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INDIAN WAR IN NICARAGUA, RIVERA PEACE INITIATIVE

by Rudolph C. Ryser

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There is a war going on in Central America, and it is a war that will virtually decide the political future of Indian Peoples throughout the Americas. It is a war between the Indian Nations of the Atlantic Coast of Honduras and Nicaragua and the Government of Nicaragua. It is a war that began in 1981 when the Nicaraguan Government sent its military forces to invade the Indian territories of the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Nations, and the Indian Nations organized their warriors with bows and arrows, machetes, hunting rifles and clubs to defend against the invasion.

The leader of the three Indian Nation coalition organization called MISURASATA, Brooklyn Rivera, came to the Daybreak Star Cultural Center on April 27 and 28 to meet with Indian leaders in Washington State and from Canada to consult with them on the war against Nicaragua and the peace initiative he began last fall. Rivera delivered an address before the Fifth Session of the Conference of Tribal Governments where he explained that the Miskito, Sumo and Rama Indian Nations had been forced into a war with Nicaragua when the Nicaraguan Government would no longer talk about recognizing Indian political autonomy, Indian land rights and the right of Indian people to live in their homelands as they had for centuries. "When the Nicaraguan army invaded our homelands and our villages," Rivera said "our Indian people could see no other course but to defend our nations by force of arms."

The price being paid by the peoples of Miskito, Sumo and Rama for defending their nations has been very high, according to Rivera. "Nearly half of our villages have been destroyed by Nicaraguan bombing or they were burned to the ground by Nicaraguan military, and more than one thousand of our civilians and Indian warriors have been killed." The Nicaraguan government destroyed all Indian fishing canoes, confiscated hunting weapons, killed Indian farm animals and set up military installations within Indian territory to prevent Indians from farming, hunting and fishing. Nicaragua's internal security system was extended into Indian villages to control the distribution of government issued food and to control Indian civilians. Nicaraguan forces have attacked Indian villages to prevent the Indian warriors, the MISURASATA Indian warriors from being supported by Indian village people.

But, despite the Nicaraguan invasion, and despite the burning of villages and the bombing of villages, the MISURASATA Indian warriors have not lost a battle against Nicaraguan military forces in four years. They continue to fight for the defense of their people with the support of their people.

A JUST PEACE AND INDIAN AUTONOMY



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