

Confidential

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ralph Eluska, NCAI Senior International Relations Rep.
cc: Joe DeLaCruz, President
Hollis Stabler, Treasurer
Ron Andrade, Executive Director

FROM: R.C. Ryser *R.C. Ryser*

SUBJECT: Preliminary Progress and Follow-Through re: Indian
Crisis in Central America Resolution.

DATE: 10 June, 1982

Subsequent to the adoption of the above mentioned resolution, the following actions have been taken:

1. I discussed the steps for formally releasing the resolution with a "cover story" to the wire services, domestic press and international press with Theresa of the NCAI staff and was assured this matter would be taken care of. I have seen no evidence that the "press" was systematically and thoroughly briefed -- except several interviews with radio (local San Diego) by R. Eluska, J. DeLaCruz and myself. I had asked D. LaCourse (of the CERT Report) to help facilitate distribution
2. On Wednesday - 2 June - I called the NCAI Office to determine if the resolution had been transmitted to the WCIP "with all deliberate speed" as required in the resolution. I was advised that key staff were not yet returned from San Diego, and wouldn't be back until Monday, 7 MAY. The transmission had not been executed. I called WCIP to advise them of the resolution noting that the Non-Aligned countries were meeting the week of 1 June - 4 June in Havana, Cuba. I further urged that the resolution with a WCIP cover be sent to key non-aligned countries including Tanzania, India and Yugoslavia following a telephone consultation with George Manuel. I sent a copy of the resolution to the WCIP Secretariat on Wednesday with the understanding of General Administrator, Marie Marule, that the Secretariat would act in accordance with the NCAI resolution. I called WCIP/CORPI President Jose Carlos Morales in San Jose, Costa Rica to advise him of the resolution. I advised him that copies of the final resolution were being hand-carried by Juana Vasquez and Floriberto Diaz Gomez to CORPI by way of Ellizar Lobez. Jose expressed pleasure with the resolution and extended his gratitude to NCAI. I briefed former President (WCIP) George Manuel over the telephone and provided a personal five hour briefing to him on 8 June in Blaine, Washington near the Canadian border. I called Juana Vasquez in Mexico to confirm that she and Floriberto returned to their homes safely and was encouraged by Juana's comment that the political leadership (Indigenous) in Oaxaca were pleased with the resolution and were actively holding meetings on it.
3. I have completed a preliminary assessment of steps that should be considered concerning implementation of the Resolution in connection with NCAI actions toward the U.S. government. This assessment follows:

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The United States foreign policy in Central America and Mexico must be seen in the context of a broader set of policies which include the whole of the Caribbean Basin. The US operates on the basis of the Monroe Doctrine which asserts that the Caribbean Basin (including Mexico and Central America) is within the US sphere of influence which must not be "penetrated" by countries outside the Western Hemisphere. The sphere of influence is defined as geographical, military (strategic) and economic. Central American and South American countries have become the largest source of imported raw materials and goods to the US, and U.S. companies (involved in mining, timber, specialty agricultural crops like bananas, coffee and cotton; and banking, petroleum and aluminum) have invested heavily in business and industrial activities which serve primarily the U.S. markets. U.S. strategic interests in the Caribbean include the commercial interests, shipping lanes and the Panama Canal.

The advent of revolutions in Cuba, Granada and now Nicaragua are seen as examples of "external penetration" by other states which threaten U.S. strategic, commercial and import/export dominance. Communism is presented as the most significant external influence though in fact the principal concern is not ideological but rather military and economic. U.S. policy opposes any external penetration including British, French and Spanish as well as Soviet and Chinese penetration. Japanese commercial influence is equally opposed by the U.S. The justification of U.S. policies in the Caribbean basin during the last thirty years has been generally "anti-communism" despite the actual motivations arising from military and economic self-interest. The U.S. has treated the Caribbean Basin as its own strategic and economic preserve.

The U.S. has maintained a large military presence in Panama and a fleet of ships in the Caribbean for decades. These military capabilities have been used primarily to support and maintain U.S. economic and commercial interests, and more recently they have been used to destabilize unfriendly governments. Most all of the National Guards and police forces in Central American and Caribbean countries have been trained in the United States and most all of the Secret police and security forces are directly connected or associated with the US CIA. The principal bases for CIA operations are located in Mexico City and the Capitol of Honduras.

For the period running from 1964 to 1979 the U.S. government has provided "friendly" governments with modest economic and military support. Economic aid has been devoted primarily to emergency aid in areas of natural disaster and economic aid to assist countries threatening default on loans secured from the Inter-American Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary fund. U.S. economic aid funds have been used primarily to prevent default through payment of "debt service" costs. Mexico currently has the highest foreign debt (equalling about \$30 Billion) and is unable to pay on the principal much less the interest and debt service. El Salvador has a foreign debt estimated to be in excess of \$2 Billion while Nicaragua has a foreign debt of more than \$2.4 Billion. None of the Central American Countries and Mexico is able to pay the principal, interest or debt services to avoid default. The U.S. is eager to prevent default by any of these countries to avoid

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a total collapse of the international monetary system (which has been in trouble ever since the United States devalued its currency in 1971 and removed the dollar from the gold standard in that year). U.S. Caribbean Policy has therefore, been recently directed toward proping up governments and failing national economies through bi-lateral financial transferrals. Mr. Reagan's recently announced Caribbean Basin Initiative, which proposed \$300 Billion in credits and direct transferrals was primarily designed to deal with the prospects of international loan defaults.

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Apart from its military installation in Panama and the Caribbean fleet the U.S. has more recently begun to increase its military aid to Central American and other Caribbean Countries. Direct U.S. Military aid to Central American countries in 1981 was about \$90 million while economic aid was about \$214.7 million. According to the North American Congress on Latin America and Time Magazine U.S. direct military and economic aid in Central America was distributed in 1981 as follows: Guatemala: Military aid= \$0, Economic aid \$11.7 million; El Salvador: Military aid= \$80 million, Economic aid= \$104 million; Honduras: Military aid \$10 million, Economic aid= \$38 million; Nicaragua: Military aid= \$0, Economic aid \$10 million; Costa Rica: Military aid= \$50 Thousand, Economic aid= \$51 million. Additional military support to these Central American countries has been indirectly provided by the United States through Israel through arms transferrals. Such transferrals were also a product of Israeli military sales and manufactured export. Between 1970 and 1980 the Israelis have transferred arms to Central American countries as follows: Mexico: 10 Arava (STOL) Transports; Guatemala: 11 Arava STOL Transports, 10 RBV Mk Armored Cars, 15,000 5.56-mm Galil Assault Rifles, 4 Field Kitchens; El Salvador: 17 Arava (STOL) Transports, 6 Fouga Magister Trainers*, 18 Dassault Ouragan Fighters*, 200 60-mm Rocket Launchers, 200 9-mm Uzi Submachine Guns, Ammunition and Spare parts; Honduras: 12 Dassault Super Mystere Fighters*, 4 Arava (STOL) Transports, 1 Westwind Reconnaissance Plane, 106-mm Mortars, 14 RBV Mk Armored Cars, 106-mm Rifles, 5 Fast Patrol Boats* (unconfirmed); Nicaragua: 2 Arava (STOL) Transports, Rifles, Ammunitions, Patrol Boats, Radios; Panama: 1 Westwind Reconnaissance Plane.

(Notes: *Indicates rebuilt planes from the Israeli Air Force. Sources: DMS Market Intelligence, Foreign Military Markets: South America-Australasia, 1981, p. 9; various issues of the Weekly Report of Strategic Latin American Affairs; and World Armaments and Disarmament -- SIPRI 1969/1970 and 1971 a 1981.)

Along with the Soviet Union, France, Britain, Israel, Brazil, Venezuela and Argentina, the United States has in 1982 dramatically increased its foreign military sales to Third World Countries. Arms shipments into the Caribbean and particularly Mexico and Central America have increased an estimated 300% in the last few years. Covert military actions involving the US CIA and the intelligence agencies of other countries have also increased dramatically. An estimated \$19 million has been committed by the United States for one operation alone in southern Honduras in connection with insurgencies in Nicaragua.

Trends in U.S. foreign investment in Central America and South America follow the military investment patterns:

(During the period from 1967 to 1977 -- the most recent figures--
U.S. corporate investments in developing countries has grown
from \$59.5 million to \$148.8 million)

<u>U.S. Investments in Central and South America:</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1977</u>
% of Total U.S. Investments	20.2	17.6	18.6
% of U.S. Invest in Develop Countries	63.2	55.5	82.2

U.S. Investments in Central and South America
by Industry.

Mining	\$1.7	\$2.1	\$1.6
Petroleum	3.5	4.3	3.4
Manufacturing	3.6	5.6	10.0
Other	3.2	4.6	12.7

(Source: Survey of Current Business, Sept, 1973 and August 1978.)

As a proportion of investment capital going to developing countries the U.S. has dramatically increased its involvement in Central and South America. The trend for development is increasingly focusing on manufacturing because of the large pool of labor that can be purchased cheaply.

It is in this military and economic context that the United States has defined its "national security" interests. It should be apparent that because indigenous populations represent a large and inexpensive labor pool and they occupy territories which are increasingly found to contain important raw materials these military and economic trends cannot be seen as beneficial. When U.S. military and economic trends are combined with similar escalations by other countries the violent political responses and extraordinarily adverse social consequences are bound to occur.

U.S. Central American policy is receiving significant attention in the U.S. Congress with current consideration of foreign aid bills and military aid bills. The Reagan administration has proposed to increase its military aid to El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica while attempting to promote new direct aid to Guatemala. (Note: Military aid to Guatemala was stopped by the Carter Administration even though indirect aid and transfers continued) Legislation concerning military aid to these countries is currently pending before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senate Appropriations Sub-committee on Foreign Operations and in the House Appropriations Sub-committee on Foreign Operations and House Foreign Affairs Sub-committee on Inter-American Affairs. It appears that such legislation will be concluded in July, 1982. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has recently voted to reduce the Reagan requested military aid appropriation to El Salvador from \$166 million to \$66 million in response to a recent decision of the El Salvadoran National Assembly to delay and therefore repeal the U.S. supported "land reform" program. There is considerable sentiment in the U.S. congress opposing U.S. arms shipments and Military aid in Central America. CORPI has been urging for three years that U.S. arms shipments and military aid be stopped.

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The WCIP has also sought to reduce US arms shipments and military through letters to the US Department of State. In the light of these efforts and the view of CORPI it would seem prudent that the NCAI adopt a systematic strategy to advocate the elimination of arms shipments, U.S. military training of Central American Nationals and an elimination of U.S. military aid to all Central American Countries. Such an effort could be coordinated with a similar effort by the WCIP at the international level to push for a halt of all arms shipments, sales, transferrals and aid efforts in which other countries are involved. While pursuing this course NCAI, WCIP and CORPI may press for recognition of Indigenous populations in Central America and Mexico as negotiators on their own behalf in multi-lateral negotiation for cease-fire between rival groups.

NCAI/U.S. government

I would urge that NCAI consider carrying out the following actions in connection with the U.S. Government (in coordination with CORPI and the WCIP):

1. Notify the following agencies, committees and individuals inside the U.S. government of the NCAI resolution with a cover-letter and a copy of the NCAI resolution:

Key U.S. Senators:

Henry M. Jackson
Howard Baker
Barry Goldwater
Ted Kennedy

John Glenn
Richard Lugar
Clairborne Pell
Orrin Hatch
Charles Percy
Robert Packwood
Mark Hatfield
Nancy Kassebaum

Key Congressmen:

Clement Zablocki
Don Bonker
Paul McCloskey
Thomas O'Neil

Thomas Foley
Jim Wright
Joel Pritchard
Guy Vander Jagt
John Dingell
Morris Udall
Clarence Long

Key Executive Branch:

Edwin Meese
Walter Clark

Jim Baker
Jean Kirkpatrick
Alexander Haig, Jr.

In connection with this letter NCAI should offer to provide personal briefings as a follow-up to the correspondence. Such briefings should be conducted by R. Eluska or his surrogate.

*Note: all correspondence should contain a full listing of the cc's

2. NCAI should conduct immediate follow-up briefings with CORPI at their scheduled meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica in the month of June.
3. NCAI should consult with the WCIP Secretariat to monitor its follow-up efforts and specifically urge wide distribution of its resolution internationally.
4. NCAI should send a cover letter and its resolution directly to the following foreign embassies located in Washington D.C.:

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Key Foreign Embassies:

Brazil	El Salvador	Honduras
Chile	Costa Rica	Guatemala
Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama
France	Venezuela	Israel
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	Cuba	India*
Kuwait*	Lesotho*	Norway*
Papua New Guinea*	Saudi Arabia*	Tanzania*
Nauru*	Canada*	Barbados*
Australia*		

(* indicates that resolution and cover are transmitted as a point of information for reference to the respective foreign ministries.)

5. Several specific agencies of the U.S. should receive the same letter and resolution as the Key individuals:

State Department:

Bureau of Inter-American Affairs
Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs
Director for Central America
Director for Mexican Affairs

Bureau of International Organization Affairs
Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs

Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs
Assistant Secretary

U.S. Senate:

Senate Appropriations
Sub-committee on Arms Control of Armed Services
Banking, Housing & Urban Affairs Subcommittee on International
finance
Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs
Indian Affairs Committee

U.S. House:

Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations
Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs Subcommittee on Inter-
national Development Institutions and Finance.
Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs

A letter of transmission and a copy of the resolution should be forwarded to the above mentioned agencies, individuals, embassies and committees immediately. A formal briefing and position paper should be developed as further follow-on use. Our correspondence must be cc'ed with references to the WCIP Secretariat and CORPI as blind copies.

(Note: This memorandum must be held in confidence within NCAI -- it is not, I repeat, it is not to be used for public attribution or general distribution.)

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Prepared By: R. Ryser
30 mar - 17 may 82

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS
MID-YEAR CONVENTION
May 25, 26, 27 1982
San Diego, California

A Resolution

(INDIAN CRISIS IN CENTRAL AMERICA: A Resolution concerning the urgent situation of Central American Indian Peoples in the face of violence and genocide, with particular references to situations in El Salvador, Guatamala and Nicaragua.)

1.0 Statement of Findings:

The more than fifteen million Indigenous peoples (Indians) located within the asserted boundaries of Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Belize, Guatamala and México constitute majority populations within their respective territorial enclaves. The majority of Central American Indigenous peoples retain their own cultural practices, their own native languages and internal political systems and have maintained their distinct group identity despite Spanish and British colonization of their territories and subsequent formation of eight nation-states by Spanish and British descendents. None of the Central American states recognize the distinct political character, nor do the individual states recognize the right of indigenous peoples to participate in the state governments as distinct political groups. (Note: Indigenous group representation in the Nicaraguan government was accepted in the new Council of State formed by the Sandinista regime, but was terminated in 1981.) The Indigenous populations of Mexico and Central America are treated as peasants at the bottom of the general economic system, though in reality Indigenous peoples are forced, by virtue of their Indian lineage, to live as the poorest of the poor. Over the generations rival groups of Spanish and/or British descendents have met in violent confrontations to control the various state governments which have in turn formulated laws or used violence to confiscate indigenous lands and natural resources for the direct benefit of a minority of wealthy, landed families. Thus forced off of their rich lands into less productive lands, Indigenous populations in Central America and Mexico now occupy the last remaining parts of their original homelands. During the last twenty-five years Indigenous territories now occupied have been found to contain vast amounts of petroleum, gold, nickle, timber and other raw materials of economic importance to the wealthy, landed families; and of significant strategic importance to the industrial states of North America and Europe. The current violence in Central America reflects a resurgence of rivalries among non-indigenous groups seeking to hold or gain control

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over the instruments of state government to gain ultimate control over the newly found wealth in the remaining indigenous territories. In the course of resurgent violence acts of genocide and ethnocide are being committed against indigenous groups. Indigenous populations are caught between the rival forces as a third political force which holds ideals and aspirations, values and political views in opposition to non-indigenous rivals.

1.1 Non-indigenous rival forces in Guatemala are directly and indirectly responsible for the violent deaths of an estimated 25,000 Indigenous Mayan people during the last ten years, and the dislocation of thousands more who have become refugees in other countries. The Guatemalan government, private death squads and their non-indigenous rivals are carrying out a deliberate policy of genocide to deny the Mayan peoples their fundamental human rights, their territorial rights and their livelihood as a peaceful people by confiscating Mayan lands and natural resources for the benefit of wealthy, landed families, national and multinational corporations and for the benefit of nations which receive import products from the exploitation of Mayan lands and natural resources. The Mayan population constitutes the majority population in Guatemala living under the domination and control of a minority which holds control over the military and instruments of governance. The ruling minority uses torture, intimidation and coercion against the Mayan majority to secure virtual slave labor; and thru coercion to induct Mayan men and boys into the military to carry out insurgency and counter insurgency actions among the minority population and against Mayan communities. Weapons and armaments widely used against indigenous communities are imported to Guatemala from the United States, Brazil, Israel, Venezuela, Chile and Eastern Block states through government-to-government sales or through the private black market.

1.2 Non-indigenous rival forces in El Salvador are directly and indirectly responsible for the violent deaths of an undetermined number of Indigenous Pipiles (Nahuat-Pipiles) whose collective population is estimated at 360,000. El Salvadoran government officials, private militias, death squads and their rival counterparts are carrying out a deliberate policy of genocide against the Pipiles to deny them their fundamental human rights, their territorial rights and their livelihood as a peaceful people. The Pipiles constitute a majority populations within their own region living under the domination and control of a majority which holds control over the military and instruments of governance. Rival forces within the majority use torture, intimidation and coercion against the Pipiles to secure virtual slave labor; and the ruling majority practices torture, mass murder, intimidation and coercion to induct Pipiles men and boys into the military to carry out insurgency and counter insurgency attacks within the majority population and against Pipile communities. Weapons and armaments widely used against indigenous communities are imported to El Salvador from the United States, Argentina, Venezuela and Israel through government-to-government sales and transfers, and through the private black-market from Libya, Western Block states and Eastern Block States.

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1.3 Non-indigenous rival forces in Nicaragua, in the border areas of Honduras and Costa Rica and in Guatamala are carrying out acts of genocide and ethnocide against the Indigenous Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples who have a combined population exceeding 180,000. The Miskito, Sumu and Rama constitute the majority population living on the Atlantic Coast, in Selaya Department, within the asserted boundaries of Nicaragua. Acts of violence against the Miskito, Sumu and Rama have been precipitated by the 1979 overthrow of the Anastasio Somoza Regime by the "Frente Sandinista De Liberacion Nacional" (F.S.L.N.) which subsequently established the Sandinista Regime. An undetermined number of Miskito, Sumu and Rama have been murdered by the military and insurgency forces of the former Somoza Regime operating from protected enclaves in Honduras and Costa Rica with the covert aid of the United States government, paramilitary forces in Florida and California, and covert forces organized by Argentina, Chile and other South and Central American states. These enclave and covert forces are using torture, mass murder, intimidation and coercion to induct Miskito, Sumu and Rama men and boys into their ranks to carry out violent actions against Miskito, Sumu and Rama communities, and against communities and installations under the control of the Sandinista Regime. The Sandinista Regime has enacted a policy entitled "Declaration of the Popular Sandinista Revolution in Regards to the Indigenous Communities of the Atlantic Coast" which contemplates "forcible assimilation of Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples and their territories into Nicaraguan society despite their relative independence prior to 1979. The Sandinista policy further contemplates annexation and confiscation of Miskito, Sumu and Rama territories and natural resources against the will of the coastal indigenous peoples. These policies are now being executed as demonstrated by the forced relocation of more than 8,500 Miskito from their native villages from the government controlled "model communities". The Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples are being tortured, murdered, intimidated and coerced by representatives of the Sandinista Government and the United States supported forces seeking to overthrow the Sandinista Government. Weapons and armaments from France, Libya, the United States, Cuba, the Soviet Union, Argentina, Israel, Brazil and Chile provided through government-to-government sales and transfers, and through the black-market are being used against the Indigenous Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples.

1.4 The acts of violence against indigenous peoples, as revealed by events in Guatamala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, demonstrate a systematic and calculated pattern of state supported and rival group supported practice of genocide and ethnocide against the indigenous peoples of Central America. The illustrated events also demonstrate complicity in the acts of genocide and ethnocide by the states of Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Honduras, Venezuela, Israel, Libya, Cuba, the United States, the Soviet Union and France.

2.0 WHEREAS: In consideration of the Founding principles upon which the Constitution of the National Congress of American Indians is based where member Tribal Governments are committed to the preservation of Indian cultural values, the equitable adjustment of Indian Affairs, the preservation of Indian rights, the

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the promotion of the common welfare of the American Indian;
and a better understanding of Indians, and

- 2.1 WHEREAS: Recalling that the National Congress of American Indians is a Charter member of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, founded in Port Alberni, Canada on October 27-30, 1975, and is, thereby, committed under that Charter to: "Promote unity of Indigenous peoples through knowledge and organization; to combat racism, to abolish genocide and ethnocide; to ensure political, economic and social justice; and to establish equality among indigenous peoples and other peoples of the world", and
- 2.2 WHEREAS: Recalling that the National Congress of American Indians has from time-to-time extended its support and assistance to indigenous populations throughout the Western Hemisphere through the adoption of relevant resolutions in convention, and
- 2.3 WHEREAS: Recalling that the National Congress of American Indians has mandated international initiatives to organize and promote supportive action within the United Nations and other international organizations to stop national government policies of genocide and ethnocide against tribal peoples ** in South America, Central America, North America, the South Pacific and Northern Europe, as provided in the "Tribal/Global Relations: Policy & Action Plan for the 80's" adopted by the 37th Annual NCAI Convention, October 28, 1980, and
- 2.4 WHEREAS: Recognizing that the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination and self-government is accepted in international law, and has been increasingly given effect in the domestic law of States, and
- 2.5 WHEREAS: Considering that the Recognition of the Inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of individuals and of peoples is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, and considering that these principles are recognized and proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, and
- 2.6 WHEREAS: the Indigenous peoples of Central America and Mexico are suffering from systematic and calculated genocide and ethnocide due to the actions of State governments and their rivals; and the Indigenous Indian Peoples of Central America and Mexico are suffering from the systematic and calculated efforts of States to force assimilation, annex indigenous territories, and expropriate and confiscate indigenous lands and natural resources.
- 3.0 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE National Congress of American Indians does hereby, proclaim its endorsement and support of the Indigenous peoples of Central America and Mexico and offers its assistance and participation in World Council of Indigenous Peoples sponsored commissions or other actions which may be instituted to protect Indian Rights in Central America and Mexico, and

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- 3.1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians does call upon the World Council of Indigenous Peoples to receive this resolution and transmit it to the good offices of the United Nations, Organization of American States, Organization of Non-Aligned Countries, the European Human Rights Commission, the U.N. Human Rights Commission, the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, the Foreign Ministries of all of the hostile States governments, representatives of hostile rival groups located in Central America and Mexico, and the relevant international press,
- 3.2 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians does direct its President and Executive Committee and staff to take all necessary steps to express our collective outrage and the contents of this resolution to the Executive and Legislative offices of the United States Government relevant to our concerns, and
- 3.3 BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians does direct its President and Executive Committee and relevant staff to take all necessary steps to convey the contents of this resolution to the U.S. electronic media and press, and to the Central American Regional Indigenous Council (CORPI) with all deliberate speed.

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INDIGENOUS CRISIS IN CENTRAL AMERICAN AND THE CARRIBEAN REGION

Nicaragua: Sandinistas, MISURASATA and the Rights
of the Miskitos, Sumus and Ramas

(A background and Policy paper of the NCAI Office of Tribal International Relations prepared by Rudolph C. Ryser.)

Indigenous populations in Central America and the Caribbean region have suffered increasing violent attacks on their leaders and communities during the last twenty years. The wave of violence now blanketing Central America and southern Mexico is proclaimed by the international press and foreign ministries from capitals in North America to Europe and the Soviet Union as a contemporary struggle between the forces of the political right and left to gain control over each of the Central American Countries. Hidden under the propaganda and rhetoric is the struggle of millions of indigenous peoples to control their own political and economic future. Tribal groups and indigenous nations have become targets of minority political factions within each Central American country; the result of which is that even as each faction seeks to destroy the other indigenous populations are being caught in the "cross-fire."

The current conflicts in Central America have many dimensions which hold great significance for the future of Indigenous peoples all over the world. This paper will examine the historical, economic and political circumstances that surround the Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples who live on the Atlantic coastal strip of Honduras and Nicaragua. Though the focus of this paper is on Nicaragua and the Miskitos the circumstances throughout Central America are directly related. At the root of our discussion is the basic question of tribal survival and the future of the rights of Indigenous peoples to live freely. This paper will demonstrate that the actions of nation-states in pursuit of their own interests are aimed at the dislocation and eventual destruction of indigenous societies. The Indigenous Crisis in Central America boldly demonstrates the fact that while nation-states will agree that genocide must not be practiced on each other it can be practiced on indigenous populations and tolerated. To prevent nation-state genocide against indigenous populations the World Council of Indigenous Peoples called upon indigenous populations throughout the world to help one another. The National Congress of American Indians has accepted the WCIP challenge, and has therefore adopted its own policy to aid indigenous nations and groups in their efforts to defend against nation-state threats.

The questions this paper will attempt to answer are: What are the historical, social, economic and political circumstances surrounding the Miskito, Sumu and Rama tribes and how do they relate to the current confrontations with the Nicaraguan Sandinista Regime? To what extent would a solution to the Miskito (et al) and Sandinista conflict contribute to a session of hostilities throughout the Central American Region. What place should indigenous have in the proposed conflict settlement negotiations (President Portillo of Mexico proposal)? What role can the National Congress of American Indian play in the

reduction of hostilities between Miskitos and the Sandinistas, and the protection of Indigenous interests in Central America and Mexico? What initiatives should the NCAI take to increase the WCIP's effectiveness as a supportive influence in Central America?

Statement of the Problem:

The Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples are currently caught in the political and military cross-fires of non-indigenous powers and interests -- their livelihood, security of their peoples, lands and natural resources are threatened with destruction and expropriation as a consequence of the following:

1. The powerfully nationalistic Sandinista Regime which overthrew the regime of Anastasio Somoza on July 20, 1979 has assumed governmental authority over Nicaragua. The new Regime is attempting to consolidate political and military control over Nicaraguan territory and now seeks to "integrate the Atlantic Coast as a priority" (the Atlantic Coast is the Miskito reserved territory which has been semi-independent until 1962). To consolidate its authority, the Sandinista Regime has begun to institute a series of "assimilationist" policies and installed its military presence in many Miskito, Sumu and Rama villages and towns. Through their current "national" organization, MISURASATA and local indigenous community organizations tribal leaders have pressed the Sandinistas to recognize and respect Miskito, Sumu, and Rama territory (land rights) and their right to control and use their own natural resources. The Sandinistas have responded by charging the indigenous leadership with being "anti-revolutionary, separatists and racists. The Sandinistas clearly regard the Indigenous demands for recognized land rights and control over natural resources as a threat to "national stability" and the regime itself.

2. Remnants of the followers of Anastasio Somoza (landed oligarchy, businessmen, politicians and military) have taken up exile in enclaves located across the border from Nicaragua and Miskito territory in Honduras. The Somoza forces in Honduras (with similar camps in Guatemala, California and Florida) are staging incursions into Miskito Territory with the intent of overthrowing the Sandinista Regime. The Miskito population located in the PuertoCBazas area (the northeastern part of the territory on the Honduran border) has borne the brunt of incursions in the last year. Sandinista military forces are heavily entrenched in this part of Miskito Territory. In an effort to prevent subversion of Miskito people, and to prevent pro-Somoza forces from organizing Miskitos against the Sandinistas the Nicaraguan Regime relocated up to 10,000 Miskito people by moving them farther south and to the interior.

3. Former MISURASATA leader, Stefan Fagoth Muller, became an exile in May of 1981 after having served in prison from the time he was arrested with other tribal leaders in February 1981. Fagoth attracted 3,000 Miskito followers to join him in Honduras as he closed ranks with the Somoza followers. A provisional tribal leadership has been installed to head the MISURASATA organization. Meanwhile, Fagoth appears to have come to the belief that the Somoza forces will help protect Miskito, Sumu and Rama interests against the Sandinista Regime. Fagoth has traveled to Washington D.C. and

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consulted with U.S. authorities, and made public charges against the Sandinista Regime. Some Miskito, Sumu and Rama leaders have closed ranks with the Sandinista Regime, while many others remain neutral.

4. The United States and the Soviet Union have elevated the civil strife in Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatamala to the status of a "confrontation between the super powers" Both the US and the USSR have attempted to apply military measures to problems which are essentially political in character. The U.S. has claimed hegemony over the Central American and Caribbean Region off and on for decades. As its "great power sphere of influence" countries in Central America and the Caribbean have been expected to be loyal to the United States. U.S. domination of the region was upset when Cuba experienced a revolution opposed by the United States. Cuba established close relations with the Soviet Union. Jamaica was closely allied to socialist and non-aligned countries until the government of Michael Manley was, in-effect, overthrown at the election polls in 1980; his government was replaced with a government more sympathetic to U.S. interests. The island country of Granada became a progressive socialist regime aligned with Cuba and then the Sandinista forces overthrew the Somoza Regime which had been sympathetic to US interests. These events have caused US policy makers to generate reactionary policies aimed at the "overthrow" of any government not sympathetic to U.S. political and economic interests. The U.S. considers its vital interests to include: the Panama Canal Zone, fisheries and oil resources in the Caribbean Sea, U.S. multi-national corporate activities in control of timber, oil, bauxite and alumina production, coal and gold. These interests combine with the US desire to control shipping lanes. The Soviet Union is seen as a threat to US interests as it supports (economically and militarily) the Cuban, Granada and Nicaraguan Regimes.

The Soviet Union portrays itself as supporting popular revolutions which break down feudalistic systems in the region. Clearly, in the "great powers" context the Soviet Union believes it is protecting its political and economic goals by providing aid and assistance to countries experiencing violent revolutions. The Soviet Union's activities in the Caribbean and Central America may be closely linked to their need to counter U.S. military and economic support to Poland, Turkey and Afghanistan. Each of these countries sit on the USSR border, well within what it considers to be its sphere of influence.

The "great powers" struggle has focused on El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatamala in large measure due to the instability of the governments in each of those countries. Nicaragua has become a specific propaganda target for the United States while El Salvador has become a propaganda target for the Soviet Union. Cuba, Mexico, Granada, Libya, France and the Soviet Union have formally offered their support to the Sandinista Regime to oppose Somoza followers and US intervention. The United States is the only country formally supporting counter-insurgency moves against Nicaragua. Canada, West Germany, Australia and Scandinavian countries have publicly remained neutral though behind the scenes each is applying political pressure on behalf of Nicaragua. The United States has publicly focused its attention on

Nicaragua to distract attention away from the turmoil in El Salvador and Guatamala -- two military regimes the United States is attempting to legitimize and support. In its attempts to undermine the Sandinista Regime, the US has seized upon public disclosures (made by Stedman Fagoth Muller) concerning the Sandinista's treatment of the Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples. The US has implied that it will not prevent former Somoza militia and other counterinsurgency forces from attempting to overthrow the Sandinista Regime.

Private gun runners inside Central American Countries and in the United States are transporting large quantities of weapons which originate in Germany, Israel, Brazil, China, France, Canada, Soviet Union, Lybia and Argentina into all three countries of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatamala.

5. President Jose Portillo of Mexico has been attempting since last year to set in train a process of negotiations to halt the violent conflicts in Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatamala. Portillo has gained the support of the governments of Cuba, Granada, France, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama and Canada. Such negotiations do not now contemplate participation of Indigenous leadership. The Central American Regional Council of the WCIP (CORPI) has been considering this possibility since August of 1981. There are community and "national" indigenous organizations in each of the central American Countries. In their own territories indigenous populations are the majority with a total region-wide population estimated at more than 23 million. Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples are sophisticated in indigenous politics, but do not have a great deal of direct experience with "western" ideologies and political methods. If the negotiations or the violence is permitted to continue without organized indigenous responses, Indigenous peoples in Central America stand to sustain major setbacks and continued exploitation.

Demographics of the Reserve Territory of the Miskitos:

The boundaries of the so called Miskito Reserve Territory are the same as the Department of Zelaya, which comprises two-thirds of the entire area of Nicaragua's claimed territory. Nicaragua claims a territory with an area of 57,143 square miles. Miskito, Sumu and Rama territory (not including parts of Honduras) contains about 38,000 square miles -- an area about the size of the state of Indiana. The Reserve Territory has a population of about 200,000 people. Of the total sixty percent or 120,000 are Miskitos; five percent or 10,000 are Sumus; $\frac{1}{2}\%$ or 1,000 are Ramas; 19% or 38,000 are descendents of Arawaks, Africans and Antillians; and, 15% or 30,000 are mestizos (descendants of Indian and European marriages). The Indigenous populations live in 250 communities all along the coastal strip and toward the interior up to the mountains.

According to MISURASATA statistics provided in 1981 13% of the indigenous population is literate in European languages. Native languages are spoken within each group though the majority speak English, Spanish or both. Most of the Indigenous communities have subsistence economies dependent on agriculture and fishing.

The principle export agricultural products are bananas, cotton, fruit and jucca. Shellfish, turtles, and assorted ogean-going and fresh-

water fish are taken. Large deposits of gold, silver, and oil are located in the northern part of the territory, while soft and hard wood forests cover the tropical plains.

Community Organization:

While the Indigenous peoples of the Reserve Territory have a tradition of governance embodied in a "king" this role has always been largely ceremonial. The notion of a king originated with early relations with the British when a "treaty" of commitment was signed in Jamaica in 1687 when Britain claimed Miskito territory as a protectorate. The actual pattern of governance (which continues to the present) has been decentralized authority vested in community elders and family heads. This pattern is reflected in the formation of indigenous community organizations established in the 1960's for the purpose of promoting and advocating indigenous land rights and natural resource rights. It is the older people who hold the principle decision-making power at the community level. The influence of these people over community affairs is both significant and wide ranging.

In 1967, local community organizations were joined together under a "national" umbrella organization called ALPROMISU. This "inter-community" organization was established to promote and advocate indigenous land and natural resource rights in relations with the Samoza Government in Managua. With the overthrow of Samoza in 1979, ALPROMISU's name and organization was "reformed" into the present-day MISURASATA organization which has maintained the local community organizational links, but divided the Reserve Territory into five "administrative" regions. MISURASATA has one delegate who sits as the representative of the Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples in the Council of State in the Sandinista Government.

The younger "educated" members of indigenous communities tend to dominate the "national" organization and its regional administrative components. Local governance remains pretty-much in the control of the elders. The younger, educated members of communities have tended to play an active role in the "left/right" or "liberal/conservative" western style politics of the Nicaraguans while the older, more traditional people have tended to occupy themselves with community and family politics.

MISURASATA: Its Relationship to Communities and the Sandinista Regime

Following the assumption of power by the Sandinista Junta on July 20, 1979 the Miskito, Sumu and Rama leadership demanded a political role in the new government. This demand was inkeeping with earlier understandings made between Sandinista (FSLN) organizers and ALPROMISU activists in the years before the overthrow of the Anastasio Samoza Regime. Within months after assumption of governmental control, the Sandinista leadership agreed to authorize the creation of a Miskito, Sumu and Rama coalition organization (MISURASATA) which would have one representative who would sit in the legislative assembly of the new government. MISURASATA would function as the social, economic and political link between the new government and the indigenous communities of the Reserved Territory. MISURASATA announced its goals to include social, economic and cultural development of the indigenous

peoples of the Department of Zelaya. MISURASATA was structured to include five administrative regions as follows: Northeast Region, headquartered in Puerto Cabezas; Rio Coco Region, headquartered in Bluefields; Waspan; Mine Region, headquartered in Rosita; South Region, headquartered in Raiti. Representatives from each of the 250 communities would participate in MISURASATA through community organizations and the regional administrative units.

Until February 1981, Stedmean Fagoth Muller was the principle leader of the national organization. Norman Cambell Smith was the international relations coordinator and Armondo Rojas Smith was the representative from Miskito Territory to the Central American Regional Council (CORPI) of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.

The roots of MISURASATA can be found in the establishment of local indigenous organizations along the Coco River in the early 1960s. The need for such community organizations was sparked by efforts of the Anastasio Samoza Regime to "nationalize" Miskito lands and forests in the northeastern part of the Reserve territory. Before the 1960s the principle external presence in the Atlantic coastal strip was United States timber and mining companies. Though these companies operated in Miskito Territory under Nicaraguan governmental jurisdiction and paid taxes to the Managua government no effort was made to impose political control over Miskito territory until US companies began to withdraw from the region. The most recent companies to work in the Miskito area was the U.S. Nicaragua Longleaf Pine Lumber Company (NIPCO), which opened largescale lumbering activities on extensive pine forests in northeast Reserve Territory. Within a few short years the pine forests were completely depleted and plans for reforestation were dropped by the company in favor of paying a higher export tax to the Samoza Regime. When this company withdrew from the area, the Samoza Regime "nationalized" the former company lands and forests. Samoza removed the Miskito peoples from the area; an act which gave rise to complaints against the Samoza Regime from community leaders. It was this act which caused the Miskito population to establish community indigenous rights organizations.

In 1967 the first "national" indigenous organization was formed to "protect the Indians' right to land and natural resources." ALPROMISU was an independent indigenous organization established to promote indigenous interests against the Samoza Regime's further moves to place indigenous lands and natural resources under his government's control. Charging ALPROMISU with anti-government activities, separatism, regionalism and associating with foreign enemies; Samoza's guardia frequently disrupted ALPROMISU meetings and frequently jailed indigenous leaders. During the intervening years until 1979, Indigenous leaders continued to demand that Indian land natural resource rights be preserved, and that the Samoza Regime not attempt to extend its economic and political authority over Indigenous territories.

After July 20, 1979 Miskito, Sumu and Rama leaders were unwilling to give up their local organizations so they replaced ALPROMISU with a new "national" organization called MISURASATA (which means: Miskito, Sumu and Rama and Sandinistas working together). Through MISURASATA THE Sandinista Government began to promote opportunities for bilingual education, agricultural assistance and representation within the

Council of State.

In August of 1980 the Sandinista Regime announced new plans for nationalizing lands on the Atlantic Coast. These plans were born from the realization within the Sandinista Junta that major exportable raw materials located in Miskito Territory should be harnessed to fill the economic development needs of Nicaragua. MISURASATA quickly obtained the Council of State's approval to postpone any nationization until Indigenous land claims were settled. In September of 1980, MISURASATA obtained a grant of funds from the U.S. based organization, Cultural Survival, for a study of Indian community land rights on the Atlantic Coast. The research was completed in January 1981 and was submitted to the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), the National Institute of Natural Resources and the Environment (IRENA), the National Forestry Institute (CORFOB) and the Nicaraguan Institute of Mines (CONDEMINA). These organizations were responsible for helping to determining the nature and extent of the Indian communities' rights to natural resources and lands.

MISURASATA's efforts to protect Indian land rights and a degree of community control have been interpreted by non-Indigenous Nicaraguans as evidence of the "historic antipathy of the Miskitos toward Nicaragua's Spanish speaking population." Nicaraguans have charged the Indigenous leaders as being racist and separatist and, therefore, a threat to the revolution. As some indigenous observers and others have noted: the Miskito reaction to the proposed nationalization of their lands and resources was not a product of some historic opposition to "Spaniards", but rather, "it was a response to a perceived threat against their subsistence security and their status as equals in relations with nation-states." Put another way, Indigenous leaders saw this most recent attempt at Nicaraguan nationalization as an encroachment by one sovereign on the sovereignty of the Miskitos, Sumus and Ramas.

As MISURASATA worked to ensure Indian community rights to land and natural resources in January of 1981, accusations of racism, separatism and incipient regional revolt became more widely heard. In February 1981, such accusations led to the arrest of 33 MISURASATA leaders by the Nicaraguan Security forces.

In mid-May 1981 Steadman Fagoth Muller, who was arrested along with other MISURASATA officials, was released from prison and fled to Honduras where he was joined by an estimated 3,000 Miskitos. During the Summer of 1981, the Sandinista Government declared the "integration of the Atlantic Coast a priority." The Sandinistas subsequently made new efforts to secure a working relationship with the new provisional leadership of MISURASATA. In December 1981 the Sandinista Junta made efforts to secure international indigenous support for their efforts with the Miskitos by requesting support for their revolution from organizations like the International Indian Treaty Council and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. The ITC announced its public support for the Sandinista Government while the WCIP offered no public comment either in opposition or support. In late December 1981, reports were circulated IN THE INTERNATIONAL

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PRESS stating that the Sandinista government had sent troops across the border into Honduras to disrupt "anti-revolutionary" training camps set up by former members of Somoza's guardia. Some of the reports indicated, though not confirmed, that five hundred Miskitos in exile were killed before the Sandinista forces withdrew.

Newspaper accounts in January and February of 1982 showed increased interest in relations between the Miskitos and the Sandinista Junta. This interest was in part due to two stories developing in Nicaragua and in the United States. On February 10 there was a report that the Sandinista Regime "resettled" between 8,500 and 10,000 Miskitos from the northeastern part of Selaya Department (in the area of Puerto Cabezas) to camps toward the interior. The Sandinistas released a statement saying that resettlement was necessary to protect the tribal members from raids and assaults being initiated by former Somoza Guards located across the border in Honduras. Reports that the MISURASATA Organization released a communique on February 14 stating that the Indians had been subjected to "armed aggressions by counter-revolutionary bands" and that 31 communities had been burned have not been confirmed.

On February 26 newspaper accounts described Steadman Fagoth Muller as having traveled to Washington D.C. to conferr with U.S. State Department officials and present testimony before a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee and the House International Affairs subcommittee. Fagoth charged the Sandinista government with committing grave human rights violations against the Miskitos, saying in part that, Indians are being "murdered, burned and buried alive" by government troops. He further stated to a Senate Appropriations Committee on Foreign Operations that Miskito anti-government activity had "started when the Sandnistas first took power."

Elliot Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights stated on February 25 that troops of the Sandinista Regime have "viciously attacked these Indian tribes, killing many." Abrams was quoted as having agreed with Fagoths reports in news conferences on the 26th of February.

Upon the occassion of a meeting with Nicaragua's new ambassador to the United States, Francisco Fiallos Navarro, Ronald Reagan condemned Nicaraguan policies toward the Miskitos and scolded the Sandinistas for "inviting alien influences and phikosphies into the hemisphere."

Secretary of State Haig, the U.S. President and Assistant Secretary Abrams have become increasingly vocal about the situation of the Miskitos -- largely based on remarks made by Fagoth. All of these reports have been broadcast into Miskito, Sumu and Rama territory through the U.S. Voice of America.

Upto March 8th both Sandinista representatives and representatives of the U.S. government have simply repeated their charges and counter charges regarding Miskitos.

Analysis and Comment:

The "localized" conflict between the Sandinista government and the indigenous populations is symptomatic of the historic conflict between the state governments and indigenous populations throughout Central America and Mexico. These conflicts date back to the 16th century when Spain and Britain colonized the region. The central issue that motivates popular indigenous political activity in the Reserved Territory of the Miskitos is the same issue that dominates indigenous activities in Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador, Guatamala, Belize and Mexico: Indigenous land and natural resource rights. All of the governments, whether controlled by an oligarchy, military junta, coalition government; politically "leftist or right wing" regimes have historically taken the same political position as regards indigenous populations: isolation of the population from the political system, political annexation or assimilation of indigenous lands and natural resources and isolation of the indigenous population from the benefits of the prevailing economic system. The Indigenous populations, for their part, have sought to maintain their distance from the ruling governments by not engaging in the political system and process; they have maintained organizations internally, but have had little success maintaining inter-group organizations which have functioned as a political force in competition with the ruling non-indigenous organizations.

Though the Indigenous population is the majority population in specific parts of the region, they have not used their popular strength to counter (the sometimes minority) non-indigenous encroachments. Independent Indigenous organizations are operating throughout the region and most of them are connected with the Central American Indigenous Council (WCIP) (CORPI). Despite the fact that the indigenous populations have such organizations they have not been seriously considered as a significant political force by either the left or the right. During a meeting of the CORPI in Chiran Astico, Mexico a year ago delegates from tribes located throughout Mexico and Central America established the principle that indigenous political organization was necessary to defend indigenous populations, but that indigenous organized efforts must "not be aligned with either the left or right" political ideologies of the non-indigenous peoples." The frank conclusion of that meeting was that Central American Indigenous peoples must organize a "separate" political force to represent indigenous political interests. When left and right political factions from the non-Indigenous population have battled each other, the indigenous populations have consistently been caught in the cross-fire. No matter which political faction controls the government indigenous populations have suffered loss of life, property and territory.

Because of its involvement with the World Council of Indigenous Peoples and because it is the oldest and most respected Indian organization located in the United States the National Congress of American Indians has assumed new responsibilities to aid other Indigenous populations whose right of self-determination is threatened by the actions of nation-state governments. NCAI has become a participant in the conflicts in Central America because of requests for support from Indigenous groups in Central America and because the United States government policies in that region are damaging

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indigenous populations which share the same interests as the tribes inside the U.S. Finally, NCAI has the duty to aid indigenous peoples in Central America because it may have the greatest potential for influencing U.S. policies, and in conjunction with the WCIP Central American government policies.

NCAI may be a positive influence in the efforts to reduce violence against indigenous populations in Central America by taking some or all of the following initiatives:

In accordance with policy objectives mandated by the NCAI convention of 1980 in Tribal/Global Relations: Action Plan and Policies for the 80's:

1. Conduct a fact-finding mission focusing on the Miskito situation by consulting with the Sandinista government and indigenous leaders in the Reserve Territory.
2. Prepare a draft assessment of the situation and transmit that report to the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.
3. Conduct a briefing with CORPI officials in Costa Rica
4. Open channels of communications with the U.S. House international relations subcommittee, Senate Appropriations subcommittee on Operations, Assistant Secretary Elliot Abrams to discuss Indigenous policies and concerns.
5. Open channels of communications with the Jose Portillo government in Mexico regarding pending efforts to arrange negotiations in Central America
6. Open channels of communications with former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt (now head of Socialist International) to request his support for the indigenous position in Central American talks.
7. Through the World Council of Indigenous Peoples initiate a series of releases describing the situations of indigenous peoples in Central America -- call for Indigenous participation in conflict settlement talks. The focus is primarily on Miskito/Sandinista relations but includes discussion of indigenous populations in El-Salvador and Guatemala.

NCAI: Policy Recommendations re: Miskito/Sandinista conflict.

NCAI advocates and endorses Miskito, Sumu and Rama claims to lands and natural resources but urges the Sandinista Regime to recognize and respect indigenous sovereignty in the Atlantic Coastal Strip. NCAI does not oppose the right of Sandinistas to govern and control their own territory as a free and independent nation, but believes the Nicaraguan Regime should not oppose Miskito, Sumu and Rama claims to their territory.

NCAI reminds the United States that it has failed to protect tribes within US boundaries and demands that it withhold its condemnation of the Sandinista Regime until it has respected the rights and sovereignty of U.S. tribes.

NCAI demands that both the United States and the Sandinistas respect tribal rights to self-determination.

4 September 1981

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CRISIS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

(A discussion by Rudy Ryser, Special Assistant to the President, on approaches to a "Crisis in Central America information Campaign" further to consultations with AL and his discussions with the CORPI Executive in Panama.)

TO: Jose Carlos Morales

As you know, since the CORPI Regional meeting earlier this year the WCIP Secretariat has issued one public statement regarding the "Crisis in Central America". Former President George Manuel issued a statement to the press from Vancouver, Canada last Spring. The statement focused on the tendency of state governments to ignore the violence and its impact on Indigenous populations particularly in Guatamala and El Salvador. Further, the statement observed that Indigenous populations were being caught between the forces of left and right and conswquently they are threatened with violence from both sides. In early August I met with Lish at the WCIP Secretariat to discuss the possibility of gaining agreement within the CORPI Executive on a plan to promote wide international political support for Indigenous peoples in Central America. A more detailed description of this discussion follows:

CORPI, in conjunction with the WCIP network, should organize a worldwide information campaign during a period of six to eight months (beginning in September '81) to raise the profile of CORPI and the Indigenous Peoples generally as a political force in Central America and Mexico. The Indigenous Peoples Crisis in Entral America campaign would be designed to achieve the purpose, goal and objectives proposed below:

PURPOSE: The ultimate purpose, I propose, would be to promote political unity among indigenous peoples within three principle sectors of Central America and Mexico so as to establish a third political force designed to rebuild indigenous political influence and control over indigenous territories and indigenous populations. The purpose necessarily argues the "intent to reestablish indigenous control in indigenous territories" and the removal of colonial influences and controls now exercised by existing state governments.

GOAL: The goal, I propose, should be to establish international recognition of the legitimate political role of indigenous populations in the stabilization of Central America and Mexico.

OBJECTIVES: 1. Establish international public awareness that indigenous peoples in Central America and Mexico are a third political force which must be recog-

nized to play a direct role in the establishment of peace in Central America if peace and stability is indeed to be achieved.

2. Establish international recognition of CORPI as the legitimate voice of Indigenous Peoples in Central America and Mexico with-
which outside and state political forces must deal.

3. Establish political ties between CORPI and selected state governments (perhaps some southern African states and particular Western European and South Pacific States) with the intention of securing their willingness to politically support CORPI and the indigenous populations, and to present the indigenous situation before specified intergovernmental forums (i.e. United Nations, North/South meeting, etc.).

ANALYSIS:

There are at least three principal sectors of Mexico and Central America which are already principally occupied by indigenous populations. Within the first sector in excess of eleven million people indigenous to Southern Mexico (including Yucatan), the Northern two-thirds of Guatemala, the Western half of Belize and the Eastern half of El Salvador constitute the majority population. This sector primarily includes tribes and communities which made up the constituent parts of the Mayan Empire. For about five hundred years this territory has been divided into four parts colonized by Britain and Spain and now their successors controlling the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and El Salvador. The status of indigenous peoples in this territory has been divided and converted into groups of mass cheap labor supporting a system of elite neocolonialism and indigenous resource exploitation.

The second sector includes the indigenous populations located in Eastern Honduras and Eastern Nicaragua. And the Third sector includes indigenous populations primarily located in Southern Costa Rica and Northern Panama. Within each of these sectors the indigenous population is in the majority yet these same populations are denied political identity and their rights by the neocolonial governments established within their original territories.

International recognition of these territories and the majority populations within them is essential to the indigenous cause of freedom from economic, political and cultural exploitation. Such recognition of indigenous populations as the Third political Force is essential to establishing a new political order in Mexico and Central America. Indeed, as we have argued in other papers, the indigenous populations hold the greatest potential for bringing economic and political stability to the region. The indigenous population holds the balance between continued conflict and instability or normalization. As long as the neocolonial successors of Spain and Britain maintain dominance politically (whether left, right or political center) indigenous people will continue to be

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exploited for the benefit of the colonial elite. The major political alliance that makes practical sense is one between the indigenous peoples within each sector and between all three sectors. The major political action that offers the best opportunity for an indigenous role in the balance of power in the region is the securing of international recognition of indigenous peoples as a legitimate political force separate from the political factions within the colonial structure.

To achieve the proposed purpose of an intensive "crisis in Central America" information campaign (an its goal and objectives) I propose that CORPI and the WCIP organizational network undertake a series of public activities directed at achieving support and high level understanding among the 1. international press (particularly in Western Europe, selected third world countries and North America), 2. selected non-governmental organizations registered with the United Nations, and, 3. no fewer than ten selected nation-state governments (my immediate suggestions include: Vanuatu, Tanzania, France, Zambia, Uganda, Norway, Nigeria, Lesotho, Barbados and Canada).

The public activities should include planned and coordinated news conferences initiated by CORPI (in Geneva, Oslo and Cancun during the next two months) and the regional representatives of the WCIP network. within their respective regions.

A "policy document" which exposes the situation of indigenous peoples in Mexico and Central America (this document should also include proposals for the political role of CORPI and the Indigenous sectors) should be prepared in advance and used (handed out) at the news conferences in all the regions. The document should be sent to selected NGOs seeking their commitment for support (economic and political) and their willingness to widely distribute the document and future CORPI (and WCIP) communications on the issues in Central America. CORPI should make direct appeals to selected nation-state representatives (serving as ambassadors or High Commissioners) as well as directly to selected nation-state foreign ministers and heads of state requesting the establishment of communications links and future political (and (perhaps) economic) support. During the early months special emphasis should be placed on potential supportive countries which intend to participate in the North/South meeting in Cancun in October.

The planned campaign should be detailed enough to provide guidance and clear direction to the WCIP Secretariat and the WCIP network. Information and clear directives are essential to the achievement of success.

I look forward to your comments regarding this subject.

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Statement by George Manuel, President of the WORLD COUNCIL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES on the Crisis in Central America and the condition of indigenous peoples within Central American Countries. Vancouver, Canada 20 March 1981.

~~While~~ The world has become increasingly aware of the military and political conflicts within Central American countries. ^{While} ~~at~~ the great ^{nations} powers of the east and west play power games ~~over spheres of influence~~ in that region, thousands of indigenous peoples are being indiscriminately killed. Whole villages of indigenous peoples are being murdered and their property destroyed while ~~with~~ the East and West block nations and the forces of the political left and right compete for domination and control. I have called this news conference today to draw ~~attention~~ the world's attention to the ~~critical~~ reality of what ~~may be called~~ the crisis in Central America. I have also called this news conference to release ^{the principles of} a proposal by the World Council of Indigenous Peoples which ~~has been~~ offers an insight into a practical means for reducing tensions ~~in Central America~~ while establishing a method for bringing ^{peace} ~~peace~~ in Central America.

The World Council of Indigenous Peoples does not enter upon this ^{matter} ~~enterprise~~ lightly. We, ^{perhaps} ~~perhaps~~ more than any other peoples in the world, understand the violent consequences of economic and political struggles. The World Council of Indigenous peoples is the first global ~~organizational~~ effort, established by indigenous peoples, created to preserve and protect the group integrity of aboriginal peoples throughout the world. We regard the preservation and protection of indigenous interests essential ^{to} ~~the~~ the preservation of world peace and world development. In Central America, the military and political violence throughout those lands threaten to wipe out the existence of millions of indigenous peoples who ~~have~~ ^{have} endured for thousands of years.

4 The world must understand that the majority of the peoples occupying rural territories throughout Central America are indigenous peoples. They are peoples whose ancestors were ~~the~~ a part of the ancient Aztec and Mayan Empires which flourished throughout the region before the arrival of the Spanish and English Explorers. The indigenous peoples in Central America and Mexico are the original tenants of the land. The governments in the region have become landlords over the territories still occupied by thousands of indigenous communities.

The World must know that the indigenous communities are not direct parties to the civil conflicts raging throughout Central America. It is the relatively small group of ^{descendants from} European settlers who have divided themselves into the political left, center and right.

^{It is these people} who are fighting one another to gain control over the ~~the~~ large numbers of indigenous peoples and the ^{rural} lands and ^{resources} used by ^{for thousands of years} indigenous peoples. ^{In} ~~Despite~~ the conflicts between Europeans, the ^{majority} ~~vast number~~ of peoples who are being killed come from the indigenous communities. What on the surface appears to be a civil war is ~~in fact~~ a war of genocide and ethnocide against indigenous peoples, committed by European ^{who are} descendants seeking economic and political control over Central America. ^{The} ~~such~~ atrocities now being committed by European descendants against indigenous peoples in Central America is comparable to ~~to~~ the atrocities committed by Europeans against the indigenous peoples of ^{North} America during the ~~nineteenth~~ ^{Nineteenth} Century. Whole communities are being slaughtered. Little children are being used for target practice. ~~just as~~ Women and men are being hacked to death by marauding soldiers and ~~rev~~olutionary guerillas. To be sure, atrocities are being committed against European workers, religious leaders and political leaders. The destruction of human life is massive by any standard.

But ~~the~~ the principle targets of the civil war ~~are~~ ~~the~~ ~~genocide~~ ~~against~~ are the thousands of indigenous communities.

Caught between the fighting European decedents Indigenous communiti es are defe~~se~~less. Large numbers of indigenous peoples are being forced out of their homes, off of their lands and into the ~~high~~ mountains. Thousands have become refugees in their own lands. ~~As~~ As the Europeans ~~organize~~ organize death squads and ~~launch~~ ^{launch} military expeditions into indigenous territories, the powerful ~~countries~~ ^{nations} of the East and West are compounding the tragedy. ~~that will~~ threatens to overwhelm the Indigenous populations. The weapons now being shipped to Central American countries are weapons used by both left and right political forces to decimate indigenous peoples. Countries ~~like~~ ^{such as} Brazil, the United States, Vietnam, Israel, France, Canada and the Soviet Union are either directly shipping deadly weapons and armaments or ~~these~~ ~~countries~~ are encouraging mercenary gun-runners to increase the death and carnage being heaped upon indigenous peoples. Large corporations are taking advantage of the chaotic state of affairs by infusing money to support one faction or another.

Who will gain from the distruction of Central American indigenous Peoples? In the end European land holders and multi-national corporati~~o~~ ions will be the major beneficiaries ^{of this tragedy.} It is these corporations and the European middlemen who will take from indigenous lands ~~large stores~~ ~~of~~ petroleum, nick~~le~~, silver, agricultural lands, timber and a conve~~n~~ient shipping base for ~~industrial~~ ^{these} products ~~throughout~~ ^{to be sent to industrial countries} the Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Oceans. As a result of the genocidal war against indigenous peoples, the ~~remaining~~ ^{survivors} people will be ~~made into~~ ^{exploited as} cheap labor to support the multinational corporate goals.

Some may say that what I have said is merely speculation. But, I ~~say to those who would think this~~ ^{would ask you to} look deeper and find what the World Council of Indigenous Peoples has found. We have seen the destruction being heaped upon indigenous communities. We have

seen the results of the left and right struggles either aided or hindered by national governments from ^{outside} the Central American Region. We have examined the connections between multinational corporations and the national governments in the East and West. The realities of the Central American Crisis and the Indigenous Peoples Crisis are ^{being kept secret} ~~only a secret kept~~ from the ordinary people. ×

Government leaders from both the East and West are intentionally misleading the ordinary people by portraying conflicts in Central America as merely a struggle between political forces of the left and right, ~~of struggles~~ between Communism and Capitalism. Such diversions from the realities experienced by Indigenous peoples only serve to hide the destruction of whole races of people. ×

The world must recognize that the struggle in Central America is between forces who would dominate or destroy indigenous peoples. The final destruction of indigenous peoples can only mean the eventual destruction of a way of life and a view of the universe that has long served as the very foundation of human existence.

In fact, with the destruction of indigenous peoples, the final chapter is not far away for those who remain

Give in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, we who are indigenous peoples believe that such an outcome is neither acceptable nor automatic. We believe that we can make a positive contribution to the easing of tensions and the establishment of peace in Central America. We believe this because ~~the~~ indigenous peoples have the most to gain through non-violence; we have the most to gain from an easing of tensions. Because ~~we too~~ ^{we} are human beings, we have a duty to seek ^{non-violent} solutions to human misery and human conflict even when we are not the cause of such misery and conflict. In order for us to make our contribution, we only ask that leaders of all countries and the people they represent accept us as human beings. Because we are large in numbers ^{throughout} ~~through~~ Central America and Mexico we are a population which has endured much and we believe we must directly participate. We are not ~~a~~ part of the problem in Central America, but we must be part of the solution. in efforts to bring peace to the Region. A

In accordance with this view I am today announcing ~~the fact~~ that

~~the~~ ^{Secretariat of the} World Council of Indigenous Peoples has transmitted the text of my remarks today and a specific ~~proposal~~ peace proposal to the presidents and prime ministers of several central American and Caribbean nations.

Our initiative is focused upon the need to secure a regional solution to a regional problem. ^{In general terms, our peace proposal is based} We believe that countries outside the region

^{on the following principles:} ~~are~~ ^{and that} only fueling the conflict they should all withdraw immediately.

We believe that Eastern and Western nations must immediately impose domestic restraints on representatives of multinational corporations to prevent their further subversion of the Central American Region.

We believe that a settlement of conflicts in Central America is only possible if the national leaders of each Central American country and the leaders of the left and right political factions accept indigenous leaders as formal participants in internationally supervised peace settlement. We believe ^{that} indigenous ^{people} ~~leaders~~ should be guaranteed absolute protection from intimidation and threats from either the left or right or from the governments. ^{Finally,} ~~we~~ we offer the World Council of Indigenous Peoples as a direct aid to facilitate the establishment of a peaceful resolution of conflicts in Central America.

The specific details of our proposals will be released after the various government officials have had an opportunity to respond.

BACK TO ROD
FOR TAMI

NCIP

for Discussion / 18 Mar 81

The CRISIS IN CENTRAL AMERICA - A REGIONAL SOLUTION PROPOSED BY
THE WORLD COUNCIL OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES - MARCH 1981.

The past and present conflicts in Central America have historically been shrouded in debates over conflicting ideologies but the central issues have always been questions about who controls economic development and who controls the use of land and natural resources. The indigenous populations, descendants of the original occupants of the area, have long recognized these issues as central to their survival and central to establishing a peaceful order in Central America and the Caribbean. Despite their commitment to the resolution of these issues the descendants of European settlers have ignored and discouraged indigenous participation in decisions which can resolve the issues. Indeed, the historical reality is that the European descendants have sought to suppress Indigenous political and economic development by pushing indigenous populations farther from the role of full participants in the decisions that will stabilize the area. As an alternative to removing indigenous populations the various national governments have sought to force hispanic assimilation on the indigenous populations. The European descendants now in control of the governments of Central America have ignored the fundamental conflict between the goals and aspirations of indigenous peoples and their own goals and aspirations. This conflict rages throughout the western hemisphere. Instead of directly dealing with the Indigenous/ European conflict the European descendants have placed themselves socially, economically and political in a superior or dominating role throughout Central America. The consequence of this unrealistic assertion of dominance the European descendants have divided themselves into political forces of the left, middle and right. This ideological polarization among the European descendants has created violent conflicts that frequently focus on one or the other point of view seeking to dominate indigenous populations and gain control over indigenous lands and resources.

The shifting of political and economic control over indigenous populations and their resources between left and right has only produced more violence and more instability. The indigenous populations find that they cannot support either the European left or right because the outcome is the same: Indigenous populations are massacred, one of the European ideologies achieves temporary dominance and the indigenous people are used to achieve European ~~goals~~ economic and political goals. When the repression of indigenous peoples is too great then the indigenous peoples revolt against the dominating power. This is usually followed by efforts of the European right or left to assume control over the indigenous discontent and a new left/right conflict emerges. The cycle continues with no settlement, no peace. While European descendants are often killed in the renewed conflicts it is the indigenous peoples who must take the full brunt of the violence.

The World Council of Indigenous Peoples believes that such recycling of violence and destruction serves neither the European descendants nor the indigenous populations. The major beneficiaries are the large industrial powers ~~of~~ from the East and West as well as the increasingly powerful multi-national corporations. It is these interests which now seek to dominate and control the strategically important Caribbean and Central American Region. Their domination and control of the region will neither benefit the indigenous populations nor the European descendants. To avoid this external control and influence the European descendants and the Indigenous populations must seek to fulfill a course of action which provides that

the indigenous peoples and European descendants socially, economically and politically coexist as neighbors. Co~~existence~~ between European and Indigenous peoples requires that each group respect the other and not attempt to dominate the other.

Many indigenous groups are divided by national boundaries established during the colonial era. Such divisions have complicated indigenous organization but ~~it has not prevented~~ these artificial boundaries have not prevented the maintenance of political ties between indigenous groups. Because of this their participation in bringing peace to central America is made absolutely essential.

The basic principles which we believe should serve as an underpinning for any political solution to the conflicts in Central America include the following:

1. Indigenous peoples are a serious political force which neither subscribes to left or right western ideologies. In this regard, they constitute a neutral political group.
2. Though the descendants of European settlers have controlled various national governments they have neglected to formulate a political process whereby Indigenous peoples could play an equal part.
3. The political force of left and right among the European descendants must play a direct role in settlement of conflicts.
4. Indigenous peoples selected by their own communities without external intimidation must have a direct role in settlement of conflicts.
5. The European descendants must respect the original rights of Indigenous peoples to lands, natural resources and their own culture and language.
6. Indigenous peoples must respect the acquired rights and interests of European descendants to live in Central America.
7. No political solution to the violence in Central America is possible as long as industrial countries from the Eastern Block and Western Block are permitted to continue shipping armaments into central American Countries.
8. A settlement in Central America will not be possible as long as multi-national corporations continue to exert influence directly or indirectly
9. Any solution to the conflict in Central America must necessarily be ~~possible~~ initiated within a regional context without uninvited external interference.
10. External involvements in the Caribbean and Central American Region must be ~~not~~ introduced only with the invitation of the majority of the regional parties.
11. an international political and economic organization must be created for Central America and the Caribbean which includes representation from Indigenous groups. to promote political and economic development in the region.

12. A fundamental change in political, economic and social structures must be encouraged as a part of a long term settlement.

Specific Steps Toward Peace

1. Leaders of the following countries should convene a Regional Peace conference by May 1981: Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Jamaica. Prior to the Peace Conference these nations should release a joint statement calling upon the Eastern and Western Nations to withdraw their military and economic involvement in the Central American/ Caribbean Region -- whereupon the Region would be declared a militarily neutral zone. As a Part of this joint Statement all countries within the region would be called upon to declare a cease fire in the areas where violence is active. The leaders of these who will form the basis for a Regional Peace Conference must formulate a structure which permits the participation of Indigenous peoples, Right and left European ideological leaders as well as the leaders of the existing juntas.
2. Under the auspices of the Regional Conference area peace conferences should be convened. An area peace conference should be convened involving Mexico and Guatemala, another area peace conference should be established between Guatemala and El Salvador, another between El Salvador and Honduras, another between Nicaragua and Honduras and finally a peace conference should be arranged between Costa Rica and Panama. Each of these area peace conferences should be supervised by the Regional Peace Conference. In all instances each area peace conference must include participation from the affected governments, representatives of the left and right and representatives of the indigenous populations.
3. The United Nations must be asked to contribute monetary support to all parties to insure the equal participation in the peace conferences.
4. The ultimate goal for these area peace conferences and the Regional peace Conference will be to formulate a Regional treaty which establishes the military and political neutrality of the Region; and economic pact between nations and indigenous peoples in the Region and a plan for the mutual coexistence of indigenous peoples and the European descendants.