

# BOOKS

## *Reporter's Sketchbook: Cocktails at Somoza*

COCKTAILS AT SOMOZA'S: A Reporter's Sketchbook of Events in Revolutionary Nicaragua. By Richard Elman. Applewood Books, 1981 \$10.95

This 195-page pot pourri of fragments is the result of three trips by a newsman to Nicaragua. There is no indication that Elman is trying to be profound about what happened, nor does he make any such pretense.

What he does do is set out a group of vignettes—some a few paragraphs, some a few pages—that add up to a valid journalist's diary of what he did and saw.

In the title piece, Elman quotes Somoza as saying "You don't know what I have to put up with sometimes. It makes my blood boil!" Elman's date answers: "I don't think I would like to be around when that happens." Indeed, throughout, the picture of Somoza emerges as a forceful, energetic man.

A brief note from Ernesto

Cardenal: "God may like a dictator who hails from Nicaragua, but He doesn't want him to be the dictator of Nicaragua." There is a glossary of terms, scraps of dialogue ("Nicaragua is not in this hotel, Nicaragua is outside") and several short chapters highlighting separate facets of scene that Elman encountered in Managua.

At one point, Elman tells of hitching a ride on the back of a pickup truck, only to find that a rotting corpse creates a stench he simply cannot stand. The driver stops, comes back to explain that the body is that of a family friend, on its way to a "reburial". The driver suggests he move to the far side of the truck and hang his head over the edge to catch the coming breeze and beat the stench. Elman finally gives up on the pickup, but does know that the revolution is not in the hotel.