



My Car in Managua

Forrest D. Colburn

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Histories of revolutions often focus on military, political, or economic upheavals but sometimes neglect to connect these larger events to the daily lives of "ordinary" people. Yet the peoples' perception that "things are worse than before" can topple revolutionary governments, as shown by the recent defeat of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua and the governments of Eastern Europe. Providing the kind of prosaic, revealing details that more formal histories have excluded, *My Car in Managua* offers an objective, often humorous description of the great difficulties and occasional pleasures of life in Nicaragua during the Sandinista revolution.

During a year's work (1985-1986) at the Instituto Centroamericano de Administración de Empresas (INCAE), Forrest Colburn purchased a dilapidated car—and with it an introduction to everyday life in Nicaragua. His discoveries of the length of time required to register the car (approximately six weeks), the impossibility of finding spare parts (except when U.S. dollars were applied to the search), and the fact that "anyone getting into a car in Managua can be charged a small fee [for car watching] by anyone else" all suggest the difficulties most Nicaraguans faced living in a devastated economy.

Drawing on experiences from visits throughout the revolutionary period (1979-1989), Colburn also sheds light on how the Revolution affected social customs and language, gender roles and family relationships, equality and authority, the availability of goods and services, the status of ethnic minorities, and governmental and other institutions. Illustrations by Nicaragua's celebrated political cartoonist Róger Sánchez Flores enliven the lucid text.

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