

ARTICLE APPEARED IN NEW REPUBLIC  
ON PAGE 18 5 August 1985

How the CIA masterminds the Nicaraguan

## CONFESSIONS OF A 'CONTRA'

BY EDGAR CHAMORRO WITH JEFFERSON MORLEY

*Miami*

ON DECEMBER 7, 1982, I met with five Nicaraguans and two Americans in an executive suite at the Four Ambassadors Hotel in downtown Miami to rehearse for a press conference we would be holding the next day. The Nicaraguans were prominent (and in my case not so prominent) opponents of the Somoza and Sandinista regimes who were to be introduced as directors of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), that is, the *contras*. The Americans were CIA agents. The one in charge, known to us as Tony Feldman, was accompanied by Thomas Castillo, one of his several assistants. They wanted to make sure we said the right things in our first joint public appearance.

Feldman introduced two lawyers from Washington who briefed us on the Neutrality Act, the American law prohibiting private citizens from waging war on another country

Edgar Chamorro served as a director of the anti-Sandinista rebel organization, the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, from 1982 to 1984. He now lives in Key Biscayne, Florida.

from U.S. territory. Feldman was worried we were going to tell the press that we were trying to overthrow the Sandinistas, which, of course, is exactly what we wanted to do. He emphasized that we should say instead that we were trying to "create conditions for democracy." After the briefing we asked each other the questions we were likely to face in the morning.

"Where have you been getting money?" someone asked.

"Say your sources want to remain confidential," Feldman advised—a truthful and very clever answer.

"Have you had any contact with U.S. government officials?"

The CIA men agreed there was no way to finesse this one. We simply had to lie and say, "No." We practiced like this for three hours.

The press conference, held in Fort Lauderdale to avoid the risk of demonstrations in Miami, was all very solemn and pompous. We filed into the Hilton Conference Center one at a time, as if we were a government taking power;

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