

Bilateral



AP Photo

Ousted from power in Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza holds a press conference in July at his Miami Beach residence. His son Julio Somoza (standing) listens in.

mander of the National Guard, Anastasio had the power to prevent his brother from continuing to implement his policies of democratization and modernization. Thus as a compromise between the two, from 1963 to 1967 two puppet presidents succeeded one another as "moderate liberal reformers" and administrators of the policies and programs of Luis Somoza. Dr. Rene Schick Gutierrez was elected president in 1963 and his vice-president, Lorenzo Guerrero, succeeded Schick upon his death in 1966. Luis died unexpectedly of a heart attack in 1967 and "Tachito" — after a thoroughly rigged election — ascended to the presidency. Commenting on his electoral victory, two *Los Angeles Times* columnists prophetically referred to "Tachito" Somoza as "the worst of the dynasty".

Somoza's tendency to use police brutality and military power to quell opposition to his government did not win him much popularity. This, coupled with his exploitation for personal profit of the 1972 earthquake that struck Managua by selling international relief supplies and land to the dispossessed, did little to endear him to the people.

National Guard

The five-star-general *cum* president began to encounter violent opposition to his government and his

dictatorial ways quite early in the 1970s. The powerful 12,000-man Nicaraguan National Guard (a combination army and national police force) was at the heart of the crisis. Commanded by both "Tachito" and his half-brother Colonel José Somoza, the Guardsmen were one of the most modern, best-trained military forces in all of Latin America. On a *per capita* basis, the numbers of Nicaraguan recruits the U.S. trained in the Canal Zone and at Rio Hato were greater than those of any other military or police force in the Western Hemisphere.

Reports of human rights violations by the Guardsmen emerged almost from the first day "Tachito" took office. Any declared opposition to the regime was threatened by the National Guard. The conclusions of the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights were definitive about the commission's findings on the use of torture and execution by the Guardsmen. Notwithstanding the toned-down nature of its resolution, the United Nations General Assembly condemned human rights violations in Nicaragua in December 1978, even though the U.S. abstained on the resolution. The Nicaraguan Permanent Commission on Human Rights constantly reported the disappearance of people. Many of the most obvious violations of human rights were conveyed by the

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