foreign policy was contradictory in that human rights only pertained to certain situations.

Bill Stewart's murder finally convinced Washington that Somoza had to go. Unfortunately, thousands of Nicaraguans had died, but it took the death of one American newsman to silence even the pro-Somoza forces in Congress. Yet during the mediation talks, the Carter administration pushed for a government to include the National Guard, the perpetrators of forty years of human rights violations. This ultimately demonstrates that the foreign policy of the Carter administration towards Nicaragua was not based on human rights, but rather on preventing a communist government from taking power.

Lessons can be drawn from Nicaragua. First of all, presidents eventually pay when their experts are ignored. In this manner Brzezinski did not serve Carter well. He put his own interests ahead of Carter's, and this led to a major blunder in policy. Second, if the U.S. government plans on forcing a leader out of power, it better know what to replace him with. Carter

did not want to see Somoza in power, but he did not provide any acceptable alternative. When crisis erupted, Carter was stuck with Somoza. Finally, understanding the history of a situation is necessary to understand present conditions. Prior to Carter, the Somoza regime enjoyed forty years of support. Certain members in congress did not want this to end, and threatened to impede passage of legislation deemed more important to Carter if this occurred. Carter underestimated this force.

Maybe the United States is, as Robert Pastor's book suggests, "Condemned to Repetition" in third world countries. Perhaps we will continue to intervene in third-world-countries whenever revolution occurs. Or perhaps someday we will actually allow a country to decide its own fate. After all, the prototype for democracy is the United States, and do not our roots lie in revolution?

Notes

1. Bernard Diederich, Somoza: And The Legacy of U.S. Involvement In Central America (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), 155.
2. New York Times, 11 January 1978, A3.
3. Anthony Lake, Somoza Falling (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), 7.
4. Robert D. Schulzinger, "Patterns in the Mess: The United States and Nicaragua," Diplomatic History the Journal of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations 13 no. 2 (Spring 1989): 256.
5. Several books do a great job of discussing this topic, most notably is Richard Millett's Guardians of the Dynasty.
6. Millett, Guardians, 17.
7. Pastor, Condemned, 18-19.
8. Eduardo Crawley, Dictators Never Die (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1979), 87.
9. Ibid., 21.
10. Millett, Guardians, 20.
11. Andrew C. Kimmens, Nicaragua and the United States (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1987), 8.
12. Millett, Guardians, 21.
13. Ibid., 22.
14. Ibid., 23.
15. Crawley, Dictators, 38.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 25.

18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 40.
20. Ibid., 42.
21. Millett, Guardians, 30.
22. Crawley, Dictators, 44.
23. Millett, Guardians, 35.
24. Ibid.
25. Crawley, Dictators, 46.
26. Ibid., 47.
27. Millett, Guardians, 41-44.
28. Crawley, Dictators, 50.
29. Millett, Guardians, 46.
30. William Kamman, A Search For Stability (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1968), 17.
31. Millett, Guardians, 46.
32. Kamman, Search, 17.
33. Kamman, Search, 60.
34. Crawley, Dictators, 51-52.
35. "Stimson Will Make Nicaragua Inquiry," New York Times, 8 April 1927, 1.
36. Ibid.
37. Kamman, Search, 98.
38. Henry L. Stimson, American Policy In Nicaragua, in Henry L. Stimson's American Policy In Nicaragua the Lasting Legacy (New York: Markus Wiener Publishing Inc.), 30.
39. Ibid., 25.
40. Ibid., 26-27.
41. Kamman, Search, 102.

42. Stimson, American Policy, 30.
43. Kamman, Search, 105.
44. "Nicaragua Split on Retaining Diaz," New York Times, 5 May 1927, 23.
45. Stimson, American Policy, 29.
46. Stimson, American Policy, 32.
47. Ibid., 33.
48. Kamman, Search, 110-112.
49. "Truce In Nicaragua Is Won By Stimson," New York Times, 7 May 1927, 16.
50. Ibid.
51. Stimson, American Policy, 36.
52. "Light On Nicaragua," New York Times, 9 April 1927, 18.
53. Millett, Guardians, 66.
54. Neil Macaulay, The Sandino Affair, (Duke University Press), 86.
55. Crawley, Dictators, 60-61.
56. Ibid.
57. Millett, Guardians, 89.
58. Crawley, Dictators, 65-69.
59. Millett, Guardians, 97.
60. Crawley, Dictators, 74-77.
61. Macaulay, Sandino, 239.
62. Ibid., 242-245.
63. Crawley, Dictators, 82-83.
64. Macaulay, Sandino, 250-252.
65. This was untrue as U.S. Ambassador Arthur Bliss Lane told Somoza not to do anything concerning Sandino without consulting him first. Somoza never did this prior to the plan.

66. Ibid., 253-256.
67. Thomas Walker, ed., Nicaragua in Revolution (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 160.
68. Ibid., 25-26.
69. "Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Latin American Affairs Edward Wilson to Arthur Bliss Lane, American Minister in Nicaragua, 10/16/1935," Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. iv, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1935), 884. From hereafter, Foreign Relations of the United States shall be referred to simply as FRUS.
70. Lane to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, 4/16/35, FRUS, vol. iv., 1935, 849.
71. Lane to Hull, 5/14/35, FRUS, vol., iv, 1935, 855-861.
72. Lane to Hull, 6/18/35, FRUS, vol. iv, 1935, 863-864.
73. Lane to Hull, 7/16/35, FRUS, vol. iv, 1935, 866.
74. Ibid.
75. Lane to Hull, 9/10/35, FRUS, vol. iv, 1935, 871.
76. Lane to Hull, 9/26/35, FRUS, vol. iv, 1935, 872.
77. Willard Beaulac, Assistant Chief of Latin American Affairs, to Hull, 10/1/35, FRUS, vol. iv, 1935, 877.
78. Lane to Hull, 2/11/36, FRUS, vol. v, 1936, 815.
79. Ibid., 816.
80. Sacasa to Stimson, 5/29/36, FRUS, vol. v, 1936, 825-826.
81. Ibid.
82. American Minister Boaz Long to Hull, 5/31/36, FRUS, vol. v, 1936, 828.
83. Long to Hull, FRUS, June 9, 1936, 840.
84. Long to Hull, FRUS, December 14, 1936, 847.
85. Ibid., 183.
86. Ibid.

87. Walter LaFeber, Inevitable Revolutions (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1984), 160.
88. Millett, Guardians, 214.
89. Walker, Land of Sandino, 29.
90. Ibid.
91. LaFeber, Inevitable Revolutions, 163.
92. Ibid.
93. Walker, Land of Sandino, 30.
94. Millett, Guardians, 235.
95. Pastor, Condemned, 36.
96. Diederich, Somoza, 89.
97. Anastasio Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed (Boston: Western Islands, 1980), 14.
106. Pastor, Condemned, 36.
107. Diederich, Somoza, 90.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. Somoza 5.
111. Diederich, Somoza, 95.
112. Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed, 6.
113. Diederich, Somoza, 94.
114. Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed, 12.

115. Diederich, Somoza, 96.
116. Ibid., 100.
117. Booth, John, The End and the Beginning (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 81.
118. Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed, 6.
119. Booth, The End, 81.
120. Crawley, Eduardo, Dictators Never Die (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1979), 150.
121. Diederich, Somoza, 97.
122. Crawley, Dictators, 151.
123. Diederich, Somoza, 102.
124. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights In Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador: Implications For U.S. Policy, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., 7 and 8 June 1976, 154. After here, this shall be cited as Congress, Human Rights, June, 1976.
125. Booth, The End, 95.
126. Carter, Jimmy, Keeping the Faith, 142.
127. Ibid.
128. The Public Papers of Jimmy Carter (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 986.
129. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance, Human Rights, 95th Cong., 1st Sess., 4 and 7 March 1977, 63. Cited from herein as Congress, Human Rights, March 1977.
130. Congress, Human Rights, June 1976, 133.
131. Ibid., 171.
132. Pastor, Condemned, 49
133. Ibid., 49-50.
134. Lake, Somoza, 1.

135. Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed, 110-111.
136. Diederich, Somoza, 154.
137. Ibid., 153.
138. Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed, 109.
139. Norman Wolfson, "Selling Somoza, The Lost Cause of a PR Man," National Review, 20 July, 1979, 912.
140. Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed, 112.
141. Ibid., 116.
142. Ibid., 113.
143. Ibid., 112.
144. Wolfson, "Selling Somoza," 913.
145. Alan Riding, "Cover Up Charged as Nicaragua Inquiry Into Slaying Lags," New York Times, 14 February, 1978, 2.
146. Diederich, Somoza, 156.
147. Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed, 117.
148. Charles W. Flyn and Robert E. Wilson, "An Interview with Somoza's Foe, Now Dead," New York Times, 13 January 1978, 23.
149. Riding, "Cover Up," 2.
150. Diederich, Somoza, 157.
151. U.S. Congress, Human Rights, 8,9 June 1976, 81.
152. Diederich, Somoza, ????.
153. Lake, Somoza Falling, 27.
154. John Goshgo, "Nicaraguan Human Rights Situation Caught in a Crossfire," Washington Post, 17 February 1978, 22.
155. John Goshgo, "U.S. Alters Stand on Rights, Frees Aid to Nicaragua," Washington Post, 16 May 1978, 1.
156. Lake, Somoza Falling, 83.
157. Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed, 285.

158. The Chamorros cannot be considered communists. They wanted the end of Somoza's rule, and supported any effort to reach that end, including the Sandinistas. This does not make them communists.

159. Pastor, Condemned, 66.

160. Ibid., 67.

161. Lake, Somoza Falling, 85-86.

162. Ibid., 85.

163. Ibid., 88.

164. The Carter Letter is reprinted in Somoza's book Nicaragua Betrayed, on pages 144-145.

165. Somoza, Nicaragua Betrayed, 137-138.

166. Pastor, Condemned, 62-63.

167. John Goshgo, "Carter Letter to Somoza Stirs Human Rights Row," Washington Post, 1 August 1978, 1.

168. "Carter Said to Overrule Aides to Praise Somoza," New York Times, 1 August 1978, 1.

169. Booth, The End, 166.

170. Karen DeYoung, "OAS Rights Group Finds 'Grave' Violations by Nicaragua," Washington Post, 18 November 1978, 1.

171. John Goshgo, "Administration Softens Stance On Somoza Rule," Washington Post, 1 February 1979, 1.

172. William LeoGrande, "The Revolution in Nicaragua: Another Cuba?" Foreign Affairs, Fall 1979, 35.

173. Walker, Land of Sandino, 38.

174. John L. More, ed., "End of Somoza Rule in Nicaragua," Historic Documents of 1979.

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