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NICARAGUA

"Fourth World peoples need no longer live as victims of state oppression whether that state oppression is capitalist, marxist, fascist or socialist. The Miskito, Sumo Rama and Creole people are showing us all that an indigenous peoples' ideology, a Fourth World ideology, has a place in this world, and that state colonialism, state imperialism and state expansion into Fourth World homelands can and will be reversed."

—Chief George Manuel
Shuswap Nation

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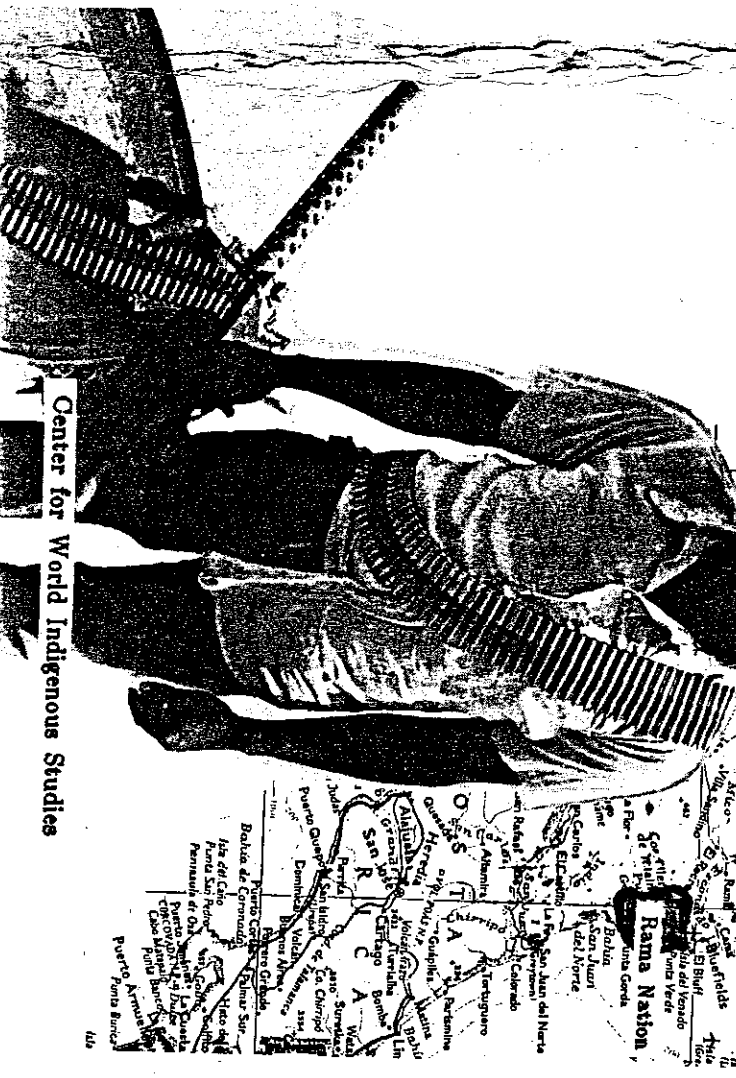
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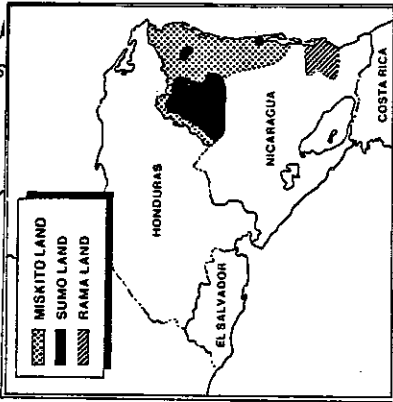
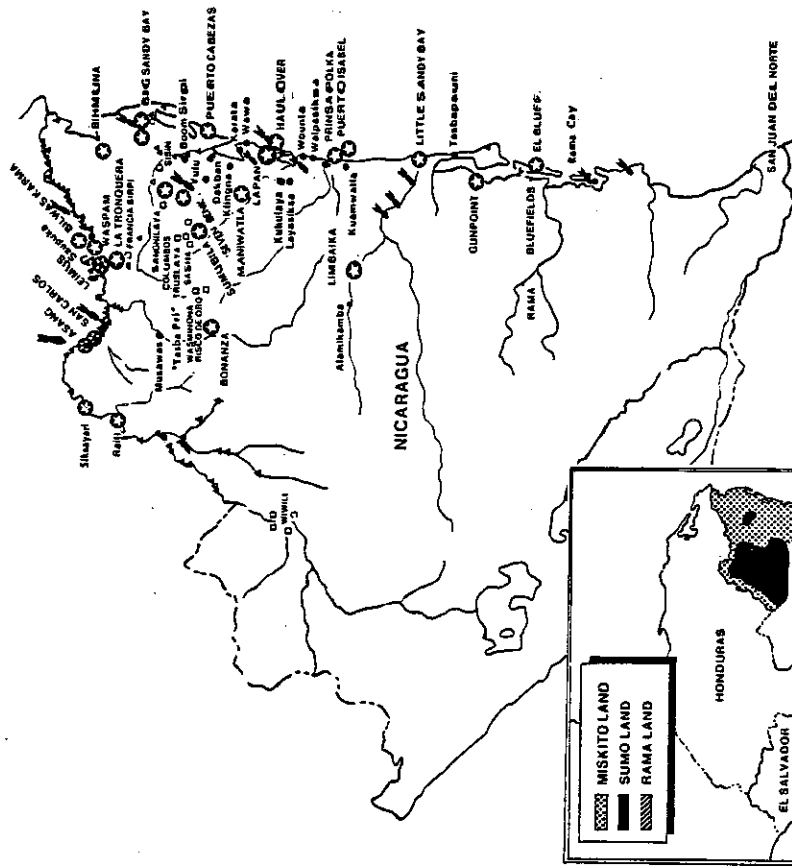
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INDIAN - SANDINISTA CONFLICTS

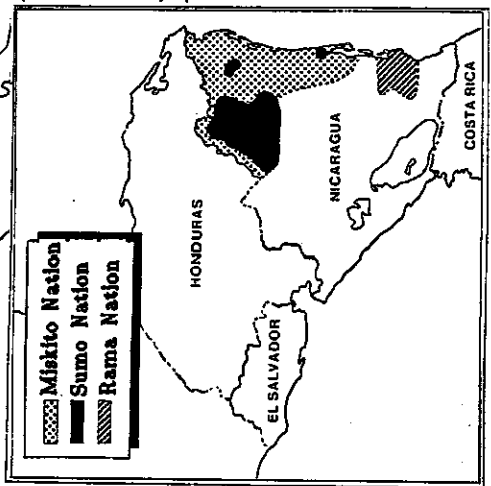
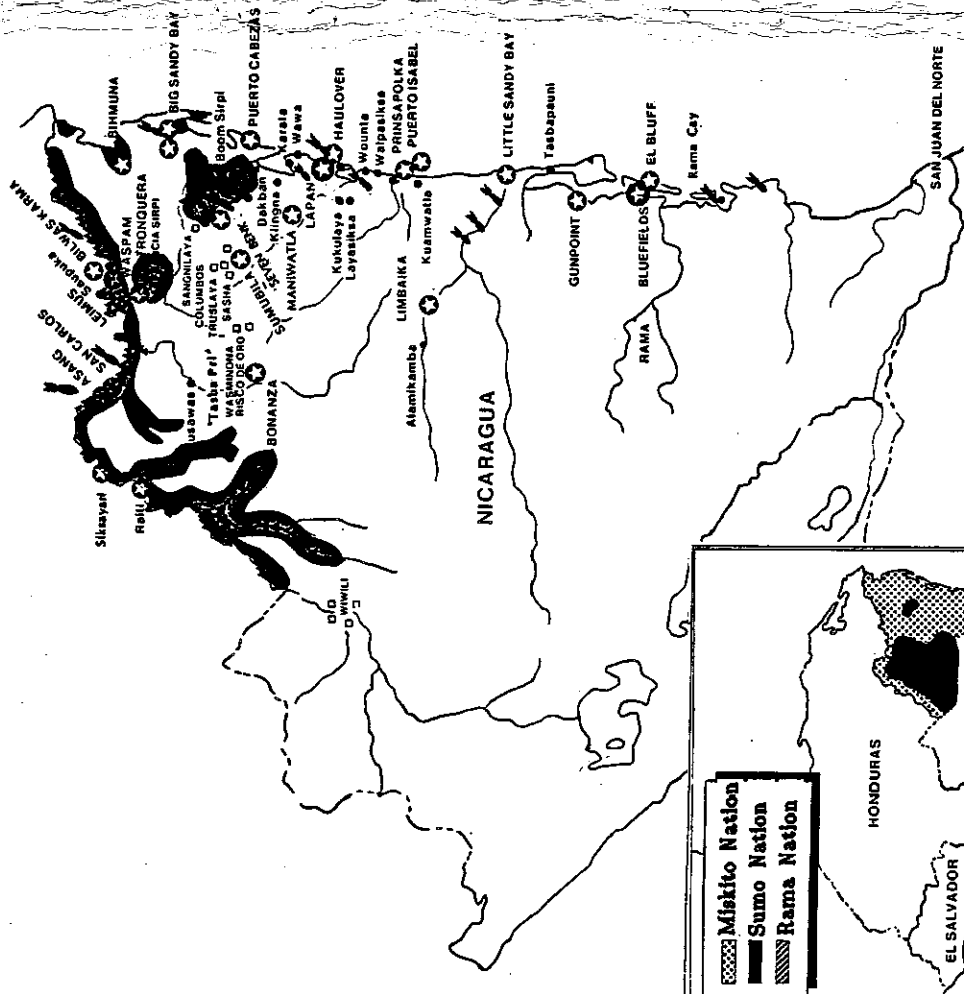
- ▲ FSLN - Destroyed Village
- FSLN Counterinsurgency Village Invasion
- FSLN Forced Relocation Camps
- ⊙ Major Battles Between Indians and FSLN Forces



Map by Bernard Nietschmann

INDIAN - SANDINISTA CONFLICTS

- ▲ FSLN - Destroyed Village
- Area of Forced Relocation
- FSLN Counterinsurgency Village Invasion
- FSLN Forced Relocation Camps
- ⊙ Major Battles Between Indians and FSLN Forces



Map by Bernard Nietschmann

Indian War and Peace With Nicaragua

Benerexa Marquez Colombia - ONIC

Oren Lyons, John Haudenosaunee Six
Mohawk, Mike Nations Confederacy
Meyers, Lawrence
Nonticoke, Bernard Parker

Hank Adams Survival of American
Indians Association -
SAIA [USA].

Clem Chartier, Hayden World Council of
Burgess, Donald Indigenous Peoples -
Rojas, Rodrigo WCIP
Contreras, Doug Sanders,
Louis Bruyere,
Andrés López

Raymond Yowel Repr. Western
Shoshone Nation

State Observers:

Also participating as observers were representatives
of the governments of Canada, Colombia, France,
Holland, Mexico and Sweden.

Appendix

Alejandro Swaby	Coordinadora Regional De Pueblos Indigenas - CORPI
Asunción Ontiveros	Consejo Indio de Sud America - CISA
Cristóbal Tapuy	Consejo Nacional de Coordinación de las Nacionalidades Indigenas del Ecuador - CONACNIE
Adolfo Triana	Fundación Comunidades Colombianas - FUNCOL
Tom Lueben	Lueben, Hughes and Tomita, Attorneys, [USA].
Ruben Snake	Chairman, Winnebago Nation, [USA]
Harvey Arden, Steve Wall	National Geographic Society, [USA].
Gerald Wilkinson	National Indian Youth Council, [USA].
Hazel Law	Nicaraguan Assembly, Managua, [Nicaragua].
Andy Shogreen	Moravian Church, Managua, [Nicaragua].
Trino Morales, Aura Marina Guzmán,	Organización Nacional Indígena de

Nicaraguan government Delegation:

The Sandinista delegation is led by Luis Carrion and has included Omar Cabezas, Humberto Campbell, Mirna Cunningham, Augusto Zamora, Galio Guardia, Manuel Ortega, William Ramirez, and Antenor Rosales.

**Indigenous Nations and
Non-governmental Organization**

Observers:

Participating as observer representatives were Indigenous Nations and organizations, including:

Russell Means

American Indian
Movement - AIM,
[United States of
America]

Evaristo Nupkuag

Asociación Interétnica
para el Desarrollo de la
Selva Peruana -
AIDSESP, [Peru]

Salidonio Padilla

Capitanes, Sucre,
[Colombia]

Benjamin Cortés

Comité Evangélica Por
Auda al Desarrollo -
CEPAD

Manuel Eariquingo

Confederación de
Nacionalidades Indígenas
de la Amazonia
Ecuatoriana -
CONFENIAE

**INDIAN
War and Peace**

With

NICARAGUA

Fourth World Papers Series



EDITED BY ELEANOR J. MENZIES
Published by Center for World Indigenous Studies
Snoqualmie, U.S.A.

Indian War and Peace With Nicaragua
Edited by Eleanor J. Menzies
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FIRST EDITION No of copies 500

FOURTH WORLD PAPERS SERIES
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Misurasata/Nicaragua Autonomy Peace Negotiations

Participants and Observers

Following private discussions between Misurasata General Coordinator Brooklyn Rivera and Nicaraguan President Daniel Oretaga in the Summer of 1984, agreement was reached between the parties to convene the Misurasata/Nicaragua Autonomy Peace Negotiations. The first round of these negotiations took place in Bogotá, Colombia. The government of Colombia hosted the negotiations and Colombian President Belisario Betancur acted as facilitator. During the first round of negotiations and subsequent meetings in March, April and May of 1985 many individuals participated as members of the Misurasata Delegation, Nicaraguan government delegation, and as observers. The negotiations were suspended in May 1985.

Misurasata Delegation:

The Misurasata delegation is led by Brooklyn Rivera and includes Armstrong Wiggins, Marcos Hopington, Julian Holmes, Max Zamora, David Rodriguez, Walter Ortiz, William Preston, Samuel Mercado, Delano Martin, and Ronas Dolores. Misurasata advisors are Jim Anaya, Robert Coulter, Theodore Macdonald, Bernard Nietschmann, Rudolph Ryser, and Steve Tullberg.

Contents

15.	Subsistence cultivation, hunting and fishing are severely limited in many areas, and staple foods, medicine and health care are withheld from villages suspected of supporting Indian guerrilla forces. Hunger and sickness have been more widespread under the Sandinistas than the Indians experienced under any previous Nicaraguan government regime.	
16.	Some 17,000 Indian refugees in World Relief camps in Honduras are living under extremely bad conditions, without proper health and sanitary facilities, without adequate medicine, food, and shelter. Another 6,000 - 7,000 refugees in Honduras receive no or little assistance and their survival is in daily jeopardy.	
17.	Public display of 26 Indian and Creole warrior corpses in Bluefields in May 1985 after they were killed during an attack on Sandinista facilities in Bluefields. Nine of the dead were youths from the town - sons, brothers or fathers of the people invited to witness the results of the attack.	
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<p>including massacres of unarmed civilian Miskitos at Leimus and Sumos at Musawas.</p> <p>At least 72 Indian civilians are listed as <i>disappeared</i> by the Nicaraguan Permanent Commission for Human Rights (CPDH). Other Indians have disappeared, but are not listed with CPDH.</p> <p>Rape of Indian girls and women by Sandinista military and security personnel has been extensive, and, apparently condoned by those in charge as these acts continue.</p> <p>Indian property has been arbitrarily confiscated without compensation. Houses, boats, rice mills, motors and other valuable property have been taken over by Sandinista officials under the ruse that their owners are "contras".</p> <p>Those who violate Indian human rights are not held accountable. Of all the arbitrary and illegal killings, torture, arrests, rapes, looting, confiscations, and destruction carried out by the Sandinista military, security and government personnel, no one has been brought to public trial. So far, the only accountability for human rights violations has been the rumor of a trial for a Sandinista soldier charged with raping a Miskito girl in Lapan.</p> <p>In many areas, freedom of movement is denied or prohibited and strictly controlled with a system of identification cards, passes, and check points. Indian civilians are not free to travel outside their villages. As a condition of the Mexico City Misurasata-Sandinista good faith accord, Minister of Interior Tomas Borge has promised to abolish identity and pass cards starting in July 1985.</p>	<p>10.</p> <p>11.</p> <p>12.</p> <p>13.</p> <p>14.</p>
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military controlled internment camps and towns in Nicaragua. This means that approximately 50,000 Indians have been forcibly relocated by Sandinista military forces or have fled from their homes to avoid Sandinista military reprisals.

4. One half of Miskito, Sumo and Rama communities have been destroyed by government forces, including the systematic destruction of houses, churches, food crops, livestock, fruit trees, and anoos. No compensation has been made.

5. The entire Indian region is under military rule and subject to the "Emergency Laws" imposed in March 1982

6. Hundreds of Indians have been arbitrarily arrested, interrogated, imprisoned, tortured. With the December 1, 1983 general amnesty, 309 individuals were released from government prisons, and another 14 were released April 28, 1985 as a condition of the Misurasata-Sandinista good faith accord reached April 22, 1985 in Mexico City.

7. More than 35 Indian communities have suffered invasions by Sandinista military and security forces during which thine civilians were arbitrarily rounded up, detained and interrogated, their houses looted, and their food and animals taken to feed Nicaraguan soldiers. No compensation has been given.

8. Many Indian civilians have been arbitrarily killed during interrogation, indiscriminately during counterinsurgency operations, and under the unproven pretext of being "counterrevolutionaries."

9. Several Sandinista atrocities have been confirmed.

By Chief George Manuel
Shuswap Nation

Indian War and Peace with Nicaragua provides the reader with a great deal of information in a very small amount of space, revealing a perspective on the conflict between three Indian Nations and the state of Nicaragua not generally available to the public. The Indian perspective "from the other side of the frontier" presents a vivid alternative to confrontation and conflict between indigenous peoples and Third World states. After reading this book, the reader will no longer see relations between nations and states in terms of "East/West", "right/left" or "North/South" politics. Indigenous nations/state relations and Fourth World/Third World relations will become a part of the vocabulary, thus refining our understanding of the events that determine war and peace throughout the world.

Like many indigenous nations elsewhere around the globe, the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations, along with the Southern Indigenous Creole Committee (SICC) have taken up arms to defend their homelands against an invading force. They have done so since 1981. But at the heart of the Indian struggle against the state of Nicaragua is political autonomy, self-determination, and the right of Indian people and the Creole people to use and dispose of the natural wealth of their ancient homelands according to their own needs and wants. The Nicaraguan government of the Sandinistas seeks to take control of ancient Indian homelands and deny the indigenous people their fundamental rights

to determine their own political, economic and social future. For the third time since its independence from Spain, the Nicaraguan government is attempting to use force to annex the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations and their territory -- to, as they say, "reincorporate the Atlantic Coast" into the Nicaraguan state. Indigenous nations have historically rejected forced integration of their territories into Western Hemisphere states, and, in the case of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations they are prepared to meet force with force to prevent the neo-colonial annexation Nicaragua seeks.

Nearly every state in the Western Hemisphere is engaged in confrontation with Fourth World Indigenous Nations. Most of these are political confrontations like the struggles in Canada, United States of America, Costa Rica, Panama and Venezuela. Others are violent confrontations like those in Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia, Chile, Brazil and Nicaragua. The articles and supporting documents in this book illustrate graphically why the war between the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations (and their Creole allies) and the government of Nicaragua is especially significant: It is an Indian war with a state.

Unlike any other confrontation between Fourth World Nations and a state in the Western Hemisphere, the Indian conflict with Nicaragua involves an armed Indian resistance against a state that is invading indigenous peoples' homelands. Also very different from the other confrontations is the political character of the state: Nicaragua is now a state engaged in a political, economic and social revolution aimed at the fundamental reconstruction of a society. These two factors combine to make the Indian war with Nicaragua more than a confrontation between Fourth World Nations and a state, they

Indian Trabilka on the Atlantic Coast

The Miskito refer to human rights violations as Indian trabilka (Indian trouble). Nicaraguan human rights violations against the Miskito, Sumo, Rama Nations and the Creole peoples range from random and arbitrary acts of violence and persecution to systematic and institutionalized policies of forced integration and counterinsurgency measures. These particular violations of internationally recognized human rights standards have frequently been referred to as "mistakes" by the government of Nicaragua, but despite such publicized admissions to general mistakes, the government of Nicaragua continues to commit violations of internationally recognized standards of human rights. Documented examples of human rights abuses against the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations and the Creole people are listed in Table 2.

Table 2.

Abuses of Indian Rights

1. Indian rights to traditional communal lands and resources have been abolished and transferred to state control.
2. Indigenous peoples' rights to self-government have been abrogated. The entire Indian leadership was arbitrarily arrested enmasse in 1981, and Misurasata, the organization that represented Indian interests, was banned in the same year.
3. One half of all indigenous have been displaced as refugees to Honduras and Costa Rica, or to Sandinista

make the struggle a test of whether Fourth World revolutions can coexist with Third World revolutions. It is a test of political maturity and the outcome will have a major influence on the future political development of both Fourth World Nations and Third World states. The outcome will determine the future political course of indigenous nations around the world.

When I first began to politically organize Indian Nations in Canada I came to believe that the struggle of indigenous nations against state domination would bring about a new political order among peoples. The authors of *Indian War and Peace With Nicaragua* clearly illustrate that the Indian Nations of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and Honduras are in the forefront of political change in the Western Hemisphere. They are creating a new political order, the Fourth World political order, for all to see and understand. The Miskito, Sumo, Rama and Creole warriors, the people and their political leaders have set the stage for other Fourth World Nations. They have shown us maturity, skill, courage and tenacity. I praise my Miskito, Sumo, Rama and Creole brothers and sisters for their resistance to invasion and their vision for indigenous peoples.

Fourth World peoples need no longer live as victims of state oppression whether that state oppression is capitalist, marxist, fascist or socialist. The Miskito, Sumo, Rama and Creole people are showing us all that an indigenous peoples' ideology, a Fourth World ideology, has a place in this world; and that state colonialism, state imperialism and state expansion into Fourth World homelands can and will be reversed.

- f. All of the communities of the area situated in the Puerto Cabezas plain.
 - g. The area encompassing the communities of Sandy Bay, Tara, and the Awastara and Bihmuna plain.
- 4.2 Concentration of the GRN troops of the region into the following centers: Puerto Cabezas, Bluefields, Rosita, Siuna y Bonanza, as well as in the border area (Laimus, Waspan, Tronquera, etc).
- 4.3 The complete integration of the MISURASATA troops into the indigenous communities and areas demilitarized by the GRN; the MISURASATA forces agree to defend in said communities and areas the indigenous and national sovereignty from all aggression in the region.
- 4.4 Both parties agree to respect the integrity of their military positions and to avoid and eliminate armed conflicts as well as any kind of provocation, and at the same time to cultivate between both parties friendship, ethnic and national identity and unity through a gradual process of mutual interrelation and understanding, during the period designed for the ceasefire.

V. Tripartite Commission.

The creation of a Tripartite Commission formed by seven (7) members: two delegates of the GRN, two delegates of MISURASATA, and three delegates of the guarantors. This Commission shall monitor compliance with the agreements and shall serve as arbiter for any incident or misunderstanding in the process of the implementation of this Bogotà Accord. The powers, duties and the organizational structure of the Commission shall be established by agreement of both delegations and shall form part of this Accord.

Introduction

its investigations related to the Indians of the region who were allegedly assassinated by its military forces or who have disappeared during the conflict.

3.4 Formal recognition by the GRN of MISURASATA, with its current leaders, as the legitimate organization of the indigenous peoples, with legal guarantees for its existence and functioning throughout all of Nicaragua.

3.5 Every agreement within the process of negotiations shall be signed by each member of both delegations and by the guarantor countries and organs that are present. The final treaty shall be signed by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua and by the head of MISURASATA, and afterwards shall be submitted to the process of consultation and ratification by the State and the public.

3.6 Both parties agree to work to create favorable conditions within the country for the repatriation of the refugees and displaced Indians and for the reunification of the Indian family.

IV. Process for the implementation of the ceasefire agreement.

4.1 Retreat of the soldiers of the Sandinista army and the disarming of the Popular Militias from the following communities and areas:

- a. From the Lagarto Point to Turzuani south of Bluefields, including Punta Gorda, Wiring Kay, Monkey Point, Kudra River, and Rama Kay.
- b. All the communities within the area of Pearl Lagoon, from Kukra Hill to the community of Tashapauani.
- c. All of the area on the Rio Grande, from the community of Tumarin to the river's mouth.
- d. The communities in the area on the Rio Prinzapolka, Rio Bambana, and the communities in the areas of the mining centers.
- e. The area encompassed by the Rio Wawa, and the Rio Kukulaya, the so-called resettlement camps of Tasha Pri and the communities in the Yulu plain.

The present-day state of affairs in Nicaragua presents us with an immense moral predicament. On the one hand we have the descendants of the *conquistadors* severely oppressed by reactionary dictatorships installed, financed and otherwise backed by the United States of America. The oppressed struggled against, and finally overthrew an entrenched dictatorship, only to find the United States threatening to invade Nicaraguan territory while providing political encouragement and material support to disgruntled counterrevolutionary forces. On the other hand we see the Nicaraguan inheritors of the European colonial reality engaged in a continuing war against the Indian peoples of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations who claim territory along the Atlantic coast as their ancestral homelands. The Indians assert that the imposition of even Sandinista rule over their nations and their lands means the commission of cultural and political genocide.

To the Indian on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua, the Sandinista turns out not to be the "freedom fighter" or the "liberator". The Sandinista doesn't even turn out to be viewed as a "leftist progressive" force, but yet another outsider coming to take over lands and natural resources -- continuing the process of colonization. The question of domination is not a question of governing fairly, but rather a question of who has the right to govern in Indian territories.

In 1848, a leading Italian said to the Austrians, "We do not ask you to govern us well, but to go." This is what the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations are saying to the Nicaraguan government. They do not want self-proclaimed enlightened rule by the

Sandinistas, but rather they wish to exercise their own inherent right to self-government in coexistence with the Nicaraguans who should govern themselves in the western part of Nicaragua.

This kind of reconciliation is built into comprehensive peace proposals put forward by the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations during several rounds of negotiations with representatives of the Sandinista Nicaraguan government. These proposals were rejected by the Nicaraguans. Why are these proposals not acceptable to the Sandinistas? Taken even further, why are similar proposals by other Fourth World Indigenous Nations not acceptable to any of the governments in the western hemisphere? What form of racism is this that continues to deny the existence of the original peoples of this hemisphere; that causes some governments to continue hunting Indians like animals, as if they were "sub-human"?

The United States of America justified its expansion into Indian territories in the 19th century by proclaiming its "Manifest Destiny". This was clearly a racist policy aimed at taking and controlling the lands and resources of Indian Nations. Are the Sandinista policies as expressed in the August 1981 "declaration of principles" for the "reincorporation" of the Atlantic coast any different than the United States Manifest Destiny? Is the Sandinista intent to rearrange and govern Indian Nicaragua any different than the reservation systems in North America? From the Indian point of view, there is essentially no difference.

But, the people of Nicaragua are also an oppressed people having suffered greatly under the rule of Somoza and the neo-colonial domination of the United States. The people of Nicaragua are struggling to build a new country free of colonial

2.4 Freedom of assembly, movement and religion for all the Indians and Creoles in the entire country. For example, freedom of movement without an identification card, etc.

2.5 Freedom for all the Indians in the region to fish, hunt, farm and engage in commercial activity.

2.6 Unrestricted freedom of expression and access for the communications media and international organizations in the region.

2.7 Suspension of forced recruitment into the military forces of the indigenous and Creole youth in the region.

2.8 Immediate liberty to return to their original communities for the displaced Indians who are situated in the so-called resettlement camp of Sangnilaya with certain facilities provided by the GRN for transport and resettlement.

2.9 The suspension of GRN military patrols into Indian communities and areas that are not yet occupied by the Sandinista army, in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts.

2.10 The retreat of GRN organizations and of the quasi-governmental organizations in charge of regulating and controlling the production and distribution of foodstuffs (C.D.S. ENABAS, AYC, etc.) from the indigenous communities.

2.11 The freedom to transport food, medicine, medical assistance, and subsistence implements to the indigenous communities of the region.

2.12 The freedom for the Miskito and Sumo people who are in the labor camps in Jinotega and Matagalpa to relocate to a secure area within the indigenous territory.

III. Additional agreements in furtherance of justice for the indigenous peoples in the peace process.

3.1 Indemnification or replacement of the goods and properties destroyed by the forces of the GRN during the conflict.

3.2 Reconstruction of the destroyed or partially destroyed communities and traditional indigenous zones with the financial and logistical assistance of the GRN.

3.3 The GRN agrees to release a complete public report of all

Nicaraguan state and the territorial integrity of the country.

13 The GRN guarantees the right to an indigenous autonomy for the native nations and peoples of the Atlantic coast within the framework of the GRN; this autonomy shall be concretely defined during the negotiations between both parties and will address the following:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| a. Regional government and home rule, | k. Culture, |
| b. Territory and land tenure, | l. Religion, |
| c. Defense, | m. Economy, |
| d. Laws, | n. Health, |
| e. Organization, | o. Housing, |
| f. Representation in the Nicaraguan Parliament, | p. Transportation, |
| g. Relations between the GRN and the indigenous regional government, | q. Communication, |
| h. Mutual cooperation, | r. Farming, |
| i. Regional patrimony, | t. Fishing, |
| j. Education, | u. Mining, |
| | v. Reforestation, etc. |

14 Agreement for the inclusion of a final Treaty of Peace and Recognition of the Indigenous Autonomy and Territory -- to be defined subsequently -- in the new Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua.

II. Cessation of all institutional repression existing against the Indians of the region.

21 End to the arrests of the Miskitos, Sumos, Ramas, and Creoles of the region, who are considered counter-revolutionaries and separatists.

22 Demilitarization of the forces of the GRN in the so-called resettlement camps and in the traditional indigenous communities and areas.

23 Immediate freedom for all the political prisoners of the region who are still in the various jails and government labor camps.

domination. How can clear thinking people criticize the Nicaraguan government's policies and its actions toward the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations when the threat by external forces against the Sandinista revolution are so great?

The purpose of this book is to show that the right of Miskito, Sumo and Rama to self-determination is fundamental to the success of the Sandinista revolution. When Nicaragua denies Indian peoples on the Atlantic Coast the right to choose their own political, economic and social future without external interference, it subverts its own claim to the same rights. To deny Indian revolution is to deny Nicaragua its revolution.

Misurazata's General Coordinator Brooklyn Rivera presents a clear description of Indian policy toward the government of Nicaragua. He presents an open alternative to war between Nicaragua and the Indian Nations -- peaceful coexistence based on mutual respect.

Rudolph Ryser, a member of the Cowlitz Tribe and Senior Fellow of the Center for World Indigenous Studies, examines the war between the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations and Nicaragua in a hemispheric and global context. He shows how the outcome of this Fourth World/Third World conflict will significantly affect the course of future relations between indigenous peoples and surrounding states.

Bernard Nietschmann, Professor of Geography at the University of California (Berkeley), draws on his 17 years of close personal association with the Miskito, Sumo and Rama peoples as a friend and advisor to present an intimate description of Indian perceptions of the war with Nicaragua and efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Chief George Manuel is known by many throughout the world as the "grandfather" of the

World Council of Indigenous Peoples of which he served as President from its founding in 1975 until 1980. Chief Manuel is the author of *The Fourth World An Indian Reality* (Collier-Macmillan Canada, Ltd., 1974), and he maintains close contact with and actively advises many Indigenous Nations throughout the world.

ELEANOR J. MENZIES
Seattle
July 4, 1985

Misurasata's Proposals For Peace

On December 8, 1984 the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations delivered their initial proposals for a peaceful settlement of the war with Nicaragua at the first round of the Misurasata/Nicaragua Autonomy Peace Negotiations in Bogotá, Colombia. The full text of Misurasata's proposals is presented below.

Bogotá Accord

A cease fire accord, for a period of three (3) consecutive months in the Atlantic region, between the military forces of the government of the Republic of Nicaragua (GRN) and the organization Miskito, Sumo, Rama, Sandinista Aslatakanka (MISURASATA) as of January 15, 1985, a period which shall be extendable in accordance with the progress of the negotiation of a peaceful solution of the present conflict, will take place if the following conditions are met:

I. Official recognition of the ethnic identity and aboriginal rights of the indigenous and Creole peoples of the region.

11 The GRN recognizes the Miskito, Sumo and Rama populations as indigenous sovereign peoples of the Atlantic region of the country, each with their own ethnic identity and possessed of the natural right to freely determine their own political, economic, social and cultural development in accordance with their values and traditions.

12 The GRN recognizes the inalienable right to an indigenous territory (land, river, lagoon, and sea), with its natural resources, for the Miskito, Sumo, Rama and Creole peoples; the area of this territory shall be delimited in the region during the continuation of the negotiation process between both parties, within the framework of the sovereignty of the

people, though the transaction did not involve the true owners.

In 1894, Nicaragua invaded Indian territory and abolished even the limited provisions in the Treaty of Managua under the pretext of *reincorporation* of Indian nations into the state. Nicaragua didn't stay long in Indian territory. Nicaraguan President Zelaya named Indian territory after himself, a second blue band was gained for the Nicaraguan flag to represent the Caribbean, lines were redrawn on maps, some Managua administrators were exiled to work there, and the military forces withdrew.

In Defense of WAN TASBIA!

A Chronology of Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nation Struggle

For more than nine thousand years, the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations have watched the rising sun, fished the turtle, and nurtured the young and respected the elder. A virtually unbroken chain between grandparent, parent and child has given vitality, strength and a wealth of heritage and culture to the modern-day Miskito, Sumo and Rama peoples. At the root of the enduring Miskito, Sumo and Rama cultures is *wan tasbia*, our land. These first nations of human beings used the land and natural wealth in balance with their neighbors and thrived for generation after generation — then came the waves of invasion from across the open sea.

Like their brother nations throughout the Western Hemisphere, the Miskito, Sumo and Rama regarded the invaders as a curiosity and nothing more, at first. But, curious though they were, the "visitors" did not simply pass through. They had come to stay. They had not come to merely use the land and natural wealth as human beings had done for thousands of years — they had come to possess, control and exploit. And, they had come to "displace" the first nations who had for so long lived as the caretakers of the land.

The Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations have now known foreign invasions by European states and kingdoms for nearly a half a millennium. They have experienced external efforts to convert, exterminate, pacify, and integrate; and these mature nations of the Western Hemisphere have met outside intrusions, step for step, with firm defense.

After 500 years of defense, the Miskito, Sumo and Rama struggle against external invasion is stronger, not weaker. Invasion by the European kingdoms and states of Britain, France and Spain were repelled and prevented from taking control of the ancient homelands. The Miskito, Sumo and Rama neighbors across the mountains, to the west, were not as successful. They were overwhelmed by Spanish invaders, and eventually a European "foothold" became an established colony. The colony, with its own complex history and memories of the Spanish culture and way of life became the state of Nicaragua. The descendants of invaders are now neighbors of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations. But, unlike the first nations they came to dominate on the Pacific side of the mountains, nations that had long coexisted with the Miskito, Sumo and Rama; the Nicaraguans have chosen to intrude into *wan tasbia*. Instead of using the land and natural wealth in balance with the first nations, the Nicaraguans, like their ancestors, seek to dominate, control and possess the homelands of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama. The Nicaraguans have become the most recent invaders of *wan tasbia*.

The Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations territorial frontiers have once again been breeched by external invaders. Table 1 supplies a brief historical overview of the world as seen from the other side of the frontier, the homelands of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations - *wan tasbia*.

ARTICLE VI

Her Britannic Majesty engages to use her good offices with the Chief of the Mosquito Indians, so that he shall accept the stipulations which are contained in this convention.

Great Britain gave to Nicaragua something it didn't have - sovereignty over Indian nations - and then promised to try and convince the Indians to accept the theft. The Indians were not participants in the treaty, nor did they agree to it. Before they left, the British did do land surveys and gave each community a title and map to its lands. The *Mosquito Reserve* was only about one-third the area of the Miskito nation. Nothing was said of the Sumo and Rama nations.

The Miskito, Sumo and Rama nations say now to the Nicaraguan state what the great North American Chief of the Chute--pa--lu (known as Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé) said to representatives of the United States at a meeting of congressmen, diplomats and cabinet members in 1879: Suppose a white man should come to me and say, "Joseph, I like your horse, and I want to buy them." I say to him. "No, my horses suit me, I will not sell them." Then he goes to my neighbor, and says to him: "Joseph has some good horses. I want to buy them, but he refuses to sell." My neighbor answers, "Pay me the money, and I will sell you Joseph's horses." The white man returns to me, and says, "Joseph, I have bought your horses, and you must let me have them." If we sold our lands to the Government, this is the way they were bought. * * * If we ever owned the land we own it still, for we never sold it.

Great Britain gave to Nicaragua what it did not possess. Like the whiteman in Joseph's story, Nicaragua now claims the possessions of another

resolved to conclude a Treaty for that purpose.....

ARTICLE I

Her Britannic Majesty... will recognize as belonging to and under the sovereignty of the Republic of Nicaragua, the country hitherto occupied or claimed by the Mosquito Indians within the frontiers of the Republic, whatever that frontier may be.

ARTICLE II

A district within the territory of the Republic of Nicaragua shall be assigned to the Mosquito Indians, which district shall remain, as above stipulated, under the sovereignty of the Republic of Nicaragua.....

ARTICLE III

The Mosquito Indians within the district shall enjoy the right of governing, according to their own customs, and according to the regulations which may from time to time be adopted by them.... the Republic of Nicaragua agrees to respect and not to interfere with such customs and regulations so established, or to be established within the said district.

ARTICLE IV

It is understood, however, that nothing in this treaty shall be construed to prevent the Mosquito Indians, at any future time, from agreeing to absolute incorporation into the Republic of Nicaragua on the same footing as other citizens of the Republic and from subjecting themselves to be governed by the general laws and regulations of the Republic, instead of by their own customs and regulations.

Table 1

9000 Year Chronology

First Nations on the Atlantic Coast

- 7000 BC. Archaeological evidence of Indian occupation of the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and Honduras.
- 900 AD. Development of indigenous societies that evolved into Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations.

European Invasion Begins

- 1502. Cristobol Colombo sails by and claims the east coast area and the people for Spain by "right of discovery," religion and the 1493 Pope's Treaty.
- 1600s - 1700s. Miskitos are a dominant political and military force - ally with French and British buccaneers to keep the Spanish from invading and repeating the conquest of the west coast that resulted in the death of one million Indians.
- Late 1700s. Spain invades with an army and settlers to pacify Indian territory in the east.

The "Integration" of the East

Nicaragua's Claim to WAN TASBIA (Our Land)

The Miskito, Sumo and Rama peoples have never relinquished sovereignty over their nation or their homelands by means of any treaty of cession, or by conquest, consent, vote or occupation. The Nicaraguan state has nothing upon which to base its claim of sovereignty over the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations even with recognition of their claims by other states.

A settler--state's fabricated theories and history of indigenous people can be ignored, but the question remains: Upon what historic or lawful basis does a state establish ownership over Indian land? For Nicaragua, the Treaty of Managua is the basis for its claims.

Treaty of Managua (1860) (Extracts)

Treaty of Managua between Her Britannic Majesty and the Republic of Nicaragua - signed at Managua, 28 January 1860. Ratification exchanged at London, 2 August 1860.

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and the Republic of Nicaragua, being desirous to settle in a friendly manner certain questions in which they are mutually interested, have

1800. The Miskitos push the Spanish out and liberate their territory 21 years before Nicaraguans do the same to create the Republic of Nicaragua.

1821. The Republic of Nicaragua is declared independent of Spain.

1843. Great Britain claims a "Protectorate" over the east coast and the Indian peoples.

1850s. The Miskitos request international recognition of their nation due to competing U.S.-British attempts to secure the area for an interoceanic canal and rail route.

Nicaragua as Invader

1860. Treaty of Managua. United States of America pressures Britain to transfer claim of sovereignty to Nicaragua and to transform the protectorate into an autonomous *Mosquito Reservation*. No Indians participate in the negotiations or treaty signing.

1894. Nicaraguan military invades Indian territory to "reincorporate" the Miskito, Sumo and Rama and their homelands into the Republic of Nicaragua. Miskitos organize military defense forces, but British - supplied arms are discovered and confiscated. Indian leaders forced to agree to the "reincorporation."

1905. Harrison--Altamirano Treaty. Nicaragua promises to recognize Indian and Creole land titles.
- 1900 - 1950s. Nicaragua indirectly exploits and profits from Indian lands and natural resources through foreign lumber and mining companies. Indian village lands still intact.
1960. World Court decision divides Miskito and Sumo Nations between Honduras and Nicaragua through settlement of international boundary dispute. No Indians involved in discussions.
1969. Sandinista rebels publish "Reincorporation of the Atlantic Coast," a plan to end exploitation of Indians and resources by foreign companies by substituting Sandinista "development reasoning" to do the same. No Indian participation in the plan's development.
- Early 1970s. Somoza and foreign interests threaten Indian lands and resources with particular emphasis on mining, and timber cutting along the Rio Coco.
1974. ALPROMISU (Alianza para el Progreso del Pueblo Miskito y Sumu) is founded with village based representation from village land rights committees to defend Miskito and Sumo lands and resources, and to promote Indian rights. ALPROMISU experiences increased tensions with Somoza government.

Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua

July 1979 Sandinistas overthrow the Somoza regime and takeover western Nicaragua.

August 1979 Sandinista regime in control of Nicaraguan government expropriates all Indian land and resources as part of its agrarian reform programs.

November 11, 1979 Misurasata is founded on the structure of ALPROMISU to represent and promote Indian interests in the new Nicaraguan government.

December 1979 Misurasata presents first Indian rights proposals to Nicaraguan government which are ignored.

Early 1980 Sandinistas increase the imposition of Party and State control within Indian communities, including confiscations of Indian property and materials. Indian peoples dispute Nicaragua's claim to their lands and resources.

June-July 1980 Nicaraguan government attempts to cut lumber along the Rio Coco and declares that Sumo land is state land. Sumos resist and stop lumber project. Many other land conflicts emerge along the Rio Coco.

August 5, 1980 Misurasata meets with representatives of Nicaraguan government to discuss State claims to Indian lands. Agreement reached that Misurasata will conduct a land ownership study and map of Indian lands to be presented to Nicaragua in February, 1981. Nicaragua agrees to stop further seizure of Indian lands.

- ★ The "Integration" of the East (Treaty of Managua 1860)
- ★ Misurasata's Proposal For Peace (December 1984)
- ★ Indian Trabilka on the Atlantic Coast (Indian Rights Violations)
- ★ Misurasata/Nicaragua Autonomy Peace Negotiations (Participants)

- October 1980. Nicaragua declares 7,400 square kilometers of Sumo land at Bosawas to be a "national reserve" and open to logging.
- November 1980. Nicaragua begins its own secret land study of the densely populated and productive Rio Coco area for planned relocation of Indians to state farms.

Indian Trabilka and War

- February 1981. One week before the Indian land study is to be presented, Nicaragua arrests all Indian leaders and declares them "separatists". Sandinistas kill four Indians in a church ceremony in Prinzapolka. The Indian/Nicaragua War begins.
- March-July 1981. Indian protests, Nicaraguan army and security arrests of more "counterrevolutionaries," 3000 Indians flee to northern Indian territory in Honduras.
- August 1981. Misurasata is outlawed by the Nicaraguan government, Indian leaders are all in exile, Sandinistas announce their "Declaration of Principles" for the integration of the Atlantic Coast - a plan for the control of Indian rights and lands at the community level.
- Nov-Dec 1981. Indian "Tropa Cruces" force attacks Sandinista military posts along Rio Coco to begin defense and liberation of the Miskito Sumo and Rama Nations.
- December 1981. Sandinistas massacre Indians at Leimus and Raiti, bombings of

communities, beginning of forced relocations, and destruction of villages.

Nicaraguan forces impose state of siege and military rule over Indian territories; destroy 65 villages, relocate 15,000 people; 10,000 seek refuge in Indian territory in Honduras. First large Indian battles and victories against Nicaraguan occupation forces.

Indian/Sandinista war rages throughout Misquito, Sumo and Rama territories, a 400-mile war zone. Numerous human rights violations are committed by Sandinista forces. Refugees flow into Costa Rica and more into Indian territory in Honduras.

The government of Nicaragua recognizes the Sandinista Party created MISITAN (Misquito Asla Takanké Nicaragua) formed from Indians placed in government relocation camps.

Sandinistas form their own Indian autonomy commission within the Nicaraguan government. Misurasata/Nicaragua Autonomy Peace Negotiations begin in Bogotá, Colombia.

After four rounds of peace negotiations, talks are suspended. Sandinistas refuse to negotiate Indian rights. Nicaraguan government plans to impose its own solution.

Sandinista Minister of Interior and head of Security Tomás Borge promises "limited autonomy" for east coast as part of a new campaign to win the "hearts and minds" of Indian people. None of these actions are related or respond to Misurasata Indian rights positions: Indian control of Indian land, resources and communities.

Youth Council said to the group: "Misurasata is in a very real way fighting for all of us. The point of a warrior is to give courage. It is now time to give support to these warriors."

1982

1983-1984

July 1984

December 1984

May 1985

June 12, 1985

The Sandinistas are uncomfortable as colonialist invaders and they have yet to devise a "solution" to what they call the "Indian Problem". At the Bogotá II talks in March 1985, Sandinista *Comandante* Omar Cabezas exclaimed, clutching his throat, "We have had it up to here with you Indians." The Nicaraguan state trashes about, using some of every occupation strategy: Military attacks, counterinsurgency against civilians, "hearts and minds," resettlement into government camps, negotiation promises, application of "the great lie" in invader schools and political meetings, try to manipulate indigenous peoples' goals, change occupation force leaders, shuffle occupation policy, and withhold basic necessities such as food and medicine until submission. All this and more and still it does not work.

The resistance of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations is stronger today than it was just a few years ago. From late 1979 to early 1981, Misurasata focused Indian demands for rights and expanded internal support within the three indigenous nations; beginning in late 1981 they developed an armed defensive force; from mid-1982 they began to take control of the countryside and isolate the occupation forces into garrisoned cities and military camps; by 1983 they had forced the occupation armies into a costly and unsuccessful counterinsurgency campaign; by 1984 they had gained considerable international support for their struggle - and the occupation force had lost much; late 1984 they entered into negotiations with the government of the armed occupation; and in early 1985 they began to gain more support from Fourth World nations and resistance movements around the world.

At a meeting of Indian leaders at the Bogotá II talks in March, Gerald Wilkinson (National Indian

June 16, 1985.

ASLA (Miskito for "united") is formed to unify Indian and Creole resistance groups under one political, military and economic organization to defend against the invasion. Brooklyn Rivera, Jennie Lee Hodgson, and Wycliff Diego are designated as the heads of ASLA. ASLA includes Misurasata, Misura and SICC in the united front.

July 12, 1985

Nicaraguan government opens Columbus, Sumobila and Sasa relocation camps allowing Indians to return to a number of Rio Coco towns and villages (including Waspam, San Carlos, and Sugi). The Rio Coco zone was said by the Sandinistas to be a "fire zone" when villages were burned and Indian people were forced to move to relocation camps in December 1981 "for their protection from attacks by contras".

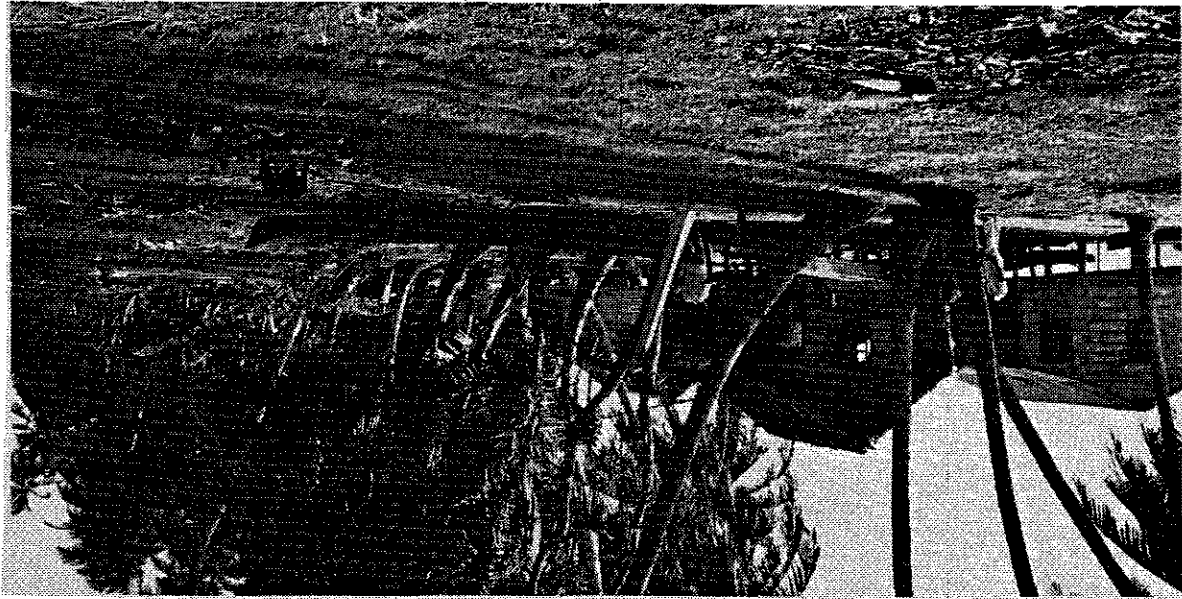
first hypothesis, Cabral notes, implies genocide of the indigenous population and thus destroys the object of the invasion. The second hypothesis has yet to be confirmed by history.

To avoid this choice, the invading state - regardless of political ideology, will try to create theories to convince the world that the invasion is in the best interests of the indigenous peoples (assimilation, integration, the Sandinistas' "New Indian"), that those being dominated are actually a minority that wants more than their fair share, that Indians are but an anachronistic impediment to progress, and that the State's suppression is not as bad as that done to indigenous peoples by neighboring or distant states.

The invading state must of course also try to convince the dominated peoples of the indigenous nations that it is really in their best interests to cease resistance; otherwise, military occupation must be relied upon as a long-term necessity. One way to control the culture of a dominated peoples is to change that culture. This is a common tactic used by invader states and settler states against Fourth World nations. It is what Rudolph Ryser calls "the great lie" which seeks to replace indigenous history, intellectual thought and rights, with European history, intellectual thought and rights: "The great lie is simply this: If indigenous peoples will only reject their own history, intellectual development, language, and culture and replace these things with European values and ideals, then indigenous people will survive." (Pathways to Self-Determination 1984:28) Surrender and submit and survive, or face annihilation to the point where even history books will only mention the indigenous resistance as being done by terrorists and mercenaries, today's equivalents of "marauding savages."

-Photo by Bernard Nietschmann

A Miskito village on the coast of Indian Nicaragua. Several Indian-Sandinista battles have taken place near this community, which has been bombed and occupied by Nicaraguan army and security units.



The essential question is how long can the Sandinistas sustain their invasion of Indian lands? After almost 500 years, the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Peoples have yet to be integrated by would-be invaders. To get the Sandinista state off their lands and out of their villages, the Indians were the first to take up arms, and are the first to try to negotiate. They will not forgive, they will not forget, they will not reconcile with the Sandinistas, but they will continue to educate, fight and negotiate with them until the Sandinistas or whatever government that may be in Managua accepts the reality that the long-term political and military costs of an invasion are not sustainable.

The Sandinistas have made promises and have admitted errors for almost six years, but still they occupy Indian land, still they deny rights, still they exploit essential Indian resources, still they prohibit basic freedoms, still they imprison thousands in their state labor camps, and still they claim the right to maintain their invasion of Indian nations by repression. They can no longer pretend that the resulting Indian war is being fought by *somocistas*, right-wing contras, the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), mercenaries or terrorists, because the Sandinistas have entered into direct negotiations with Indian resistance leaders — and no one else — to end the Indian war.

The Sandinistas are faced with a situation similar to what Amilcar Cabral (a former leader of Guinea-Bissau resistance against Portuguese occupation) called the "dilemma of cultural resistance": They can either try to liquidate almost all the population of the dominated nation to eliminate cultural resistance; or, they can try to impose themselves and the foreign systems without damage to the culture of the dominated people. The

The Indian Negotiations And Nicaragua's Conflict

By Brooklyn Rivera

General Coordinator
MISURASATA

This statement is based on a March 25, 1985 background briefing given by Brooklyn Rivera to the more than 20 representatives of Indian Nations and organizations who had come as observers to the Second Peace Treaty Negotiations between Misurasata and the Nicaraguan government [Bogotá, Colombia March 26 — 27, 1985]

We want to express our appreciation for your interests and support. You have a common struggle with us. The goals of indigenous peoples are the same all over. Therefore, your support is vital to us. We invited you so that you can enrich our peace proposal and the negotiations.

To understand the proposal we've made to the Nicaraguan government, you should know the context of our struggle.

Our ancestors were there long before the formation of the Republic of Nicaragua. They were totally self-sufficient until 1860 when a treaty was made between England and Nicaragua without the participation of the Indians. England recognized the sovereignty of Nicaragua over Indian land, and they created an Indian reserve that had political autonomy within Indian territory. Between 1860 and 1894, the Indian peoples still had political autonomy. In 1894, the Nicaraguan government militarily

invaded Indian territory, violating Indian determination, raised the Nicaraguan flag and declared Indian territory to be "reincorporated" into Nicaragua. Even though Nicaragua declared an incorporation, in reality the region remained *marginal* to that country, but our Indian territory experienced colonialism and exploitation of Indian peoples and Indian resources. None of Nicaragua's governments were concerned with this. Each was only concerned with the exploitation of resources.

During the Somoza dictatorship, this system of exploitation was aggravated seriously. The dictatorship did not permit the existence of an Indian organization to defend Indian rights. Despite this, in 1973, a political movement was born - ALPROMISU [Alianza para el Progreso del Pueblo Miskito y Sumu] - to promote Indian rights and the defense of the people.

The Sandinista Revolution came to power in 1979. Indian people held meetings to analyze the situation and changed the name of the Indian organization to MISURASATA [Miskito, Sumo, Rama, Sandinista, Asla Takanka] to include our Rama brothers, and the Sandinistas to show solidarity with Nicaragua in 1979. However, less than two years later, our organization and our people became engulfed in conflict.

There is much misinformation and confusion around this. Our struggle began before any of the anti-government organizations. That's why we don't accept them saying that we are part of that. Before 1982 the FDN [Nicaraguan Democratic Force - "the Contras"] did not exist; ARDE [Revolutionary Democratic Alliance - Edén Pastora's coalition] did not exist. North American aggression was not expressed.

The conflict began over claims about rights to the

now in charge of Sandinista Indian policy and administration - as making this chilling statement in Bluefields: "Here there are no whites, blacks, Miskitos or Creoles. Here there are revolutionary and counterrevolutionary Nicaraguans, regardless of color of their skin. The only thing that differentiates us is the attitude we assume toward the nation."

Nicaragua is but another colonialist state seeking to justify its expansion into Indian homelands by accusing the Indian people of not adhering to the invader's ideology. Sandinista claims to a right to control Indian peoples and nations rests on the self-serving assumption that only the enemy resists takeover and subjugation. Six Nations Confederacy Chief Oren Lyons put it this way: "How can the Sandinistas justify being on Indian land? If they say they own it, they then declare themselves to be the aggressors. The only other way is to be there by invitation."

The Sandinistas cannot say they are on Indian land to assist Miskito, Sumo and Rama peoples because they have brought more suffering and repression in six years than has occurred during all the preceding 85 years of invading state regimes from Zelaya to Somoza. They cannot say they are on Indian land to defend the Indians from the FDN because it has been the Sandinista armed forces who have attacked the Indians: More than 100 villages destroyed; houses, canoes, crops burned; 50,000 people displaced to state camps and refugee camps; 1000 killed; 72 listed as "disappeared" after being taken by State Security forces. [SEE: Appendix: Indian Trablka and Indian-Sandinista Conflicts: inside cover maps] They were not invited, they are not wanted, and they will eventually leave because no invaders have ever maintained their invasion.



San Antonio de Upa. One of several Sandinista Indian labor camps in isolated areas of Jinotega and Matagalpa where Rio Coco Miskitos and Sumos were secretly taken after they were forced from their villages in late 1982. Conditions are miserable: people are crowded 25 and 30 to tiny rooms at night and then taken to pick or plant coffee during the day. About 350 Sumos are at this particular camp.

-Photo by Steve Tullberg

land. Nicaraguan aggression and oppression began precisely at the moment of presentation of our demands. So, the people interpret that the Nicaraguan government's response was over our demands for land rights.

Another reason was autonomy. At the beginning, there was conflict between the Indian organization and Sandinista organizations. The Sandinistas said there could not be two vanguards on the coast. They said that Misurasata was an obstacle on the Atlantic Coast, and had to be destroyed. In 1980, Misurasata developed "Plan 81" to initiate a plan for autonomy in the region and to develop our own human and natural resources. The Nicaraguan government called this plan *separatist* to justify their aggression against the Misurasata leadership. But the plan was only an indication of the process of autonomy. So we see clearly that another cause of the conflict was autonomy.

I can go on naming the cause. Even though the Nicaraguan government said, at first, they would support Misurasata, in practice they tried to impose their mass organizations on us, such as C.D.S. [*Neighborhood Defense Committees*] for control and vigilance in the communities, but, that did not work in Indian communities. They also imposed their mass organizations for workers, fishermen, mine workers, women, and children, and so on. Every one of us had to be in their organizations so they could control and change us. All of these organizations were part of the origin of the conflict. You must understand this in order to understand how to resolve the present conflict.

So, the reasons for the conflict are land, autonomy, the liberty of Indian people, freedom for our culture and people. When these are in Indian hands there will be peace.

We never wanted war or violence. We wanted to avoid these as much as possible. But, the rigidity of the Sandinistas forced us to defend ourselves. We stayed in Managua and in our communities until the last minute. We never wanted to leave our people. But, the Nicaraguan government never tried -- all they gave were threats and hostilities. Even in exile we tried. In 1982, we spoke to the Organization of American States (OAS) to mediate; also to the French and Mexican governments to influence the situation. And they gave us deaf ears always.

The Sandinistas believed the solution was a military one. They believed they were powerful because they had won against Somoza. But, in almost three years of war, they've tried to impose their system and they've failed. They've admitted it. They lost many men fighting against Indians. They now recognize that our struggle is different, that our aspirations are not counter-revolutionary. That's why they are participating in this process.

Last October, after a meeting in New York, Daniel Ortega invited our organization to travel to Nicaragua. We spent eleven days visiting our brothers in our lands. And, in December in this city, we initiated the negotiations. We presented a basic document for a peaceful solution. (See Appendix: Misurasata's Proposal for Peace "Bogotá Accord" December 8, 1984) What we seek is a bilateral agreement between Misurasata and the Nicaraguan government to establish rights: Basic rights over our land, rights over our resources, rights to our determination of how we want to live and work in our communities, on our land, in our territory. We seek many other things too, including compensation for the destruction during this conflict.

For Misurasata, this peace negotiation represents an opportunity to explore peace and dignity based

counterinsurgency information under the pretext of distributing medicine. Military forces were moved from the Siuna-Bonanza area to the Indian communities of Alamikamba and Limbaika. The Frente Interno (combined Misurasata-Misura force) destroyed three troop transport trucks. The EPS occupation forces retaliated against Indian villages. On May 17 the Frente Interno attacked the Sandinista garrison in Bluefields.

The hit-and-run Bluefields attack sparked an uprising in the Creole militia (Milicias Populares Sandinistas - MPS). Sandinista occupation forces are generally detested by Indians and Creoles who if they are not in the armed resistance, must give tacit support to survive. The Nicaraguan state has exported its obligatory military service (Servicio Militar Patriótico - SMP) to the occupied Indian territories, and it is forcing Indians and Creoles into Nicaraguan units to fight against Indians and Creoles in the Frente Interno resistance. This is a common tactic of colonialist invaders who'd prefer to protect their occupation with the lives of the dominated. However, the reality in Indian Nicaragua is that civilians are Indians without guns, and many local militias are Misurasata forces being fed by the state.

Further talks have been suspended after the break down of the Bogotà III negotiations, May 25 - 26. During this last round of talks, the Sandinista delegation devoted its attention solely to denouncing Misurasata for supposed violations of a ceasefire that never existed, ignored proposals to set up a third-party commission to monitor agreements and violations, and avoided discussion of any of the fundamental issues such as land rights, resource rights, and autonomy.

A *NEW YORK TIMES* article (April 26, 1985:6) quoted Minister of Interior Tomás Borge - who is

negotiations in early December, 1984, Rivera went inside Indian Nicaragua by outboard-- powered canoe with an armed Misurasata unit to tell the people about the talks and to listen to their opinions. On January 1, the Sandinistas sent a military force against Indian communities in the Pearl Lagoon--Rito Grande area. Rivera was wounded by aircraft rocket shrapnel in the attack. He witnessed the attacks on Indian villages of Kara, Little Sandy Bay and Karawala. Other attacks were launched against Indian communities (Haulover, Wounta, and others,) south of Puerto Cabezas. State military forces occupied many of the villages until February. Because of the attacks and occupation, Misurasata broke off the next round of talks scheduled for January 19 - 20, 1985. Only at the personal instigation of Colombian President Belisario Betancur did the talks resume in late March.

The Mexico City April 20 - 22 meeting produced a good faith accord between the Nicaraguan state and the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations. The Sandinistas promised to release Indian and Creole political prisoners, assist in supplying food and medicine to the villages, allow people the freedom to hunt, fish, and plant again. In turn, Sandinista and Misurasata forces would refrain from military actions. The Sandinistas wanted the accord to influence the April 23 vote on contra assistance in Washington; Misurasata wanted the accord to help the people who are being held as virtual prisoners in the villages. On April 28, 14 political prisoners were released by the Sandinistas; Misurasata suspects that more are held by the state.

In late April and May, Managua began to escalate security and military actions against the defensive forces of the Indian nations. State security agents infiltrated Nicaraguan Red Cross teams to gather

on justice. That's why we've said many times that we seek peace with justice and freedom. For the People of the east coast, peace means the reestablishment of rights. There is no other way. There is not going to be peace with a simple change of government, or if the Sandinista government democratizes itself. To achieve a natural peace in Nicaragua, there must be justice -- justice of land, autonomy, the right to develop our own culture and economy -- that's what is going to guarantee peace. But, that would lead to a bilateral agreement. We don't seek a government solution even though they created the problem.

We want to be the owners of our culture and creators of our future. So, the first part of our peace proposal is about rights to our identity through recognition of indigenous peoples as sovereign peoples with self-determination. The second point is recognition of the inalienable right to an indigenous territory, without which other rights would mean little. The third point is that we want autonomy for our Indian nations from the Nicaraguan state -- that is, with our own internal self-government, self-defense, and self-determination. The fourth major point is that these agreements should be included as law in the Constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua.

These four points we believe to be the fundamental base for an agreement between Indian nations and the Nicaraguan government. In the negotiations last December, we spent most of the time discussing these points. The Nicaraguan government did not want to accept Indians as peoples, but only as *ethnic groups*. And, instead of historic rights, they talked about special rights. So we could go no further. We were frustrated. We could not reach any substantial agreement at that

Soviet system of ethnic autonomy. If the Sandinistas continue to draw upon repressive foreign models to control Indian peoples, they will but prolong, not end the war.

The Sandinista state has ignored and rebuffed offers of Indian leaders who seek to help promote a solution to the crisis through recognition of indigenous rights. At the Bogotà II negotiations in March, 1985, Sandinista delegation head Luis Carrion said that the presence of Indian observers (American Indian Movement, Haudenosaunee, National Indian Youth Council, Winnebago Nation, World Council of Indigenous Peoples, and Indian representatives from Colombia, Ecuador and Peru), "was a threat to the sovereignty of Nicaragua." Oren Lyons (Sub-Chief, Haudenosaunee) responded that "it is the Sandinista position that is a threat to Indians." And Russell Means (AIM) remarked, "the Sandinistas say that we are a threat to their sovereignty; we have to carve that one in granite."

Indian forces are prepared to fight and negotiate with the Sandinistas to defend their nations and promote their goals. The Sandinistas, however, have directed their military occupation forces against civilian Indian communities during the course of the negotiations. These regrettable events - probably carried out at the direction of Tomás Borge, have severely jeopardized the talks, breaking them off in January, and now the Sandinista disregard for honor has led to their indefinite suspension.

As a precondition for beginning negotiations last year, Brooklyn Rivera returned to Indian Nicaragua with a Misurasata delegation under guaranteed safe conduct from Daniel Ortega. On the day of his departure - October 31 - a large Sandinista attack was made on the Miskito village of Haulover, a center of Misurasata support. After the first

-Photo by Bernard Nitschmann

Mostly women live in the villages of Indian Nicaragua; men and boys left to fight or to avoid arrest and interrogation by Sandinista State Security. All males are guerrilla suspects. Many women have also taken up arms.





Misurasata General Coordinator Brooklyn Rivera and American Indian Movement (AIM) Leader Russell Means announcing to the press the AIM leader's commitment of Indian assistance to Misurasata. Tim Ross of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) is to the right. (Bogotá, Colombia, 1985)

-Photo by Bernard Nietschmann

meeting. However, we agreed to continue.

We believe that the delegation from Nicaragua will come with more preparation than they did last time, because they went back with our proposal. They've had sufficient time to analyze and consult. We hope they're going to come with better preparation. So for these meetings, we expect a formal response from Nicaragua to our proposal of last December.

However, we have a deep concern about the real purposes of Nicaragua for these talks. What is it that the Sandinistas really want to achieve? We have observed their actions and analyzed their statements, and they totally contradict our proposals. We believe they may try to impose unilateral solutions with their own formula and are only trying to legitimize that by our participation in these meetings. And, that's our fear.

We will speak clearly in front of the Nicaraguan government about this. Indian people will never accept unilaterally imposed solutions. That would be ethnocide! The solutions must come from indigenous peoples, and presented to the Nicaraguan government; and then discussed in negotiations. Nicaragua has its own structure for solution of the crisis.

First, there is MISATAN (Miskitu Asla Takanka Nicaragua), the group the Sandinistas formed to manipulate the Indian struggle, and to disrupt and abort the indigenous movement. It was formed by the Nicaraguan State Security (DGSE) and the Sandinista Party (FSLN) with the support of the Sandinista government. It has taken a belligerent position to these negotiations, and to all constructive actions involving independent Indian opinion. Second, the Sandinistas have created the National Autonomy Commission. This was created to formulate the Nicaraguan government's position on autonomy — not the Indian position on autonomy —

than 100 destroyed communities; and 6) Obtain external recognition of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama as peoples with sovereign and inalienable rights over their nations, communities, lands, waters, and surface and subsurface resources.

During almost six years of occupation and six months of negotiations, the Sandinistas have refused to accept the Indians' right to self-determination over their own nations and resources. Instead, Managua asserts its power to force Sandinista-determination over Indian nations with claims of "national sovereignty," "national security," and "national resources." Indians who resist the invasion and takeover are labeled "counterrevolutionaries," and those who organized to defend Indian rights and lands were arrested as "separatists" and "CIA mercenaries."

Hardly revolutionary, the Sandinista state's invasion, occupation, confiscation and repression are but racist and supremacist brutalities unleashed by many Third World states - the new colonialists - against indigenous nations. In this, distinctions are erased between Nicaragua and the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma, Ethiopia, Morocco, Sri Lanka, and Guatemala.

The two Indian organizations - Misurasata and Misura, and their combined Frente Interno military forces, seek co-existence between indigenous nations and the state, such as is evolving between the San Blas Kuna and Panama, and the Inuit and Denmark. The Indians call this autonomy, the Sandinistas call it counter-revolutionary.

The Sandinistas appear to be organizing their own "Indian autonomy," possibly to be modeled on the Soviet example. In February, 1985, Managua sent two Sandinista Miskitos (Armando Rojas and Fornes Rabonias) to Moscow and Lithuania to study the



Misurasata delegation preparing a draft of the good faith accord during Third Round negotiations, Mexico City, April 21, 1985. The Nicaraguan delegation and Misurasata delegation agreed to the good faith accord on April 22. Left to right: Arnalton Wiggins, Marcos Hopington, Max Zamora, Brooklyn Rivera (seated), David Rodriguez, Romas Dolores, and Walter Ortiz. -Photo by Bernard Netchmann

and are there with guns. I call this imperialism. What do you call it?"

The Miskito, Sumo and Rama peoples have never lost or given away their sovereignty, territory or rights of self-determination. In order to incorporate Indian lands and peoples into the new Nicaraguan state, the Sandinistas claim that the Indians are Nicaraguan citizens - not distinct peoples - who as ethnic groups are but a small minority of the national population. Misurasata leader Brooklyn Rivera told the Sandinistas, "Ethnic groups run restaurants. We have an army. We are a people. We want self-determination."

Latin America is also Indian America. Frontiers are being reversed. The Miskito, Sumo and Rama are the only peoples in the Americas to experience and reject both extremes of European economics and politics: Capitalism and dictatorship under Somoza, and Marxism and dictatorship under the Sandinistas. Their Fourth World revolution is determined to free their nations from occupation by colonialists, imperialists, capitalists, or marxists.

Indian objectives in the war and in the negotiations are the same: 1) A pullback of Sandinista military forces from Indian lands and communities which would end the shooting war; 2) A withdrawal of Sandinista state institutions (DGSE, [Nicaraguan State Security] CDS, [Neighborhood Defense Committees ATC, Labor Unions] ENABAS, [Nicaraguan State Stores] MINT, [Ministry of Interior] etc.) and personnel from Indian nations which would end the institutional repression; 3) An expansion of the Indian defensive force to protect Indian peoples and their territories; 4) Bring home the 20,000 to 25,000 Indians being held in state resettlement camps, and the 25,000 in refugee camps and in exile in Honduras and Costa Rica; 5) Rebuild the more

in order to later impose it on us. It is clear that they are planning to impose their own version of autonomy with or without Misurasata.

This is more or less the overview. The situation has historic roots, and a solution is not easy and will not be quick, but we must give a sure step to advance into the future with a correct direction for the genuine emancipation of indigenous peoples. That is our final goal.

Tomorrow we will meet with the Nicaraguan government delegation. Thank you for your support.

Rivera's and Misurasata's concerns were correct about Sandinista intentions in the negotiations. The Nicaraguan delegation did not prepare a response to Misurasata's peace proposal; instead they brought their own which was based on a ceasefire first and promises to discuss rights later. In contradiction to these promises they proclaimed "national sovereignty" over all of the Indian rights, and issues that are basic to a lasting solution of the conflict. While the Misurasata leaders were disappointed that no progress was made with the Sandinistas, they were very pleased and thankful for the overwhelming support they received from all of the indigenous organizations and Indian leaders who came to Bogotà and who saw firsthand what was and is behind the conflict between the indigenous nations of Miskito, Sumo and Rama, and the state of Nicaragua.

Indian Nations and the Nicaraguan State

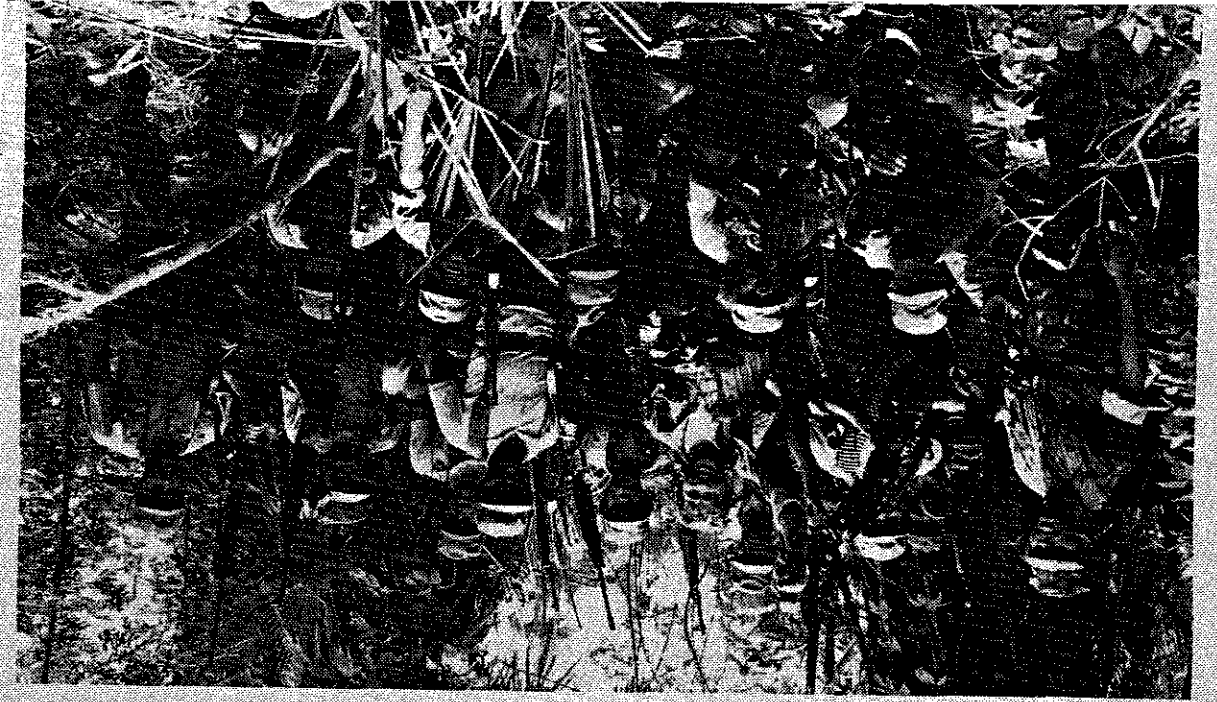
By Professor Bernard Nietschmann
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The armed conflict of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations, and the Creole peoples with the Nicaraguan state has been the subject of Misurasata-Sandinista negotiations since December 1984. More than 30 Indian leaders came to the talks to observe the only negotiations in the Americas between a state and armed Indian nations. Russell Means of the American Indian Movement (AIM) declared this war and the Indian peace initiative "to be the most important thing happening to Indian peoples at this time anywhere. It is beyond the colonizers' comprehension."

To the Indian nations, the Nicaraguan state is a superpower that has invaded and expropriated their lands, forcibly imposed foreign controls, and denied Indian peoples any rights to territory, resources, or freedom to pursue their own ways of life. The Indian war seeks to remove the Sandinista state from Indian lands and communities. John Mohawk (Six Nations Confederacy) has followed the war from the start and says "The Nicaraguans go through all sorts of gyrations to hide the facts that their people have invaded the coast, and that they look different, talk different, are in a different place — not their home,

Bruno Gabriel and combined Misurasata-Misura Indian warriors at the formation of the all-Indian Frente Interno, formed in August 1984 inside Indian Nicaragua. A top political and military leader, Bruno Gabriel was killed 10 days after this picture was taken during a massive attack on the communities of Haulover, Mouta, Karaslaya, Layastka and Maspaska.

-Photo by Bernard Nietschmann



collapse of new possibilities for Third and Fourth World Nations if the war goes on to a bloody conclusion.

Nicaragua's Indian War: Clash Between Two Worlds

By Rudolph C. Ryser

Center for World Indigenous Studies

Scores of thatched-hut villages are burned, farm stock are slaughtered, and the natives are rounded up and marched off to join other natives from other scorched villages in a specially built, fenced compound. The heavily armed spanish soldiers act as sentries guarding the compound and the governor proclaims the natives secure and protected from threatening bandits. Other natives still on the loose organize small bands of warriors and attack the soldiers in the swamps, the forests and in the highlands. More soldiers are garrisoned in native territories to pacify more villages. The natives increase their resistance and a war commences.

A sixteenth century confrontation between Spanish conquistadors and American Indians? The Brazilian Government's battle against the Yanomnu Indians along the Amazon in the 1970's and 1980's? Perhaps, it is a description of the Guatemalan Government's treatment of the Mayan Indians since the late 1970's. Or, maybe it is a description of the war against the Pipil Indians being waged by the El Salvadoran Government, Death Squads and rebels since 1979. In truth, it is a general description of all of these confrontations, and it describes the four-year war between the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indian Nations and the Government of Nicaragua. They are all confrontations between the ancient

world of the America's and the colonizers who seek land and riches.

Over a period of four hundred years, the Western Hemisphere saw countless wars, skirmishes and battles between European settlers and Indian Nations from the southern tip of South America to the Arctic Circle. Out of this period emerged more than thirty-five new states superimposed on the territories of thousands of ancient nations and tribes. But, despite the protracted wars and the europeanization of the Americas, more than two thousand Indian nations and tribes persist in their hold on parcels of land occupied by their ancestors for thousands of years.

As we near the close of the twentieth century, Indian wars have been renewed - only now with a difference. Instead of European powers crossing the ocean to invade Indian territories to spread religion and gather riches, American states are *imploding*, and invading the remnants of Indian homelands to spread political ideologies and gather riches.

The Chilean government has carried on a policy of oppressing the 500,000 Mapuche Indians, the Bolivian Government marginalizes the Quechua Indians who constitute the majority population of that state, the Guatemalan government attacks Mayan Indians who are the majority population in that state, the El Salvadoran government and the rebels opposed to the government have jointly killed one-third of the Pipil Indians since 1979 and the Nicaraguan Government, along with the rebels who oppose that government, have killed more than a thousand Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indians since 1980.

While all of these confrontations between American states and Indian peoples share common characteristics, Nicaragua's Indian War has some important differences. All of the violent

and elsewhere in the world also have a stake in the Misurasata/Nicaragua negotiations. Failure of the talks will confirm suspicions widely held among indigenous peoples that *left-wing* or Marxist revolutions and the states they produce are no different than capitalist or *right-wing* movements. Both will be fully seen for what they are: Two sides of the same coin. Indeed, the experiences Fourth World peoples have had with socialist states in Burma, Vietnam, China, Spain, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and New Caledonia (France claims this island territory) already confirm this suspicion. Relief from state wars against indigenous nations in India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and at the hands of other capitalist and socialist states will only come when indigenous nations succeed in forming global alliances for mutual defense or when all indigenous nations are annihilated.

Nicaragua's Indian War and the Misurasata/Nicaragua Autonomy Peace Talks do have a special significance for Third World and Fourth World peoples. A mutually acceptable conclusion of the talks will create a new dynamic for political revolution - a dynamic which demonstrates that Third and Fourth World Peoples can peacefully coexist and mutually benefit one another. A successful conclusion to the only peace negotiations between a Third World state and Fourth World Nations currently even partially active in the world can produce a revolutionary blend that can serve as a real alternative to the fraudulent systems offered by the United States and the Soviet Union. Misurasata and the Government of Nicaragua risk failure by continuing their peace negotiations, but such a risk is outweighed by the possibilities for success. They guarantee failure for the Nicaraguan revolution, the death of three Indian nations, and the

support of Ethiopia against the people of Eritria, as the Ethiopian military forces battle Fourth World peoples. The Soviet Union, like the United States, is actively engaged (either directly or indirectly) in twenty-three wars around the world involving a state in violent combat with one or more Fourth World Nations. The revolutions that created both the Soviet Union and the United States were in large measure conducted at the expense of Fourth World peoples. Their foreign policies continue to reflect this tendency toward indigenous peoples throughout the world.

Nicaragua has an opportunity to become the first truly revolutionary state without oppressing Fourth World peoples. It can still reject state models which have brutalized indigenous peoples. The Government of Nicaragua still can formulate a revolution that is uniquely characteristic of the Western Hemisphere, but only if it agrees to coexist with the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations, and recognize Fourth World aspirations as revolutionary.

The stakes for the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indian Nations and the Fourth World are equally high. If the Misurasata/Nicaragua Autonomy Peace Talks fail, these Indian Nations risk total annihilation at the hands of the Nicaraguan military. Having suffered the destruction of nearly half of their villages as a result of Nicaraguan scorched earth policies and aerial bombings, as well as attacks by the Nicaraguan rebel forces located in Honduras and Costa Rica, the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nation have already realized the risks and high stakes involved in defending their homelands against invasion by Nicaraguan forces. While the Nicaraguans will be seen as having committed genocide, the Indian Nations will be dead. Fourth World peoples throughout the hemisphere

confrontations involve Fourth World Indian Nations and Third World States. They are all concerned with Fourth World Nation claims to lands and natural resources and political sovereignty, and Third World state claims to national sovereignty, natural resource development and integration. Unlike the other states involved in Indian wars, Nicaragua is engaged in a self-proclaimed revolution for social, economic and political justice — a revolution guided by Marxist ideologies. Unlike any other Fourth World Nations in the Western Hemisphere, the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indian Nations have organized their own revolution, their own defensive military and their own Indian political ideology in response to what they consider to be an overt invasion of their homelands by the revolutionary government of Nicaragua.

The clash between Nicaragua's interests and the interests of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations has a special significance because of the revolutionary model that both parties represent. Nicaragua's revolution has been portrayed by its supporters as the first truly revolutionary example for other hemispheric Third World states if it succeeds. Similarly, Fourth World Indian Nations throughout the hemisphere (and, indeed, many Fourth World indigenous nations elsewhere in the world) have come to view the revolutionary experiment of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations as a potential example to be followed if it succeeds.

For six months, the political and military organization of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations, Misurasata, and the Government of Nicaragua conducted four rounds of Autonomy—Peace Talks aimed at bringing the four-year Indian war to an end. Cautious hopes were raised that real peace talks between Indian Nations and a state would be

conducted on the basis of mutual respect and mutual interests.

These hopes were especially aroused because the Government of Nicaragua was viewed as revolutionary in the true sense of the word. Unlike the Governments of Guatemala and El Salvador which are clearly practicing genocide against Fourth World peoples (the Mayans in Guatemala and Pipil in El Salvador), many Indian peoples in the hemisphere were hopeful that the Government of Nicaragua had truly come to recognize the folly of its widely publicized statements about "mistakes in the treatment of the Indians". Indeed, within two weeks following the third round of peace talks, Nicaragua's Omar Cabezas was quoted in the press as "warmly" describing Misurasata as "a group that took up arms to rebel against our mistakes."

The fourth round of the Misurasata/Nicaragua Autonomy Peace Negotiations broke down in May. The Government of Nicaragua charged that Misurasata violated a limited *humanitarian agreement* that had been reached during the third round of talks by committing offensive military actions against Nicaraguan forces. Misurasata countered by saying that Nicaragua had violated the spirit and the intent of the agreement by failing to fulfill its commitment to allow humanitarian aid to Indian villages, and by the government's offensive bombing of Indian villages before the beginning of the fourth round of talks. Misurasata also denied Nicaraguan charges and suggested that the Nicaraguan government was merely creating false charges to justify ending the negotiations.

Despite the breakdown of the peace talks, there is still a small hope that Misurasata and the Government of Nicaragua can find a peaceful solution to the Indian War. Indeed, many believe

that they must find a mutually acceptable peace solution. For both, the stakes are very high. The humanity and integrity of the Nicaraguan revolution rests in large measure on how it deals with Fourth World peoples. If it fails to recognize and accept the fundamental social, economic and political rights of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations, the Nicaraguan revolution and all other similar revolutions will be regarded as a fraud, and they will be violently opposed by Fourth World peoples.

In the Western Hemisphere, this is especially significant because Fourth World Nations have a collective population of more than eighty-five million. In the Third World states of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Venezuela, Peru, Bolivia and Chile Indian Nations are either the majority population, or they are a dominant population occupying a major portion of the state's claimed territory. Fourth World Nations are actively forming political and military alliances throughout the hemisphere, thus strengthening their individual capacity to confront states as significant economic, military and political forces. The Fourth World will either become an important ally of Third World revolutionary movements, or it will become a significant opponent. As Che Guevara learned in Bolivia: Without the support of the Indian nations, Third World revolutionary movements are doomed to failure, and such revolutionaries cannot succeed unless they understand and recognize the interests and aspirations of Fourth World Nations.

The Soviet Union has already demonstrated its inability to comprehend the interests and aspirations of Fourth World Nations as it continues to conduct its war against the tribes of Afghanistan. It has also shown its blindness to the Fourth World by its