

Central America Becomes Central

Nations Re-emerging Under Fire.

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Central America is rapidly emerging as a world region on a geopolitical par with the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Situated between the two continental Americas, this area is the increasing focus of competing superpowers, and contending political and economic systems. It is also the stage for contesting armed national groups and their international advisors. Central America's location is commonly described using the international security terminology of shipping lane *chokepoints*, air cover *umbrellas*, foreign *beach heads*, *centers* and *bases*. And geopolitical metaphors are commonplace as in *Vietnam* and *Afghanistan*.

What Central America is or should be depends on which of two accepted geopolitical views you may favor. The traditional two-sided geopolitical views represented by either left-wing political analysis or right-wing political analysis are always in contention. Often left out is a third-side that is at the core of Central America's history. The third-side is more naturally rooted in the geography and people of the region — the position occupied by Central America's original nations.

Peripheral Views of Central America

Typical two-side East-West perspectives on the seven Central American countries (five if you are from one of the original republics) see them as being ruled by left-wing or right-wing dictatorships or oligarchies. Policy analysts describe Central American peoples as prisoners of poverty or exploitation. They portray everyone as identifying as a member of one of the states (i.e. *Guatemalan* or *Costa Rican*). They see Central America's peoples in terms of class (workers or campesinos), political system (communism or democracy), and economic system (socialism or capitalism). Each view establishes a constituency, defines a condition, and promotes a solution: Either bring the underclass up or the upperclass down.

Overlooked is the glaring fact that not everyone in Central America identifies as being a citizen within the recognized states. Many peoples have not consented to such an arrangement (the myth of national homogeneity within artificial and imposed boundaries). Nor do they accept the European-derived interpretations and solutions for their very real problems (the myth that Eurocentric analysis produces universal explanation).

For example, the 1983 Kissinger Commission Report, the cornerstone of the United States' Central American policy and Caribbean Basin initiative, reduces different peoples and places to a cartographic cartoon. The report declares that everyone within the *dash-dot-dash* boundaries claimed by Guatemala is Guatemalan with similar problems of poverty — the source of instability. The source of instability is resolvable, according to the report, through economic

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development.

Not included in the Kissinger Report is mention much less analysis of Maya peoples (more than one-half of Guatemala's claimed population and territory), who are being invaded and occupied under the guise of economic development. No mention is made of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama nations which have fielded the Americas' only Indian army and who are fighting Central America's largest army over Indian control of one-third of Nicaragua's claimed territory. The report ignores the Kuna who have their own autonomous nation run by the Kunas' own political, economic and social systems. These are different and distinct from those of Panama, and of the East or West, North or South. Not only does the Kissinger Report overlook the Maya, Miskito, or Kuna, it only refers indirectly to indigenous peoples by mentioning *Indians* three times.

I'm sure that the Kissinger one-sided interpretation is counterbalanced by whatever Kissinger-equivalent study on Central America the Soviet Union or Cuba produced.

The Other Side of the Frontier

Another view to the geopolitics of Central America is from the other side of the frontier. Alongside and underneath the seven imposed states are some 50 nations with a combined population of more than 6,000,000 (23 percent of the states' claimed population). Their countries have a combined area of more than 80,000 square miles (207,120 square kilometers), or 40 percent of the states' claimed territory. The more than 5,000,000 people in the 22 Maya nations (inside Guatemala) form a larger

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population than any Central American state. This includes Guatemala with its 3.6 million Ladino population. Wan Tashbaia, the Miskito Nation, has three times the area of El Salvador. Guatemala, Mexico and Belize claim but can only militarily occupy the Maya nations. This is the same situation for El Salvador and Honduras and the Pipil Nation; and Nicaragua and Honduras and the Sumo and Miskito nations.

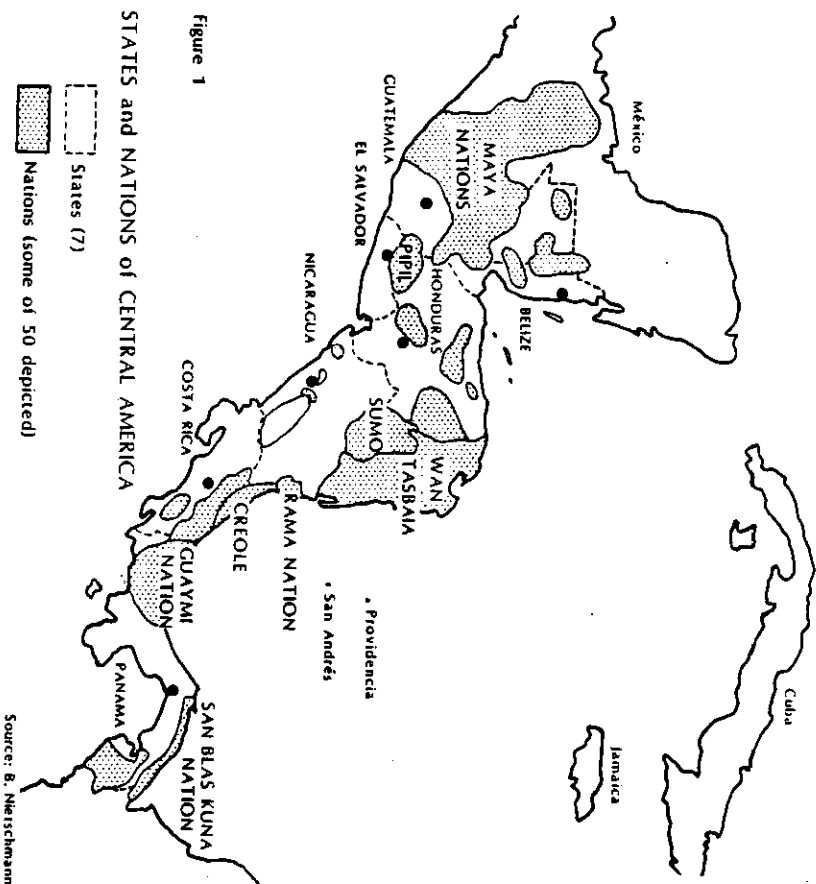
Look at Central America in terms of where states actually have control by consent, rather than by imposed military occupation, or paper—only cartographic delusions. Viewed this way we see several significant geopolitical realities normally hidden by two—side Eurocentric analysis.

Mexico and Guatemala mostly border the Maya nations, not each other.

The Guaymi Nation separates Costa Rica and Panama.

Nicaragua has only corridor access to the Caribbean along the Rio Escondido to Bluefields. The nations of Miskito, Sumo, Rama historically claim, use and defend the Caribbean coastal waters. This area includes a shipping lane *chokepoint* and Colombia's maritime claims around San Andrés and Providencia islands. Panama controls but a small piece of its claimed Caribbean coastline (Figure 1).

Central America contains seven states and 50 nations, but no *nation—states*. Each nation is a community of people bound together by common origins, history, institutions, identity, consensus, and territory. Nations exist and persist by internal and



neighbor-nation recognition. States are centralized political systems which seek to enforce one set of laws at the exclusion of others. They impose institutions, sometimes language and religion, within claimed boundaries regardless of the existence of distinct and unconsenting original nations.

States come into being largely through external recognition by other states, often geographically but not politically distant. A *nation-state* is a term for any nation (geographically-bounded territories of common people) that forms its own internationally recognized state. None exist in Central America, and of the world's 168 states, less than 10 percent are *nation-states*.

Thus there are two major types of internal conflict in Central America. The first is between groups representing different political and economic systems and superpower interests who by vote or gun vie for control of a state. The second type of conflict stems from state invasion and attempted takeover of one or more nations.

Each of the Central American states is a centralized political military entity that asserts sovereignty over many unconsenting nations. This is universally condoned by other nation-occupying states and limited only by competing claims of sovereignty by adjacent states. *Smokeless* invasion, occupation and annexation are done by unilaterally asserting that members of unconsenting nations really are or want to be citizens of the expansionist state. States disguise the forced incorporation of nations' lands and resources as *national integration, economic development, and national*

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consolidation. State governments call this *nation-building* which is really *state-building* and *nation destroying*.

States attack nations by invading and occupying their lands. They seize nations' lands, take their resources and exploit their people as cheap labor. States impose their system of government and cripple national self-government, prohibit native social and economic systems, and regularly violate human rights. When nations resist state invasions, their people are typically referred to as *bandits, dissidents, separatists, and extremists*. If states are particularly threatened by nations resisting they use terms like *rebels, communists, mercenaries, or terrorists* to camouflage the state-nation conflict. What may actually exist as an international war is characterized as a *domestic, internal matter, requiring police action*. In Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua this has meant genocidal attacks on a large scale. Entire communities and peoples of resisting nations become targets.

Most of Central America's states use their armies, security forces and emergency laws to defend the state. These instruments of state power have become weapons *against* their claimed citizens, not neighboring states. State army and security forces are used 1) to prevent or contest groups from overthrowing the state government (left- or right-wing rebels depending on which wing is in power); and 2) to invade or occupy nations on the periphery of state control.

Members of nations view themselves as belonging to a people with a distinct territory. They may be the present or recent majority depending on the extent of annexation by expansionist state populations and

transnationals. Contrary to assertions by academics, state governments and multi-state organizations, members of these historically and geographically delimited nations do not identify with or accept being defined by the apartheid terminology of states. Terms like *tribes*, *minorities*, *ethnic groups*, *ethnic minorities*, *peasants*, or *a segment of the Nicaraguan population of Miskito origin* are simply wrong. This terminology seeks merely to incorporate nations into states, to simplify academic explanation and to justify state occupation. It does not describe nations.

The purpose of defining a nation as a tribe, ethnic group, minority or just *campesinos* is to transfer land, resources and labor to the state. States treat unconsenting nations as landless, sub-state populations. Internationally and *domestically*, nations have been given special rights to language and folklore, never to their land and resources and political self-determination. States reserve the right of self-determination to state populations, and deny it to nation populations.

Central American states presume that demands for self-determination were satisfied in the nineteenth century when as colonies they rebelled against Spanish control and formed politically independent territories. But for the original peoples and nations this amounted to no more than an exchange of flags used by the armies that occupied their territories and denied them self-determination. New states meant the transfer of colonialism from Europe to Latin America, from white to brown, from Madrid to Guatemala City.

World War II broke the back of white colonialism. Anti-colonialist revolutions and international support for decolonization led to the creation of new states —

the Third World. The United Nations worked to contain the explosive energy of self-determination within the artificial boundaries of the pre-existing foreign colonies which had been imposed over unconsenting nations. The fatal flaw in decolonization is that the United Nations — the Brotherhood of States — only recognized self-determination for the political offspring of colonialism who would form a government and claim all the territories and peoples within the old colonial cage. This was done in order not to break up "the national unity and territorial integrity of a country" (U.N. Resolution 1514). This is a ridiculous statement! There is no national unity and territorial integrity within either imposed states or colonies.

Worldwide, the winds of self-determination are sweeping aside such self-serving fabrications. Of the world's 50 hot wars, 32 (60 percent) are armed struggles for territorial self-determination by nation peoples. Nations on every continent are ignoring and bypassing state-limited self-determination and are creating their own. Take note of Eritrea, Tigray, Tamil Eelan, Khalistan, Palestine, Kanakia, Kowthoolei, Northern Ireland, and Wan Tashaba. These countries are all advancing their claims to independence despite state suppression.

In Central America the self-determination genie is out of the bottle and cannot be put back in again. Two-side state rules and claims are no longer enough. A third-side has emerged. It does not identify with the upperclass or underclass explanations of why nations should help overthrow one form of state government only to become invaded by its replacement.

Taken from discussions with members of several

nations within the Central American region these comments reflect commonly held views. If they seem far fetched and exaggerated it is likely that you identify as being a citizen of a state. You may see yourself as a subject of France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, or Spain. If these views don't appear so far fetched, you may be from Corsica, Northern Ireland, Puerto Rico, Estonia, Catalunya or another of the world's more than 3000 nations.

The Third Side

Most problems and conflicts have more than just two sides. In Central America, one side is the right-wing military-backed upperclass that may be in power (Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, Honduras), or seeking to take power by force (the Nicaraguan Democratic Force -- FDN). Another side is the left-wing military-backed vanguard class that is either in power (Nicaragua) or seeking to take power by force (the FMLN in El Salvador, the URNG [EGP, FAR, ORPA, PGT] in Guatemala, and a small but growing leftist rebel force in Honduras).

A third side exists which does not seek the revolving door of state oppression in the name of stability, or state oppression in the name of the masses. Instead, the third-side aims to defend and promote autonomous nations with separate and distinct territories, economies, societies and self-rule governments. The Kuna Nation situated within the autonomous Comarca de San Blas already has gained many of these goals since its 1925 revolution against Panama. The revolution ousted Panamanian rule and created the basis for subsequent bilateral agreements between the Panamanian state and the Kuna Nation.

Without some recognized separate and defended territory within a republic, federation, or confederacy, nations in Central America become simply the targets for *side-in-power* profits through the seizure and exploitation of lands and resources. Or they become targets for *side-out-of-power* needs for sanctuary and recruits. Many nations have the potential of becoming an important counterbalance to totalitarian right and left state regimes.

Most nations in Central America are being hit by the opposite sides holding or competing for control of the state. (Figure 2) In the Mayan country, Guatemala's occupation army has bombed and destroyed villages and massacred entire communities. State military commanders forced thousands into internal and external exile. They have imposed counterinsurgency camps called "model villages," and forced Mayan men and boys into *civilian defense patrols* to foster state control. At the same time, leftist guerrilla forces (EGP, FAR, ORPA) invade Maya communities, massacre village people, and use Mexico's border refugee camps as sanctuaries and recruiting centers.

El Salvador's two-side war is a daily part of the Pipil Nation's experience. Both government forces and FMLN guerrillas attack Pipil communities whose third-side position is perceived as actual or tacit support for the other side. The state government's land reform programs became a disguised policy for expropriating Pipil lands and to drive Pipil away from productive farms. Members of state security forces and state-sponsored "national security" groups (ORDEN, UGB, FALANGE, OLC) operate secret death squads ("Los Escuadrones de la Muerte") whose task is to

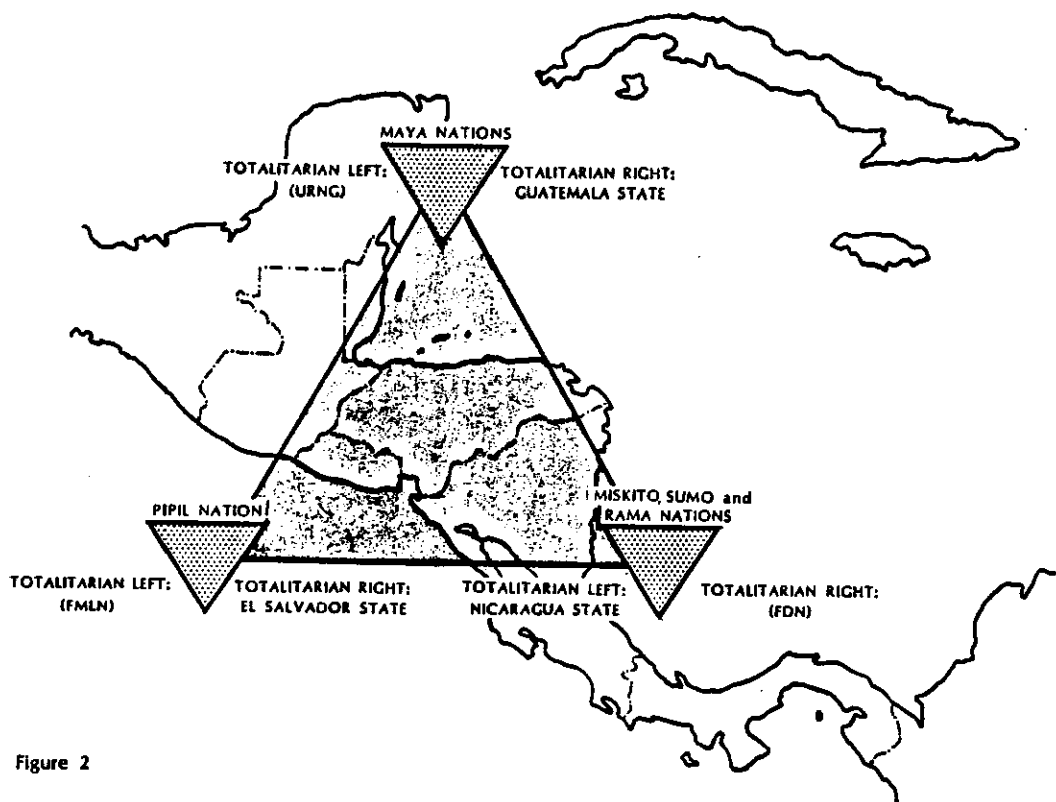


Figure 2

obliterate suspected opposition to the current state government by assassination, murder, massacre, kidnapping, torture, and disappearances. The death squads and the war for control of the state government have produced a body count that is now close to the 50,000 U.S. casualties in the Vietnam war. In El Salvador, many of the "peasant fatalities and disappearances" in reality have been Pipil men, women and children.

Some of the most intense battles between "rebel forces" and "government forces" in El Salvador have occurred in Pipil territory. Battles for the *hearts and minds* of El Salvador's peasants have actually centered on the taking of Pipil land and the massacre of Pipil villagers. As with nations elsewhere in Central America, the Pipil are the target of a two-sided civil war among state members. They have everything to lose from the conflict, but nothing to win from the success of either of the opponents.

The Miskito, Sumo and Rama nations are having an increasingly strong third-side position in the Nicaraguan conflict.

The Nicaraguan Conflict

Although usually portrayed as a two-dimensional *Contras—against—the—Sandinistas* war, the Nicaragua conflict is more like a Spanish-speaking Lebanon made up of many competing groups. The three main factions (*tendencias*) within the ruling Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) have been held together by the threat from the U.S.—supported forces who seek to topple the Sandinista government. Anti—Sandinista

forces referred to by the FSLN—term *Contras*, include the right-wing-led Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), the left-wing-led original Sandinistas (FRS), and the no-wing nationalists who make up the bulk of the fighters. Within the Ladino state territory the Marxist-Leninist *tendencia* within the FSLN took power after 1979, invited support from Cuba and the Soviet Union, and now dominates the Nicaraguan government. As a result, many of the original Sandinistas left the FSLN and Nicaragua and took up arms to rein the revolution they'd achieved by defeating Somoza but lost to the Marxists and their foreign communist advisors. The original Sandinistas organized behind Edda Pastora in the Sandino Revolutionary Front (FRS) and fought the FSLN Sandinistas from 1983 to mid-1986 when the CIA forced Pastora from his command and tried to move his FRS forces into a *Contra* guerrilla unit.

After the Ladino people took to the streets to overthrow the dictator Anastacio Somoza and his National Guard (the FSLN Sandinistas only took over power, they didn't overthrow Somoza, the Ladino people did), members of the regime fled Nicaragua. Former officers in the National Guard and State Security concentrated in Honduras where they formed the "16th of September Legion". With CIA backing in 1982 this largely inactive group of exiles changed to the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force), now known popularly as "the *Contras*", short for "counterrevolutionaries, or those opposed to the Sandinista Revolution. This is now the largest anti-Sandinista force and has received millions of dollars of United States assistance. It represents a potential U.S.-backed new government whose goal is to oust the Cuban- and Soviet-backed Marxist-Leninist Sandinistas. The FDN represented a military option against the FSLN but not a political one. In an effort

to broaden the support base, the United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO) was created in 1985 as a political umbrella for the FDN and other anti-Sandinista groups. The three top UNO leaders — Calero, Cruz and Robelo — remain sharply divided among themselves and over political strategy and goals.

Nicaragua is like a Spanish-speaking Lebanon with its own quicksand Vietnam war against the nations on the other side of the mountains.

To the east of the continental divide, from the interior mountains to the Caribbean coast and sea, the Miskito, Sumo and Rama nations are carrying out their own revolution and defensive war. They are defending their homelands against the invading and occupying forces of the Sandinista government (FSLN). At the same time they are working to push forward an indigenous revolution that seeks to liberate Indian people from colonialism and to secure self-determination. Meanwhile, they openly discuss and plan for the contingency of some day defending against the *Contras* (FDN) (Figure 3).

Defending the Homeland

Each of the three nations has a bounded national territory, a distinct national population, and an armed defense force. Each nation has suffered widespread destruction from the invading and now occupying Sandinista army and security forces. The vast majority of each nation's peoples are now external and internal refugees as a result of the Sandinista invasion.

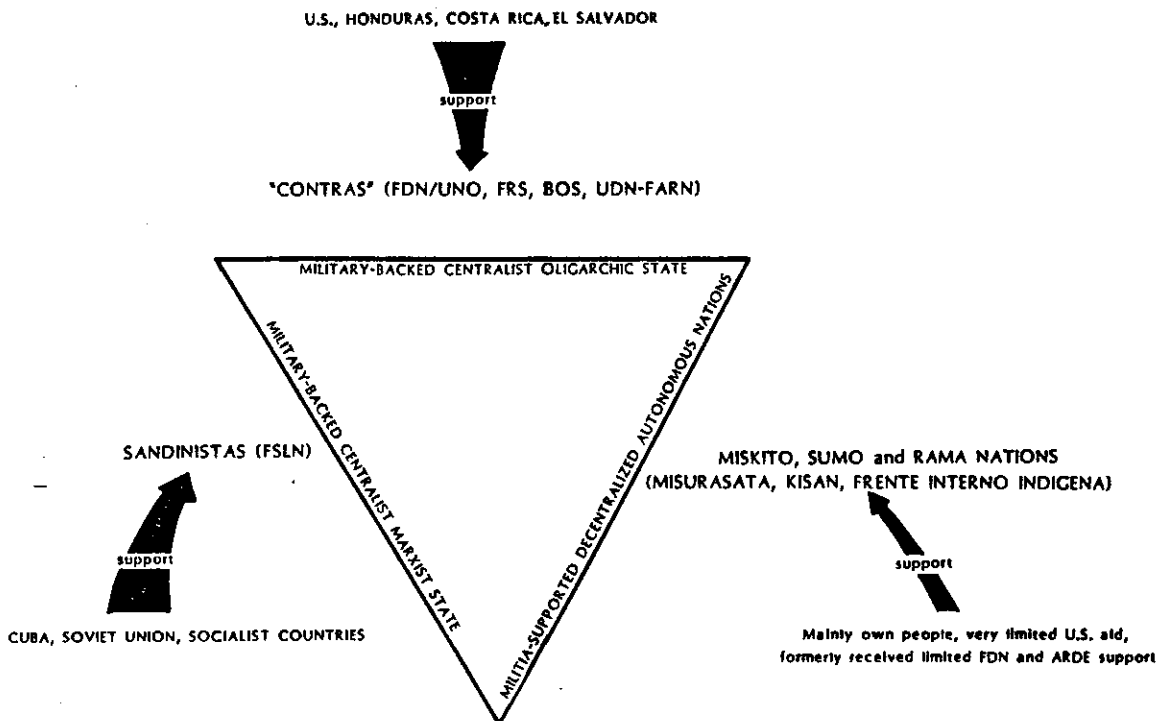


Figure 3

THIRD-SIDE MISKITO, SUMO and RAMA NATIONS vs. FSLN and FDN STATE SIDES

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Largest in area and population, the Miskito Nation has a 650 kilometer (400 mile) coastline from Pearl Lagoon to Cabo Camarón. Wan Tasbaia extends some 200 kilometers (125 miles) westward along the Wangki River. The Miskito Nation has a population of about 140,000. In lands claimed by Nicaragua, some 100,000 Miskito used to live. Now one-third (34,000) have fled to refuge in Miskito territory claimed by Honduras. Thousands more Miskitos are refugees in 11 states from Canada to Venezuela.

Sumo national territory is cut in two by an artificial state boundary imposed on an unconsenting people. All of the Sumo Nation is state-claimed: ten percent of the area by Honduras, 90 percent by Nicaragua. This gold-wealthy and lumber-rich nation is in the mountains west of the Miskito Nation. The national Sumo population is about 8,000 – 10,000, with more than one-half living in refugee camps on Honduran-claimed Miskito lands. Sumos have also been *relocated* to Sandinista forced labor camps on Nicaraguan state lands in Jinotega and Matagalpa.

Located south of Bluefields, the Rama Nation's country is rich in fish, oysters, tropical hardwoods, and good upland soils. The smallest nation with a population of less than 1000, the Ramas have been hard hit by the Sandinista state invasion and takeover. Many Ramas have escaped to Costa Rica. Others are hiding in the forested mountains. Four hundred or so have been confined to the tiny island of Rama Cay, at the south end of Bluefields Lagoon, near the main Sandinista military garrison.

Nicaragua's invasion and occupation of the Sumo

Nation is seldom mentioned by the international press. In 1980 at Bosawas, the Sumo people were the first to protest enmasse Sandinista state expropriation of their lands and resources. Hundreds of Sumos with machetes and axes forced state log cutters to abandon plans to pillage Sumo forests for mahogany and cedar to export. To pacify the area, the Nicaraguan government intensified its program to integrate Sumo territory, resources, society and economy into the Sandinista state. The Sumos were to become *Nicaraguan workers*. Sumo resistance to military annexation led to armed defense by late 1981. In 1982 - 1983 Sandinista army and military units attempted to crush Sumo opposition by destroying the Sumo Nation.

Dimala, a Sumo leader in exile, said this about the 1982-1983 holocaust and continuing Sandinista occupation of his nation:

We don't want Sandinistas in our land. Go home to your own land. The Sandinista Revolution is a revolution of destruction for the Sumos. Our people are dying. Our people are crying because of the Frente Sandinista. Why do they want to change us? Why do they want to exterminate us? We ask the world to help us so that we can have peace in our land.

When the Sandinistas came to our Sumo villages they massacred us. They killed everything to the last puppy. They told the world that we were not dying, but we are. The Sandinistas lie. Musawas, Bokay, Awastingni, Arangdak, Samupipi, Urra, Alal, Wingpulu, Sabakiang, Wila, Palanwas, Tabarus, Sabawas, Kakah, Kishana, Awulu, Padremain, Ukwas, Tiba, Tibi --- these villages and others are no

more. Destroyed by the Sandinistas. My people were killed, beaten, taken to concentration camps at Tasha Pri, Salsa, Sumebila, Truslaya and Rico de Oro, and those near Espaguine and Britkut. Many are still in Sandinista labor camps at San Antonio de Upa, Isla de Upa, Abesinia and La Paz [Jinolega and Matagdape].

The Sandinistas say they are protecting us from the contras. They lie. They do these things because we will not accept their foreign system. They say that only contras from Honduras are fighting in my people's land. That is also a lie. We Sumo are fighting with spears, arrows, bombs we make, arms we take from Sandinistas we kill. Sandinistas and Cubans, there will be a day when you will pay for the Sumo blood you spilled at Musawas and Bokay.

Other than recoveries from Sandinista EPS (army) and DGSE (security) personnel, Sumo resistance fighters have no source of arms within their nation. They have had to spread their forces thinly to search for weapons. Many are with the Miskito-dominated KISAN (United Coast Indians of Nicaragua) force; some fought with Edeñ Pastor's FRS-ARDE (Revolutionary Democratic Alliance) units far to the south. Ampifio Palacios leads the main Sumo resistance unit which has been loosely allied with - but not controlled by - the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force - the *Contras*). Palacios can obtain better arms from the Nicaraguan Democratic Force. FDN-supplied weapons are newer and the selection is good for guerrilla operations (AK-47, FAL, M-16, G-3, M-60, M-79, RPG-7, grenades and mortars). With these arms his combat unit has fought a valiant and successful campaign against the foreign military occupation. It is rumored

that not even the Sandinistas' top anti-guerrilla units ("BLI" units) will go into the bush after Palacios' Sumo fighters.

Similarly unknown, the Rama people have also struggled courageously against overwhelming numbers of Sandinista military and security soldiers. Beginning in 1980, the Frente Sandinista tried to *rationalize* the small-scale Rama economy by suppressing communal exchange of labor and produced goods. Their plans called for imposing a system of cash sales and purchases at state-run stores. The centralized, economic controls extended to the amount of land planted and coconuts harvested. Even state price controls on bundles of firewood and bottles of shucked oysters became the rule. The Rama tried to sell the firewood and oysters in Bluefields in order to buy machetes, clothes and boots. These were either unavailable or outrageously priced in the state stores. The Sandinistas imposed controls over everything Rama: Rama land was claimed by the state, Rama resources were claimed by the state, the Rama economy was dominated by the state, and as a people the Rama were to be erased—their identity exterminated, and they were to become Nicaraguan campesinos who worked for and supported the Sandinista Revolution. Like David and Goliath, the small Rama Nation would not be intimidated, and it organized an armed resistance against the Sandinista superpower.

In August 1982, a Sandinista military force invaded and occupied the main community at Rama Cay. They arrested, interrogated and jailed villagers to intimidate them. They wanted to prevent Rama villagers from joining or supporting a Rama resistance unit operating within the heart of the Rama Nation.

By mid-1984 Rama fighters controlled most of Rama territory, including Rama Cay, located but ten miles south of Bluefields, the largest occupied city on the coast. In July 1984, the Nicaraguan government assembled 1500 troops and enough boats to transport them. They added Cessna 337 *Push-Pull* aircraft for bombing and Soviet Mi-8 helicopters for rocket and machinegun strafing, and attacked Rama Cay. After days of bitter fighting, the outnumbered and out-of-ammunition Rama fighters and civilians left the island. They disappeared into the tropical forests. Sandinistas soldiers suffered heavy casualties. They burned the community.

By early 1985, under the Rama leadership of *comandantes Coyote* and *Danto*, the main Rama combat force grew to 604 experienced fighters. The combatants included many Miskitos, Blacks and some Ladino *costeños*. Neither the MISURASATA Indian organization nor Pastora's ARDE could or would send supplies to Coyote's resistance force. No support was forthcoming even though Coyote's forces were getting low on many essentials. Such basics as medicine, boots, radio batteries, and ammunition were in serious short supply. The closest place where these items were available was Bluefields.

On May 17, 1985 Bluefields came under attack and almost every opposition group claimed credit: The FDN, MISURASATA, and ARDE. But few details about the attack were available. These groups had not made the attack so they could say little. The Sandinistas did not want the news of what had happened to leak out so they offered no details. Coyote and *Danto* and the Rama fighters made the attack and came within minutes of overrunning and taking

Bluefields! They were in control of much of the city and were advancing on remaining Sandinista army units when they began to run out of ammunition and had to withdraw. Meanwhile, Blacks from Bluefields who were in the Sandinista militia (MPS) took their weapons and began shooting at Ladino Sandinista soldiers (EPS). This was the first case of a militia unit turning on the Nicaraguan army.

Shocked by the audacity and success of the Rama combat forces, the Nicaraguan government immediately brought more troops into Bluefields. They broke off negotiations with MISURASATA, negotiations which had taken place in Bogotá, Colombia and Mexico City. They then put the entire occupied coast under the central control of Nicaragua's most powerful man, Minister of the Interior Tomás Borge. Even the defensive capabilities of a small nation like the Rama's are feared by the much, much larger invading state of Nicaragua.

The Indian Revolution

Just as the Somozas' totalitarian regime was the catalyst for the Sandinista revolution, the Sandinistas' totalitarian regime brought on the Indian revolution. Once in power, the FSLN attempted to invade, occupy and transfer ownership of Rama, Sumo and Miskito territory to the new Nicaraguan state. The FSLN tried to ram a Ladino-run and Ladino-oriented revolution down Indian throats. Sandinista *comandantes* intended to force the three nations into the Nicaraguan state. Their method was the imposition of Sandinista organizations, institutions, laws, and armed forces. Out of this process "New Indians" would emerge without their natural identity, or their own leaders, goals, land,

resources, society, economy or government. They would strip the Indians of everything precious, everything Indian. The final goal is to incorporate Indian identity and territory into the anti-Indian Sandinista state.

The Rama, Sumo and Miskito nations were the first to rise up in arms against the Sandinistas one year before the FDN *Contras*. This was two years before Eden Pastora's original Sandinistas organized ARDE into a fighting unit operating out of Costa Rica and later southeastern Nicaragua.

The FSLN retaliated in 1981 with a massive *counterinsurgency* program that continues to the present day. Brutal "scorched-earth" attacks were made against unarmed Indian villages. The purpose is to destroy the civilian support base for the Indian revolution. Sandinista forces cannot defeat and they rarely are the first to locate the armed resistance, so they target Indian civilians in order to obtain submission by terror and destruction. Unleashed, this genocidal holocaust has resulted in the destruction of over one-half of the indigenous communities. The Sandinistas use army combat forces (EPS), state security units (DGSE), and bombing and strafing attacks by the air force (FAS) against Miskito, Sumo and Rama villages. Some 25,000 Miskito and Sumo villagers have been taken at gun point to 13 Sandinista state camps where they were confined against their will and made to work on state projects. Several of these camps still exist. Another 35,000 fled to refugee camps in Honduras and Costa Rica. Sandinistas committed widespread human rights violations including arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, torture, killings, disappearances, denial of food and medicine, rapes, assaults and thefts. They continue to force the induction of Miskito, Sumo

and Rama boys into the Sandinista army and the state militia.

In almost every aspect, Nicaragua's strategy for the occupation of indigenous nations (falsely referred to as counterinsurgency) is the same as El Salvador's occupation of Pipil country. There is basically no difference in the tactics Guatemala uses to occupy and subdue the Maya nations (forced relocation camps, forced military induction, military attacks on civilian communities, the bombing of civilian communities, and the indiscriminate use of terror to control what is missed by the bullet, bomb or boot). There is, however, one minor difference. The invading Salvadoran army carries M-16 rifles made in the United States of America. The Guatemalan army totes Galls made in Israel, while the Nicaraguan army carries Ak-47s made in the Soviet Union.

It is ironic and contradictory for Nicaragua to accuse the U.S. of the same thing it is doing to Miskito, Sumo and Rama nations: The use of military force to invade, to deny a people's self-determination, and to overthrow a popular revolution.

After six years, the indigenous national revolution has gained considerable military experience and power. And, it has achieved a great deal of international attention and political support. From a village-based movement in 1979, the Indian revolution has rapidly gained the strength to raise the only Indian army in the Americas. It has militarily stalemated Central America's largest army, and carried out the first and only negotiations between the FSLN and any armed opposition force. And it has projected the goals of territorial autonomy, land, resource and water rights,

and Indian self-government throughout the Indian nations and refugee camps. Far from a successful movement, this third-side Indian revolution, nevertheless, is one of the fastest growing movements in the world.

This armed Indian rights movement has many different groups and factions which reflect differences in methods used to achieve goals, alliances made with non-Indian forces, and the differences and disproportionate populations of the three nations. MISURASATA in 1981 was forced underground and into exile. The organization became divided in 1982 and split into Honduras-based MISURA led by Steadman Fagoth and Costa Rica-based MISURASATA led by Brooklyn Rivera. To obtain support for their fighters each organization made alliances of convenience with a Ladino anti-Sandinista organization. Even though they shared a common enemy, goals were different and the Ladino-Indian alliances frequently broke down. MISURASATA was allied with Pastor's ARDE from 1982 to mid-1985. MISURA (called KISAN after October 1985) has been allied with the FDN Contras from 1982, off and on to the present.

The vast majority of the Miskito people and the fighters want KISAN and MISURASATA to unite as one political-military force in order to achieve Indian rights. This has not been done for several reasons: (1) the leaderships are antagonistic to each other and haven't found a way to democratically integrate differences; (2) their FDN and ARDE Ladino allies themselves have been near enemies and have failed to unite; and (3) neither the Sandinistas, the Contras, the CIA, or Honduras wants Indian unification because they cannot control this now fragmented third force and they

don't want to see it become even stronger.

The Sumos and Ramas have smaller numbers of people than do the Miskitos. Their own goals and needs have not received adequate attention from the Miskito-dominated MISURASATA and KISAN organizations. This is a primary reason that Palacios' Sumo force is not a part of KISAN and Coyote's and Danto's Rama force is not fighting with MISURASATA. In addition, the Miskito-dominated resistance groups have not included Black coastal people's goals, and Black fighters are still scattered about without their own military organization. The recent formation of Nicaraguan Coast Peoples Alliance (NICOPA) may solve some of these problems.

Despite these internal difficulties, the Indian revolution still presents such a powerful independent third-side, that both the Sandinistas and the Contras are trying to find a way to control it because they can't destroy it. Under the direction of Minister of Interior Tomás Borge, the Sandinistas have set up their own Indian autonomy commission to produce promises for political — not territorial — rights. The FSLN is hard at work in its attempts to lure out-of-ammunition Indian units into cease-fire settlements. The FSLN is trying to strengthen its most vulnerable military front by promising Indian combatants future rights in exchange for present cease fires.

With the U.S. Congress' approval of \$100 million for the Contras, the CIA and UNO-FDN now have the economic leverage to attempt to control and redirect the Indian revolution. The United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO) is the Contra political umbrella organization which includes the FDN Contra guerrilla army and the

mostly Miskito KISAN which is the second largest anti-Sandinista military force. The majority of the KISAN fighters don't want to be allied with UNO or the FDN because both are against Indian rights and Indian land. These fighters and the 35,000 refugees are being forced to accept this self-destructive predicament through some of their own KISAN leadership and because their only outside financial support will come through the CIA and UNO. This tactic of trying to buy leaders and to bribe a revolution is counterproductive: **Indians are not going to fight anti-Indian Sandinistas on behalf of anti-Indian Contras.** The CIA and the Contras are quite likely to destroy the Indians' hot war Eastern Front, just as they've already done to Eden Pastora and ARDE's Southern Front. This means that rather than spreading the Sandinista forces over three political-military fronts, the war may collapse to the single FDN front in the north.

The irony is that the CIA and the Contras are doing more to shut down anti-Sandinista opposition than are the Sandinistas.

MISURASATA has managed to maintain its political independence. It is scheduled to receive \$5 million dollars from the \$100 million which will be administered through the State Department and not the CIA. However, President Arias of Costa Rica has forbidden military activities to be launched from his country against Nicaragua. This means that MISURASATA cannot be effective based in Costa Rica and must either move to Honduras or to Wan Tasbaia. Because they fear MISURASATA's independent Indian rights position, the FDN, the CIA, the KISAN leadership, and Honduras, have agreed to prohibit MISURASATA from coming to Honduras to hold an

assembly for unification with Indian combatants and refugees.

While MISURASATA waits for financial support and contemplates various possibilities, the UNO-FARN Contras in Costa Rica, led by Fernando "El Negro" Chamorro, are trying to buy up Indian fighters who can hardly feed and house themselves. In August, 1986, one of the Rama military commanders declared:

The other organizations are trying to create conditions such as limiting food to force us to sign up with Comandante Chamorro under the FDN and UNO flag. Our fighters have suffered all kinds of oppression from these Ladino organizations, including now hunger, because we won't join them. And we won't join them because we are fighting for liberty and against oppression.

The Indians want their liberty and that is why we have fought almost day and night against the Sandinista regime. And now the other side is trying to take advantage of the Indians because they don't want us to obtain our liberty.

This is the situation: With a geographical location between Cuba and Nicaragua, the most effective fighting force, and a third-side political position that promotes liberty and democracy for Indians, the indigenous nations cannot be ignored so states are attempting to control rather than support the Indian revolution. Man for man the Indians are the acknowledged best fighters but they are the worst armed. With widespread civilian support, favorable terrain and a determination to defend their homelands to the end, the Indian resistance forces are the ones most likely to continue fighting but they

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are not included in any regional peace plan. The Indian revolution and war is not part of peace proposals made by the nine-state Contadora Group, U.S. envoy Phillip C. Habib, or the United States. Not willing to agree to Indian control of Indian territory, the Sandinistas only offer cease fires to stop shooting, while the Contras offer weapons to keep shooting.

Several alternatives are open to the Indian revolution: 1) maintain an independent third-side stance and wait out the fighting between the Ladino Contras and Sandinistas, 2) continue to plan for the next war against the Contras or a continuing war against the Sandinistas based on the 20 to 30 year strategy, 3) agree to continue the parallel war against the Sandinistas if the logistical help is not tied to Ladino political organizations and military commanders, or directed through CIA Cuban-American and Mexican-American agents who are paternalistic and ineffective, 4) concentrate pressure on unifying the two Indian forces either in Honduras or in Wan Tasbaia, or 5) declare the three Indian nations to be neutral and invite international peace-keeping forces to protect against Sandinista and Contra attacks.

State Dinosaurs and Emerging National Autonomy

States and state—contending groups continue to promote dinosaur politics that deny conditions have changed. They all profess ignorance of Indian politics and autonomy, misinterpret the defense of nations as "separatism" to form new states, and fail to adapt to or see advantages in alliances with new political realities and environments. States, look around: 60 percent of the world's 50 hot wars are between states and nations and these conflicts don't go away without state

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concessions to nation demands for autonomy.

Third-side nations do not have many of the overall strengths of either left-wing or right-wing states. But they do have staying power. As Third World states follow the examples set by the East and West in upgrading and modernizing the equipment for war, they are pricing themselves out of making war. Most Third World states can't afford the costs of a prolonged war against an indigenous nation. New strategies are being developed to defend nations by increasing that cost.

What is the cost for a bankrupt Ethiopia of continuing a hot-war military invasion of Eritrea beyond the present 25 years? Or for Burma in its 37th year of attempted invasion of the Karen Nation? Indonesia must borrow money from the World Bank to finance its 24-year-long military occupation of West Papua and invasion of East Timor. And Nicaragua can no longer even feed its own people and must beg handouts from other countries to keep its forces on Indian land. And we are only beginning year six of that war. What about year 15, or 20, or 30? Miskito military and political leaders have analyzed "wars of liberation" in Algeria, Vietnam, Guinea Bissau, and the FSLN's own war against the Somoza Dictatorship. Their findings: It takes 20 to 30 years, low intensity is much more sustainable than cannon-fodder attacks. In the long run, world opinion will not favor colonialist domination or a military occupation.