

Edited by Klaudine Ohland and Robin Schneider

NATIONAL REVOLUTION AND INDIGENOUS IDENTITY:

The Conflict between Sandinists and Miskito Indians on
Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast



IWGIA DOCUMENT

ISSN 0105 - 4503

IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs - is an independent, international organisation which deals with the oppression of indigenous peoples.

IWGIA publishes the IWGIA Documentation Series in English and Spanish. The IWGIA Newsletter in English and the IWGIA Boletín in Spanish, will be published approximately four times a year. The Documentation and Research Department welcomes suggestions and contributions to the Newsletters and Boletines. The IWGIA Boletín has been published from 1979 for distribution among indigenous organisations in South and Central America and in 1983 a Spanish Document Series has begun.

IWGIA Documents and Newletters (in English) can be obtained through subscription or purchased separately. The subscription fee for 1984 is the following: Documents and Newsletters, for individuals US\$16.00 (120 D.Kr.) and for institutions US \$30.00 (210 D.Kr.). IWGIA Documents and Boletines (in Spanish) can be purchased similarly at US\$10.00 for individuals and US \$18.00 for institutions.

Please make your cheque payable to the International Secretariat of IWGIA. Address: Fiolstræde, 10

DK 1171 Copenhagen, K
Denmark

Telephone Copenhagen 1 - 12 47 24

Board Members: Georg Henriksen (President 1982-1983), René Fuerst, Mark Münzel, and Aud Talle.

Documentation & Research: Teresa Aparicio, Jørgen Brøchner Jørgensen and Andrew Gray.

Administration: Inger Dyrhagen and Klaus Hundebøll.

Cover Photo: Tasba Pri, March 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).

NATIONAL REVOLUTION AND INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

The Conflict between Sandinists and Miskito Indians
on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast

Edited by Klaudine Ohland and Robin Schneider

Copenhagen November 1983

Author Information

Klaudine Ohland, born 1943, is a linguist. She lived from 1978-1981 and 1982-1983 in Central America. Since 1979 she has worked first for the medical supply of the Frente Sandinista guerrilla movement and then, after the Sandinist victory of July 19 in department of health planning in Managua's Ministry of Health. In 1981 she worked in a pilot project in traditional medicine in Nicaragua.

Robin Schneider, born 1955 is a social anthropologist. He lived from 1980-1981 and 1982-1983 in Central America. He conducted fieldwork among the Rama Indians of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. His research interests include inter- and intra-ethnic relations and conflicts, integration, missions and mythology. At present he is co-ordinator for Central America of the West German human rights organisation "Association for endangered peoples".

This Document was originally published in German:

Nationale Revolution und indianische Identität
Der Konflikt zwischen Sandinisten und Miskito-Indianern an
Nicaraguas Atlantikküste

Dokumente und Interviews

Edition Nahua, Wuppertal, 1982

CONTENTS

Editor's Note.....	1
Michael Rediske and Robin Schneider: National Revolution and Indigenous Identity. The Conflict between the Sandinist Government and the Miskito Indians 1979 to 1982.....	3
Robin Schneider: British Indirect Rule: Miskito Kings and the Repression of autochthonous peoples.....	28
Carlos Núñez (FSLN): "We will not continue Somoquist traditions!".....	36
MISURASATA: "Together we will build a just society!".....	38
FSLN: The Atlantic Coast: Indigenous peoples; Culture and Revolution.....	42
MISURASATA: General Directions.....	48
Brooklyn Rivera (MISURASATA): "An Indian without land is not an Indian!".....	64
MISURASATA: "We ask for Understanding!".....	68
Steadman Fagoth (MISURASATA): Unity and Fraternity between MISURASATA and FSLN.....	73
Government of National Reconstruction JGRN: Law on Education in Indigenous Languages on the Atlantic Coast.....	79
MISURASATA: Plan of Action 1981.....	89
INNICA, IRENA, MISURASATA: Agreement on Norms for Lumber-Felling.....	95
Sandinist Armed Forces FAS: Counter-Revolutionary plan subdued in the Atlantic Coast.....	99
FSLN: National Sovereignty attacked by Separatism.....	106
FSLN: The Separatists are not the Atlantic Coast.....	110
Government of National Reconstruction JGRN: Strong denial of <u>La Prensa</u> 's allegations.....	115
Norman Campbell (MISURASATA): "We are not against the Revolution!".....	117
Brooklyn Rivera (MISURASATA): "We are part of this Revolution!".....	120
Luis Carrión (FSLN): Ethnic Minorities and the Rev- olutionary Challenge.....	131
Sergio Ramírez (JGRN): "We will not allow racial segregation in our country!".....	140
Manuel Calderón (FSLN): "We have the job of forging a class consciousness!".....	142
Brooklyn Rivera (MISURASATA): "Great anxiety prevails in the villages!".....	153

Daniel Ortega (FSLN & JGRN): "We have to integrate the Indians totally, so they become united with the Sandinist Front".....	160
Government of National Reconstruction JGRN: Agrarian Reform Law - Article 30.....	162
MISURASATA: Proposal on Land-holding in the Indigenous and Creole communities of the Atlantic Coast.....	163
FSLN and Government of National Reconstruction JGRN: Declaration of Principles of the Sandinist Popular Revolution with regard to the Indigenous Communities of the Atlantic Coast.....	178
William Ramírez (FSLN): "We want to be an example in America as to what a revolution can be for the Indigenous Peoples!".....	181
Tomás Borge (FSLN): "It is very difficult to fight against backwardness".....	189
William Ramírez (FSLN): MISURASATA: An organisation that disappears.....	193
Luis Carrión (FSLN): "Our challenge is to integrate without destroying".....	198
Brooklyn Rivera (MISURASATA): Problems of the Indians with the Sandinist Revolution.....	203
William Ramírez (FSLN): The Imperialist threat and the Indigenous problem in Nicaragua.....	218
Luis Carrión (FSLN): The truth about the Atlantic Coast...	235
Gabriel Bell, Minerva Wilson, Marcelo Zúñiga and Galio Gurdián (CIDCA): "There was not too much resistance during the relocation".....	269
Robin Schneider: Bibliography of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast.....	285
Abbreviations.....	298

Photographs

Tasba Pri, March 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	cover
Between the Atlantic port Puerto Cabezas and Waspán, the biggest settlement on the Río Coco, govern- ment ENTRACAR trucks stand in for the lack of buses, July 1981 (Michael Rediske).....	37
Saupuka: a Miskito community on the Río Coco, July 1981 (Michael Rediske).....	39
A Creole quarter in Bluefields, April 1981 (Klaudine Ohland).....	45
House of a Miskito family in Bluefields, April 1983 (Klaudine Ohland).....	53
Brooklyn Rivera speaks at a MISURASATA meeting in Tuapí, July 1981 (Michael Rediske).....	65
House of a Miskito family on the Río Coco, March 1981 (Volkmar Gross).....	69
Steadman Fagoth, July 1981 (Leo Gabriel).....	75
Blackboard in Bluefields "Open the book, raise the fist!" March, 1981 (Volkmar Gross).....	81
La Rosita- in the mine region, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg)....	90
A Miskito man works with his "dory" (canoe) - the most important means of transportation on the Atlantic Coast, April 1981 (Klaudine Ohland).....	96
In Tasba Pri, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	101
In a Creole quarter of Bluefields, April 1981 (Klaudine Ohland).....	108
Moravian Church in Puerto Cabezas, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	111
In Tasba Pri, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	121
Leticia Herrera, Luis Carrión, Sergio Ramírez, October 1981 (Cordelia Dilg).....	132
Farmwork in Tasba Pri, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	144
Miskito and Creole children in Puerto Cabezas, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	154
"Miss Mildred" in the kitchen of her Coffee-House in Bluefields, April 1981 (Klaudine Ohland).....	167
Health Centre in Sumubila, Tasba Pir, some hours after birth, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	183
Tomás Borge, January 1980 (Cordelia Dilg).....	190
In Tasba Pri, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	204

Tasba Pri: in the new settlement Wasinona, March 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	219
Tasba Pri: Construction of prefabricated houses, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	236
Tasba Pri: in the new settlement Truslaya, March 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	268
Tasba Pri: In the new settlement Wasminona, March 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).....	284

Maps and Diagrams

The Indigenous Population of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast.	10-11
Mískito Population of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and Honduras.....	17
Facsimiles from the English and Mískito Alphabetisation Workbook.....	84-88
MISURASATA emblem.....	94
MISURASATA seal.....	130
MISURASATA: Indigenous and Creole territory on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast.....	171
Proposition for Parcellation and Special Organisation in Tasba Pri.....	254-255
Military Aggression against Nicaragua "Plan Red Christmas"	261
Rural Integrated Rettlement Project of the Río Coco Communities.....	266

EDITOR'S NOTE

Since July 1982 the situation on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast has rapidly deteriorated. What before merely seemed possible is today a certainty. Open battles have begun in the Puerto Cabezas area between the Sandinist army and armed units of several thousand men who have invaded from Honduras. Supported by the Honduran army and equipped with North American arms, the opponents of the Sandinist Revolution aim to trigger off popular revolts among the indigenous population on the Atlantic Coast. Even if they have not yet achieved this, the few existing reports from the war-zone indicate that the counter-revolutionary troops are made up predominantly of Miskito, who have themselves been trained by Somoza's former National Guards and indigenous deserters from the Sandinist army.

The documents in this book can give an understanding of the background to the fact that the indigenous village communities are supporting this armed struggle against the Revolution today, for example with food and medicine, as well as to the reason for the failure of the Sandinist policy of integration with regard to the indigenous population. The historical conflict between the two parts of the country and the confrontation between the FSLN and the indigenous movement MISURASATA during the first two years of the Revolution explain how the internal prerequisites for the present day military alliance against the Sandinists have developed. The documents and interviews published here concentrate only on this topic.

The recent internationalisation of the conflict is not the theme of this book. It plays a key role in the Central American policy of the Reagan administration, according to which the Sandinist Revolution is to be destabilised and the liberation struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala isolated and driven back. It even aims at provoking a regular war between Honduras and Nicaragua. And just as the policy of the Guatemalan army to eradicate the indigenous population in Quiché fits in with the US Government's anti-subversion

programme, on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua the embitterment of the Mískito Indians towards the Sandinist Revolution is being exploited with propaganda, promises and arms. The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, has thus tried to categorise these regional, ethnic problems as part of the global East/West conflict. Through its financial and political support of the now anti-Sandinist indigenous peoples as well as of the armed counter-revolution, the present US Government has established a connection between this regional problem and its own battle against the Revolution.

Of course, for the indigenous people it is a question of their demands for land and self-determination. But the Mískito are in the process of falling into a trap and of being crushed between anti-Communist and Sandinist forces: indigenous rights have no place in the programme of the counter-revolution.

August 1982

MICHAEL REDISKE AND ROBIN SCHNEIDER:

NATIONAL REVOLUTION AND INDIGENOUS IDENTITY
THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SANDINIST GOVERNMENT
AND THE MISKITO INDIANS 1979 TO 1982

The main concern in Nicaragua today, three years after the overthrow of Somoza, is the continued existence of a national revolution, the Sandinist Revolution, and at the same time the survival of the ethnic "minorities", whose identity has not been influenced primarily by the national, Spanish-speaking culture. Politically, however, much more than just the fate of Nicaragua and her Atlantic Coast is at stake.

During the last ten years, more and more ethnic groups of Latin American highland and lowland Indians have begun to voice their opinions and to bring their problems and demands before the national and international public through their own organisations. Up till then the churches and governments had, for the most part, spoken in their name. The "deputising" policy of left wing parties and national liberation movements on behalf of indigenous groups is also being met with increasing rejection.

Particularly in countries like Bolivia or Guatemala, where autochthonous groups make up the majority of the population, there are indications of a new relationship developing between the ethnic, national and class struggles. This means that in future the relationship between the organisations and movements engaged in these often overlapping struggles can no longer be determined by the dogmatic dispute as to whether ethnic identity or class consciousness determines political strategy or whether the rural population which speaks Quiché or Quechua is first and foremost indigenous or campesino.

Especially in Central America, the real social movements are too far advanced to enable the answering of such questions in isolation from the history of the struggles up to now and from the practical experience of both the Latin American Left and the indigenous organisations,

In Guatemala there are already signs of a remarkable alliance between the guerilla movement and the indigenous peoples. A national liberation movement there has begun to acknowledge the decisive role of the indigenous culture and tradition - and not only the necessity for the participation of the Indian population - in the struggle against oligarchy and imperialism.

Nicaragua's popular war against the dictatorship of Somoza , in comparison, is an example of a liberation which, until 1979, practically left out the territory on which the indigenous and Afro-American population settled - the so-called "Atlantic Coast". Owing to the scant degree of economic and political integration of the region into the national state, it was not necessary to include it. But as a result, the different cultures of the Pacific and Atlantic sides of the country only began to enter into a permanent process of interaction, of pursuing policies with, or against each other, after the victory of the liberation movement.

Precisely because of this special historical situation of the liberation war, the conflicts which have broken out on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua are certainly largely atypical of the Latin American region. Nevertheless, everything that happens in Nicaragua between the liberation movement in power and the national minorities (which make up the majority of the population on the sparsely settled Atlantic Coast) gathers a symbolic political significance throughout the continent. The level of confidence with which other Indian movements will enter into alliances with liberation movements and left wing parties, in order to take up the struggle against military dictatorships, racism and exploitation together with them, may well be decisively influenced within a few years by whether it has been possible in Nicaragua to grant space within the national revolution to culturally and ethnically based demands for the recognition of a distinct identity and self-determination.

Are an external threat to the Revolution and an "exemplary" policy towards the indigenous peoples compatible?

Nicaragua has set itself the goal of solving this problem within a structure which is to be an example for Latin America - a tall order for a revolution which is not able to draft its future on the drawing-board of social planning, but has to find speedy and practicable solutions to each (often externally caused) problem as it arises. This immediate pressure to act, under which we, as the left wing opposition in Europe seldom find ourselves, and which we can only imagine with difficulty in our international solidarity work, has assumed such shape and proportions in Nicaragua that it has become hard for the Sandinists really to give the example they have been striving for with their policies towards the indigenous peoples.

The Sandinists' National Revolution does not only have to deal with the ethnic groups on the Atlantic Coast, for whom the term "nation" implies something culturally alien and external to them and who react to the attempt to "integrate" them with mistrust and refusal. Far stronger and more immediate for the Sandinist Revolution is the danger which is threatening their national liberation from outside. Since President Reagan took up office, the United States Government has made it quite clear that it sees all the liberation struggles in Central America as a part of the East/West conflict and their protagonists as members of a subversive plot directed from Havana and Moscow. Reagan's policy of containment in Nicaragua has not only had recourse to the use of economic pressure and military threats, it has also set out to intensify the social conflicts which could be made useable for its aims. Hence the fact that its direct support is also given to the armed struggle of the counter-revolutionary organisations which, recruited mainly from former soldiers of Somoza, run barely concealed military training camps in Florida and California and carry out systematic attacks and acts of sabotage inside Nicaragua from Honduran territory. Assistance

is given above all to the different civilian groups and organisations - from the Employer's Association to the Christian Democratic trades unions- which have opposition to the Sandinist Government as a common denominator.

During the time of Somoza, the indigenous population on the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast was the object of North American fishing, lumber, banana and mining companies. The US Government only began to be "concerned" about the Indians' human rights, however, in 1982, when it was able to make propaganda of the fact that in its dealings with the indigenous movement MISURASATA, the FSLN set its sights more and more at gaining control rather than accomodating different interests, that the position hardened on both sides and that the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua became the most obvious political weak point of the new revolution.

The tension reached its peak in December 1981, after the armed counter-revolution had transferred its operational base from the western part of the border between Honduras and Nicaragua to the east (facing the Atlantic) and a former MISURASATA leader, Steadman Fagoth, had joined it.

The sequence of events of the armed clashes which took place between the end of 1981 and the beginning of 1982 on the Río Coco is still unclear. We do not know what the former National Guards contributed to the events, or to what extent, on the other hand, was the part anti-Sandinist Miskito played in the seemingly rebellious acts. What is certain is that both on the Miskito's and on the army's side, there was considerable loss of life and that in this situation the Government embarked on the endeavour to resettle the entire indigenous population living on the Río Coco to the interior of the country.

It is also certain that before the resettlement took place, most of the at least 40,000 inhabitants of this now depopulated region, which used to be the main area inhabited

by the Miskito, fled to Honduras into the forest and to relatives in Puerto Cabezas and Managua. The new settlements of about 7,000 - 8,000 Miskito near the goldmine of Rosita are also problematic. In spite of all the good will and the commitment already shown by the Sandinist Government, the construction of four large settlements for the river Indians, who have lived up till now in small widely scattered village communities, will bring far-reaching and abrupt changes to the Miskito's way of life, which is oriented towards subsistence reproduction and family farming with mutual assistance.

Even if, in view of the military polarisation and the internationalisation of the conflict, there had been no alternative for the FSLN at this moment, and even if we do not want to choose between solidarity with the national liberation movement and solidarity with indigenous peoples, we still cannot avoid the question as to how and why it came to this. For neither can the conflict on the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast fail to bring consequences for a series of other Latin American countries, nor does it seem possible to us, after the resettlement, simply to hope for a new beginning between the Miskito and the Sandinists.

The intention of this book is thus to give a description of the genesis of this conflict between a national revolution and indigenous identity in the form of documentation of primary texts of the protagonists, the FSLN and MISURASATA. We consider it important to show that the texts, which are arranged in chronological order, do not simply reflect two incompatible concepts or positions. It is rather precisely through the texts that we can follow the inconsistencies, contradictions and changes which both Sandinist and indigenous statements have demonstrated in reaction to each other.

The original and often still unclear conceptions of the FSLN and MISURASATA at the time of their common alliance in 1980 are often distorted today by an ideological

retrospective view. According to official FSLN opinion (Luis Carrión page 235) MISURASATA was separatist and counter-revolutionary from the start. On the other hand, in exile in Honduras, MISURASATA's former co-ordinator, Brooklyn Rivera, no longer reflects how, in the course of the political polarisation, the radicalisation of the demands of MISURASATA in its turn reduced the margin for a peaceful settlement of the conflict of interests (Brooklyn Rivera page 203). With the help of original documents and interviews over a two and a half year period, we want to try to do away with subsequent ideologising and to start with an examination of the historical course of events.

It is, of course, also true that the collection of the documents only gives a limited explanation of the real political processes. Speeches and official statements normally only reveal very specific layers of reality. On the one hand they are mostly "spotlights", written for the political discussion in Managua and to be understood in the context of the publicity there, dominated by the FSLN. (Since the October disturbances of 1980 in Bluefields, news from the Atlantic Coast is subject to censure by the Ministry of the Interior.)

On the other hand, we have to take into consideration that in Nicaraguan politics, the form of the written statement falls far short of the possibilities and habits of expression of oral rhetoric. Vitality, inconsistencies and the sequence of completely concrete events only rarely come to light in texts for political use. This applies all the more to MISURASATA's texts. For the indigenous population, it is not writing but the word spoken before the village community which is authoritative and valid. For this reason, we have had, particularly here, to fall back on the few available interviews rather than to the collection of the FSLN texts.

The historical context of the Documents

MISURASATA: Indigenous demands and alliance with the Sandinists

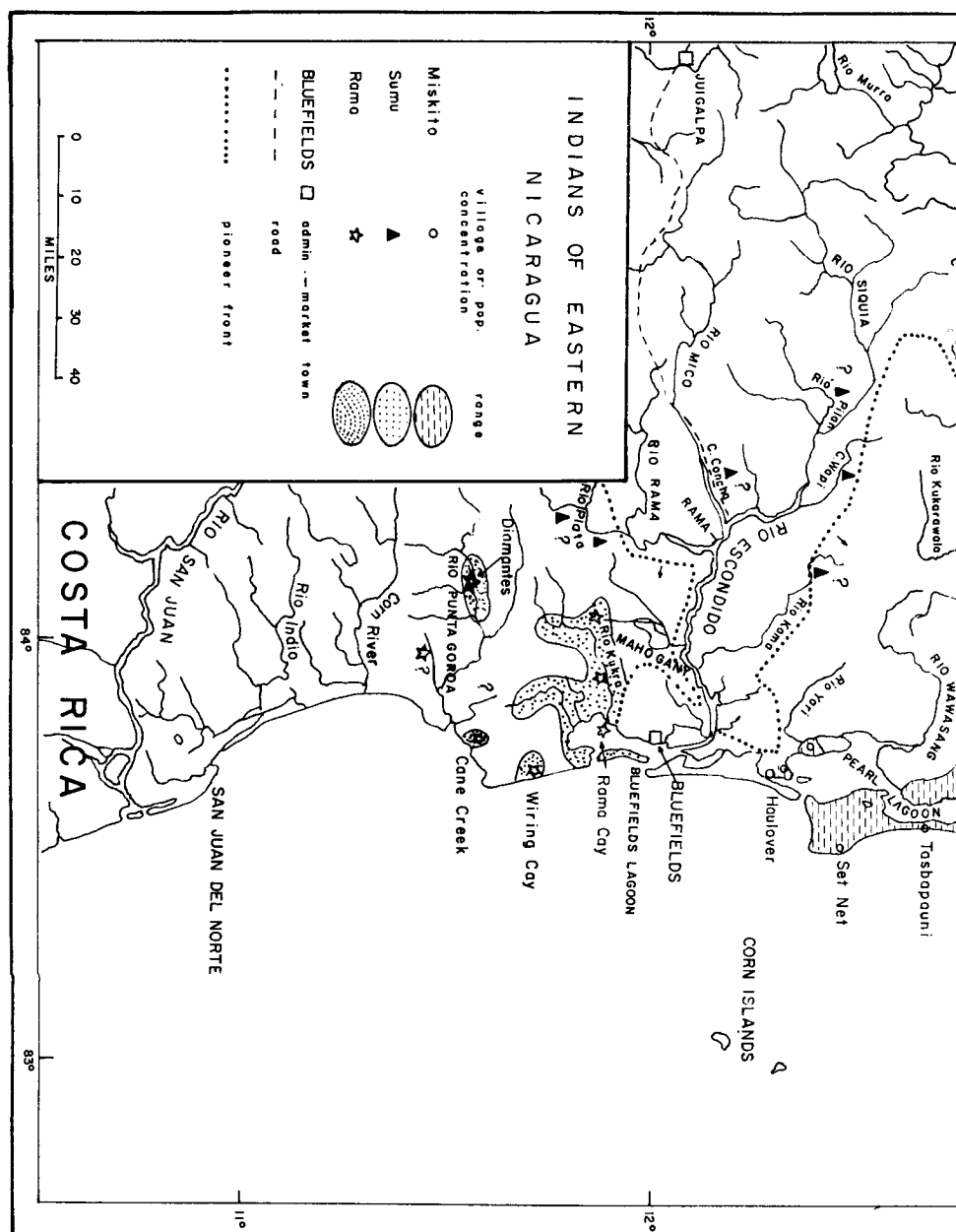
What meaning could be given to indigenous and Black liberation on the Atlantic Coast within the newly-won possibility, expressed in the statement of interests and organisation, after the victory of the Sandinist Front over Somoza on July 19, 1979? The first available texts express only hesitatingly all the hopes which arose gradually and blossomed among the indigenous and Afro-American population.

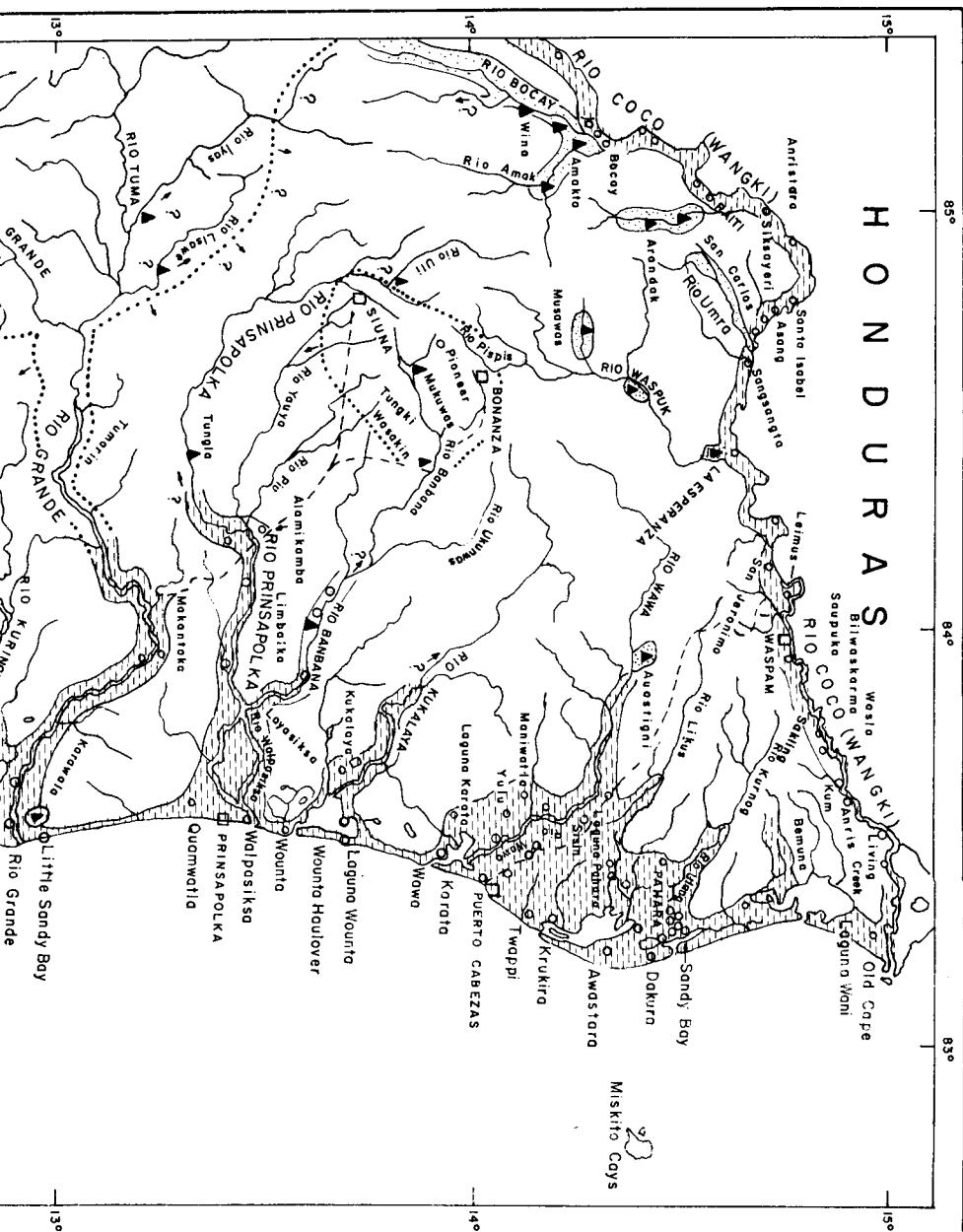
The indigenous rural population, which lives in stable village communities, bears the imprint, above all, of a "conservative" historical moment marked by the preservation and recuperation of its threatened tradition and culture. Like the lowland ethnic groups in other countries, it does not demand development and progress and does not struggle against unemployment or for Socialism. Such categories of the industrialised world or of the world integrated into the capitalist market have no meaning in the subsistence reproduction and way of life of the indigenous villages. The word "work", for example, does not exist either in Mískito nor in Sumu or Rama: an indigenous person goes fishing, cuts down a tree or goes into a field. Wherever paid labour exists (outside the village community) the Mískito use the English word "work".

The indigenous Lowlanders struggle rather for the survival of their collective ethnic identity, consisting of the common language, a mythological geography and history teeming with stories, shamanic traditions, collective land ownership and the memory of an economy based on gift exchange which was suppressed by the Protestant mission of the Moravian Brothers. In fact the indigenous people only want to be "left in peace" and to go back to the good old times.

On September 11, 1979, the organisation MISURASATA, "Mískito SUMu RAMa SANDinista asla TAKanka" was founded by

The Indigenous Population of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast





village leaders from almost all of the 250 or more communities, at a congress of the indigenous organisation ALPRO-MISU in Puerto Cabezas, the northernmost of the two Atlantic ports. Set up in 1974, ALPROMISU was closely connected to the Moravian Church and a founder member of the World Council of Indigenous peoples (WCIP). Both the presence of the FSLN Comandante Daniel Ortega at the founding of MISURASATA and the name itself symbolise the hope of an alliance between the indigenous population and the Revolution: "Miskito, Sumu, Rama together with the Sandinists". But at the same time, MISURASATA is a compromise between the original wish of the Sandinists to set up a sort of Sandinist mass organisation for the indigenous population and the latter's concept of remaining organised independently from the Spanish-speaking culture of Nicaragua.

In addition to the material conflict of interests over the land question, opposing concepts of law and politics lie behind this. For the indigenous Lowlanders, it is not a question of "law" in the sense of a legally codified calculation of interests nor of the recognition of civil liberties as such. They defend their ancestral indigenous rights over and against dominating "Western" societies; namely to live differently (which does not have to mean "authentically" or as "purely indigenous").

Nor is the organisation of political matters separated from the cultural and economic spheres in this society which knows no State and whose leaders are entitled to a limited command. Political connections are established on the level of the village communities, which for their part share a specific linguistic and ethnic relationship of kinship to each other. Now, since the Seventies, indigenous societies in Central and South America have begun to struggle for their different identity from "our" culture with the help of "Western" forms of organisation. MISURASATA is one such attempt. We easily forget that these forms of organisation accepted by the indigenous

people are not their own. When, however, they are used - through the mediation of indigenous leaders with a "Western" education - it is in the knowledge of the fact that "we" (or the Sandinists) only understand our own language, that we can only appreciate indigenous people if they speak as a farmers' Union, as an indigenous organisation with a structure similar to that of an association or as a non-government organisation (NGO) at the UN.

In Spanish-speaking Nicaragua, it is the Sandinist Revolution which has re-established the connection between the cultural, political and economic levels in numerous areas: from the emergence of a collective political consciousness in the struggle against the dictatorship of Somoza, through the re-discovery of disused traditions (such as the maize culture, which was displaced through the import of wheat from the US), to the creation of a political popular culture whose "surplus energy" can be made fruitful for social changes. But this achievement of the Sandinist Front cannot be exported to the Atlantic Coast - except at the price of the suppression of its autochthonous inhabitants and the Caribbean culture (even if this has been moulded by the Moravian Church since the last century).

If the General Directions, which MISURASATA was able to draw up for the three indigenous ethnic groups (under the leadership of the 80% Miskito among them) was largely free from Sandinist influence, (MISURASATA, page 48) it was because part of the FSLN leadership, particularly the Minister for the Agrarian Reform, Jaime Wheelock, also advocated a special regional development of the Revolution on the Atlantic Coast. In Wheelock's Ministry, INRA, "integration", the key word of the official policy towards the indigenous peoples, was interpreted to mean participation of the local inhabitants in the formulation and execution of state policy for the Atlantic Coast. "Special development" meant here a clear rejection of Hispanicisation and assimilation which were considered to

lead to the dissolution of the village communities with their collective use of the land and the ethno-cultural identity which goes with it.

The General Directions of MISURASATA seeks to put forward indigenous claims but at the same time to bring the political culture of the Sandinist Revolution on the Pacific side of the country to bear upon them. Thus the text demands the participation of the indigenous communities in the political events in Managua too. It is significant that this central text was published in Spanish but never in Mískito, Sumu or English. The MISURASATA leaders went through the village communities with the programme, expounding their ideas on it at meetings. An example of this is the speech which the co-ordinator of the organisation, Brooklyn Rivera, made in an indigenous village in September 1980 (Brooklyn Rivera page 64).

First Conflicts on the Atlantic Coast

Nicaragua's literacy campaign - from March to August 1980 - was initially planned only in Spanish and led to the first confrontation between the Sandinist Government and MISURASATA. On the Atlantic Coast the programme in the Spanish language was boycotted by the population. The Government therefore decided to carry out a new campaign in the languages of the ethnic groups living there. From October 1980 to February 1981, MISURASATA and the Ministry of Education organised the literacy programme together in Mískito, Sumu and English. Moreover, at the suggestion of the representative of MISURASATA, Steadman Fagoth, a law for the introduction of bilingual teaching in Primary Schools on the Atlantic Coast (in Mískito or English and at the same time Spanish) was passed in the State Council - similar to a Parliament (owing to the subsequent political conflict and practical difficulties, however, it has not yet been put into practice).

At the beginning of October 1980, the Creole population of the port of Bluefields went on strike for three days against

the presence of Cuban doctors and teachers. 45 years of Somoza dictatorship and its anti-communist indoctrination only partly explain why here, for the first time, part of the indigenous population militantly opposed the policy of the Sandinist Revolution. Behind the "October disturbances" lay not least the fear of the relatively well-off Creoles of the urban petite bourgeoisie, when the Government expropriated a number of fishing boats and houses in Bluefields, that they would lose their privileges (over and against the indigenous rural population).

The spontaneous attempt to rebel was put to an end by the Ministry of the Interior's military police POI, who were flown in from Managua. Several hundred detainees were released again after one day but the leaders of the intellectuals' organisation, the Southern Indigenous and Creole Community (SICC), were sentenced. They were let out of prison only in September 1981.

The leadership of MISURASATA, which was still in alliance with the Sandinists at the time, did not side with SICC (see MISURASATA: "We ask for Understanding", page 68). The Creole population did not forgive it for this and for its part distanced itself from the Miskito when their conflict with the Government heightened in 1981. Since the attempts at organisation by the Creoles and the indigenous peoples fell apart with the "October disturbances" and the Afro-American population has remained in a state of political lethargy or sometimes passive resistance up to the present time, this documentation is limited to the confrontation between the Sandinists and the indigenous population (and here again to the Miskito, who acted on their own).

Apart from the literacy programme and the law about bilingual teaching in Primary Schools, during the year 1980 MISURASATA indeed achieved little which would lead to the concrete fulfillment of its conception of a "special" development

of the Atlantic Coast. (The Government's "integrating" infrastructure and social programme could be seen as a positive step but could also, in fact, have an assimilating effect.) Nevertheless the "alliance with the Sandinists" was exceptionally successful in that it ensured MISURASATA of the necessary scope to develop from an organisation into a real "movement" with an enormous capacity for mobilisation in the indigenous communities. Thus MISURASATA ousted the influence of the hitherto only regional organisation with an infrastructure which reached the grass roots: the former Mission and now indigenous Protestant Church of the Moravian Brothers.

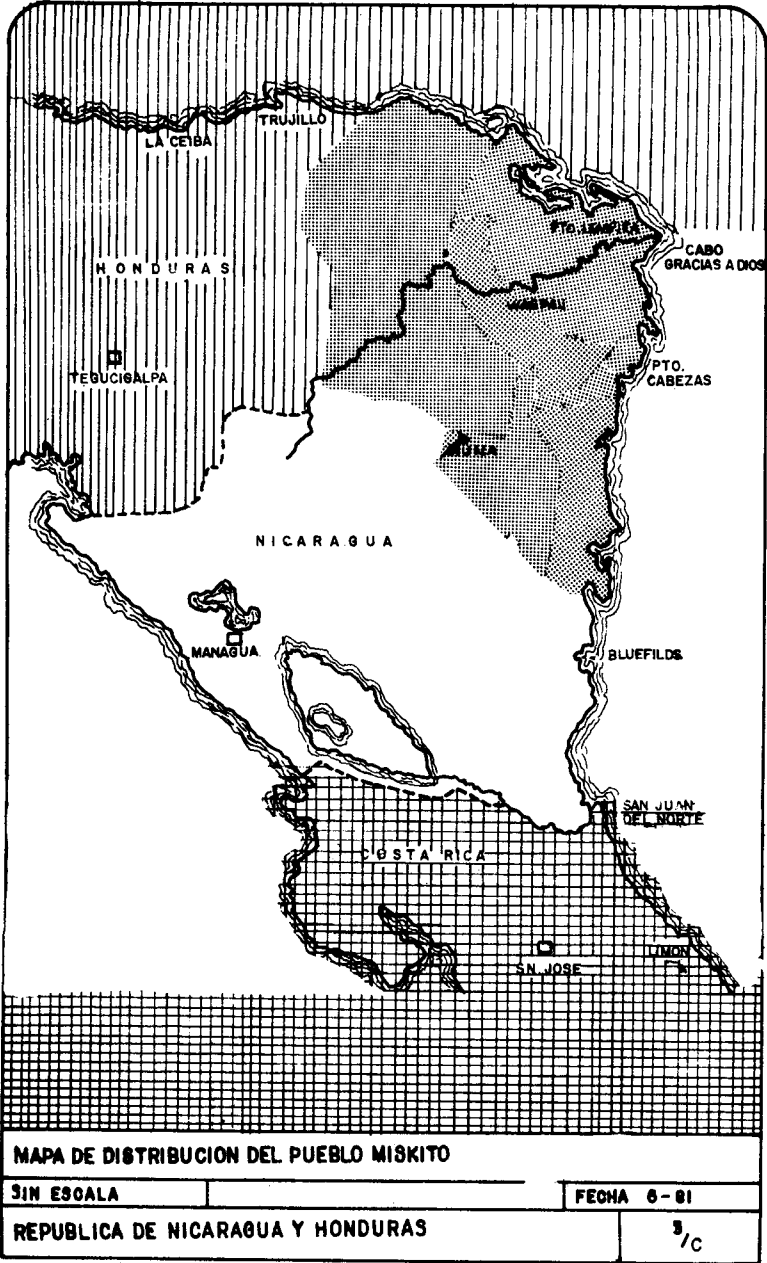
The young indigenous intellectuals of MISURASATA who had studied in Managua or León, were likewise "too successful" for the Sandinists. For while, through its own mass organisations and the literacy campaign, the FSLN had included the majority of the population on the Pacific Coast into its concept of revolution, the influence of the FSLN cadres or the employees of the state institutions in the indigenous communities was slight. Indeed, they were often only accepted when they could show letters of recommendation from MISURASATA. With strong backing in their region, the Miskito leaders soon started to over-estimate themselves. They began to demand an authentic indigenous revolution, increasingly separated from that of the Sandinists, and the self-determination of all peoples.

The Polarisation of 1981:

At stake - the land question and political control

Immediately after the victory of 1979, the Revolutionary Government nationalised all the land for which no titles of private ownership existed. Almost the whole indigenous area was affected by this and legally became state property. Although this did not mean that a decision had already been taken to deny communal land titles to the indigenous communities, nevertheless the Government began immediately to exploit the precious wood in the traditional indigenous areas, without the land rights being clarified.

Miskito population of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and Honduras



Source: CIERA, 1981.

In February 1981 the latent conflict flared up because the Government did not adhere to an "Agreement on norms for lumber felling" (page 95) between MISURASATA and the Government Institute for Natural Resources, IRENA. According to the agreement, the State was to pay back part of the current value of the felled precious wood to the indigenous communities affected, for development projects. Initially, however, this did not happen - at least in the case of the Miskito. Once again the latter saw the fact confirmed that the "Spaniards" (as all Spanish-speaking Nicaraguans are still called on the Atlantic Coast) only wanted to appropriate the wealth of the region - the largest area of continuous tropical rain forest in Central America today - for themselves.

Another threatening form of appropriation is the unflagging advance towards the Atlantic Coast of the pioneer front of the Spanish-speaking peasants. Since the beginning of the 1950s, the poor campesinos, driven from their plots of land by the expansion of coffee and cotton plantations pasture land in the Pacific and Central regions of Nicaragua, have been colonising the forest of the Miskito Coast, historically known as "Moskitia". The new settlers, who do not only produce for their own subsistence but also for the local markets, have pushed the Rama in the south right up to the coast and in the north will soon reach Tasba Pri, the four new settlements of the Miskito who were resettled from the Río Coco.

MISURASATA was supposed to announce to the Government its land claims for all the indigenous communities at the end of February 1981. This was to be done by means of a map, for which all the detailed information had been gathered during months of work, and by means of a 155 page document of legal evidence, which non-indigenous lawyers in Managua had drawn up for MISURASATA (financed by Cultural Survival, Cambridge, Ma.). A few days before the date set for delivery, however, the entire leadership of MISURASATA was arrested and so were many of the literacy teachers active in the organisation. (The campaign in the non-Spanish languages had almost come to an end.)

Behind the accusation of "separatism" made in a communiqué of the Sandinist armed forces (page 99) lay MISURASATA's "Plan of Action for 1981" (page 89) with its demands for more possibilities of exercising influence, above all at the local level and in the State Council in Managua. When an army patrol appeared in the Moravian church of the Mískito village of Prinzapolka in order to arrest another local leader, Elmer Prado, during the celebration of the completion of the literacy campaign, a confrontation broke out between Sandinist soldiers and Mískito in which four people on each side were killed.

These events did not only prevent the land problem from being finally tackled. They also led to the beginning of an increased hardening of the positions on both sides.

The representative of MISURASATA in the State Council, Steadman Fagoth, was found guilty of being a former agent of Somoza's secret police, OSN. It remains unclear to what extent and for how long he worked at the same time as a double agent for the Socialist Party of Nicaragua, PSN. Through the mediation of the Bishop of the Moravian Church, the Mískito John Wilson, the rest of the MISURASATA leadership was released again after three weeks. Nevertheless, by this time so much anger and protest had accumulated in the indigenous village communities, that in spite of the dubious figure of Fagoth, the Mískito rose "to a man" on his behalf. Mass demonstrations took place for a whole week. 10,000 Mískito gathered in Waspán, on the Río Coco and in the port of Puerto Cabezas and other places, churches and offices were occupied by MISURASATA. This was a new form of civil disobedience to which the Sandinist leadership reacted at first with uncertainty and then with repression. The Government was afraid that a sort of counter power could be established there. After more than a week, the demonstrations were finally broken up by force. For fear of a second wave of arrests, 3000 Mískito, mostly young activists of MISURASATA, then fled from their respective villages to Honduras, on the other side of the Río Coco. (About 35,000 to

50,000 Mískito also live on the northern side of the frontier, which has only been fixed there since 1960.)

The tense situation on the whole of the Atlantic Coast prompted the FSLN to set Fagoth free "conditionally". While he was still in prison he had consented to go on a long study trip to Bulgaria. But before that, he was to undertake a journey through the Mískito villages and use his prestige - which had grown with his imprisonment - to persuade those who had fled to Honduras to return. Under military guard, he travelled to his home region, half-way up the Río Coco, in May. When the old village leaders told him that they would not want to have anything to do with him after a period abroad, he crossed, one night, over the river into Honduras. Instead of calling upon the refugees there to return, he organised them under his leadership and in Tegucigalpa and Miami began to negotiate terms for co-operation with armed organisations of Somoza's former National Guards. For this purpose he was allowed to use their radio station in Honduras "15 de Setiembre" (the date of the independence of Central America in 1821). In his impressive rhetoric, he called almost daily on the Atlantic Coast for the "liberation of the Mískito from Sandino-Communism" using this radio and succeeded in bringing even more young indigenous activists over the border, virtually as links to the village communities.

Fagoth's increasing influence caused a mediating mission to Honduras by the MISURASATA co-ordinator Brookyn Rivera and Bishop John Wilson to fail. In order to persuade the refugees to return against Fagoth's will, it was necessary for the remaining Mískito leaders, who were still aiming at negotiations with the Government in Managua, first to show some success. An indigenous council, called together by Rivera and Hazel Lau in the village of Tuapí near Puerto Cabezas in July 1981 also failed. Under the name "Legion 15 de Setiembre", Fagoth's people broadcast death threats to the fraction which was prepared to negotiate and spread the rumour over the radio

that the Sandinist army was preparing a massacre in Tuapí. Only fifteen village communities were finally represented at the meeting, the failure of which Brooklyn Rivera summed up in an interview (page 153).

Only the Agrarian Reform Law, announced on July 19, 1981, gave rise to any hope at this juncture. In a special arrangement for the Atlantic Coast (page 162), a provision was made to put as much "collective and individual" land ownership at the disposal of the indigenous village communities as they needed for their subsistence economy. Meanwhile, however, the MISURASATA leaders who had remained in Nicaragua were already under heavy pressure from their village communities, who were no longer prepared to make any compromises. The Sandinists' policy of continually delaying the land negotiations and at the same time stepping up the military control on the Miskito Coast had also led to the radicalisation of the Miskito's demands. They now wanted territorial autonomy and control over the natural resources - even if within the Nicaraguan National State. At the end of July 1981, this demand was submitted to the Government with a map of the claimed territory - the whole of the northern part of the Atlantic Coast (page 163).

The FSLN for its part now saw no further possibility of using Rivera and Lau's rapidly diminishing influence for the return of the Miskito who had fled. It decided to declare MISURASATA defunct (page 181) and to aim at direct land negotiations with the village communities as well as the building up of new, more controllable indigenous organisations with Miskito, Sumu and Rama separately.

In a Declaration of Principles on their policy towards the indigenous peoples (page 178) the FSLN and the Government announced their consent to the economic and cultural demands of the indigenous village communities and their refusal of the politically autonomous representation of indigenous interests. It was emphasised that "Nicaragua is but one nation" and that

"its official language is Spanish", while the "indigenous brothers" were guaranteed the "preservation of their languages". The background to this was an economic development strategy which was to be based on the natural resources of the Atlantic Coast. "The natural resources of our territory are the property of the Nicaraguan people, represented by the Revolutionary State. It is the only entity empowered to establish any utilisation."

However, the planned negotiations with the single village communities for the land which was to be guaranteed to them never happened. On its first visits to the villages, the Government delegation was soon given to understand that only all the village communities together could decide about the land question. In the summer of 1981, government initiatives too in schools and the health service, as well as the now Spanish programme for adult education (post-literacy) were similarly largely boycotted by the Miskito. In September, Brooklyn Rivera also went to Honduras. From there he took stock of the events in a document (page 203) in which his resignation about the situation of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast changes abruptly into a strongly anti-Sandinist attitude.

MISURASATA did not exist any more, but the FSLN did not have any political influence whatsoever, let alone hegemony, in the Miskito village communities either. The counter-revolution of Somoza's former National Guards, organised in Honduras and Miami, now leapt into this ideological vacuum (only the Moravian Church was still able to exert some influence). While up till then it had carried out its attacks and raids on Nicaraguan territory in the mountainous region of the northwestern departments of Chinandega, Somoto, Nueva Segovia and Jinotega, at the end of 1981, it shifted its operational base eastwards. Thanks not least to Fagoth and the radio station "15 de Setiembre", it was able to count on the support along the Río Coco of many Miskito villages on the Nicaraguan side. Radio is the only means of mass communication on the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast.

In December 1981, the raids on the local stations of government institutions were increased. Supply boats were captured from Honduras, military posts attacked and the Miskito who co-operated with the Sandinists threatened. In Nicaragua, the Miskito village communities were politically divided down the middle and on the Honduran side there were evidently groups which co-operated with Fagoth and the Somozists as well as others which undertook acts of revenge against the Sandinists on their own initiative. The losses of the Sandinist army mounted up. On a single day near San Carlos more than 12 soldiers lost their lives and a helicopter was shot down. The most contradictory versions exist of what course the actions and reactions of both sides in those weeks really took. It seems certain that armed confrontations caused casualties on both sides, also among the civilian population. At this juncture those members of the FSLN won their way, who for months had been recommending the evacuation of the indigenous population on the Río Coco and the creation of a purely military zone along the frontier river. In a speech in March 1982, the Vice-Minister of the Interior and the FSLN representative for the region, Luis Carrión, described - from the Government's point of view - how and why in January this resettlement to the interior of the country was carried out (page 235).

Perspectives of a political solution

The texts collected in this book should make it clear that idealisation - whether of the indigenous reality or of the liberation movement in power - gives a distorted vision of the developments as they really occurred and hinders an appropriate treatment of their consequences. On the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast, the idyll of an indigenous life uninfluenced by imperialistic and Latin American civilisation does not exist. Nevertheless, racial inbreeding, the remoulding of traditions and - in the case of the Rama - the partial loss of their own language, have not been able to destroy the consciousness of an indigenous identity.

On the other hand, after its assumption of power, the national liberation movement FSLN was not in a position initially to give answers to the problems of the "internal colonialist relationship" between the Pacific and the Atlantic parts of Nicaragua and thereby to lessen the conflict which had already been traced out by history. The Sandinists (at least in their prevailing political orientation) have consciously shown themselves to be heirs of a line of thought which measures revolution for everyone according to the same indicators (of "western definition") of social and material progress. This inevitably resulted in centrally and paternalistically drawn programmes for the integration of the Miskito Coast, which was simply and solely declared "backward".

Of equal importance are the constraints imposed at the same time on the National Revolution by the immediate threat of counter-revolutionary strategies, behind which the interests of the USA in a submissive "Central American backyard" are also hidden. Even three years after the victory over Somoza, the revolution in Nicaragua is only able to bring about slow and inconsistent changes in the economic and social structures. The primary requirement for the Sandinists is to defend the political power and thus to maintain the precondition for turning an anti-capitalistic Utopia some day into a reality.

It is certainly not easy to deal with the contradictory reality rather than with idealisations. But if we are concerned not only with the defence of the right of Nicaragua to its own revolution but likewise the defence (on the Atlantic Coast) of those rights which the indigenous peoples are demanding today throughout Central and South America, then we have no choice. We must see the perspectives - of possible future developments there and our attitudes to them - on the basis of this real antithesis between the National Revolution and the indigenous identity. We must understand this antithesis historically as being produced on the one hand by colonialism,

Somoza's dictatorship and being deepened with the Revolution, and on the other by polarisation and manipulation brought about from the outside but also by the FSLN's basic lack of understanding for ethnic problems and their political consequences.

The result is a situation beset with extreme difficulties on both sides. After a year of hard and ultimately bloody confrontations, the Miskito population finds itself torn apart. Besides the roughly 8,000 new settlers in Tasba Pri, there are 12,000 UNHCR registered refugees on the Honduran side and at least 20,000 indigenous people who are living scattered about somewhere.

For the Sandinists, the situation is not only determined by the relative failure of the resettlement action in military terms and the experience of their own losses of human life on the Río Coco. The continual and growing pressure on the Revolution - both diplomatic and economic - also limits the possibility of a political opening towards indigenous peoples.

A perspective which aims at a new rapprochement between the indigenous population and the Sandinist Revolution will certainly be based on the accommodation of different interests and presupposes the recognition of the indigenous way of life and economy as legitimate and of equal status.

We can hardly do more than merely ask questions, however, about the future of the Miskito and the concrete development of the Sandinist policy. If the news from Honduras is true that Steadman Fagoth has forfeited a lot of prestige among the Miskito through his unholy alliance with the ex-National Guards (who do not exactly behave very amicably to the indigenous people) then we can raise questions about the new scope for action which would ensue here for Miskito leaders who want on principle to struggle for the rights of the indigenous population within the Sandinist Revolution. What possibilities for a solution can the Miskito themselves

envisage today, above all the refugees and evacuees - precisely on the supposition that a return to their traditional settlement area on the Rio Coco can be excluded within the foreseeable future?

What will the four new large settlements of Tasba Pri demonstrate here? A project which is regarded by the FSLN Government as a new beginning to its indigenous policy and to which it is devoting considerable financial and personal resources, should show what government policies for the development and integration of the Atlantic Coast will be like in the future.

How far will it be possible for the Miskito who have been resettled to resume their traditional mode of production which was linked to the structures of the old village communities? Will the model of the agrarian co-operatives, promoted by the Sandinists on the Pacific side, be abandoned in favour of communal land ownership?

A second point too will depend on what concept of economic integration of the Atlantic Coast the Revolutionary Government decides upon. Up till now, the hope (in our opinion illusory) has prevailed that the structural crisis of the Nicaraguan export economy on the Pacific Coast could be solved by a rapid and selective exploitation of the natural resources of the Atlantic region. Projects range from the advance of the pioneer front through the export of precious wood to the planned construction of large reservoirs and the exploration for oil. Will the short-term economic pressure allow the Revolutionary Government in Managua to put less emphasis on the rapid achievement of an increase in production and proceeds in foreign currency and more on the political and ecological effects?

A development with equal status which is shared by the coastal population can only come about if first the differences of the Atlantic Coast and its inhabitants are taken as the

point of departure and if "integration" of both parts of the country is recognised to be a lengthy process to be treated with great sensitivity.

Then it should be possible to grant the indigenous population genuine participation and also self-determination on the Atlantic Coast. For the Sandinists, the condition would certainly be the achievement at an international level of the prevention of the terror activities from Honduras of the former National Guards. Once this very immediate danger of an alliance between armed counter-revolutionaries and the indigenous population is removed, then there will be a new scope to reduce the military problem to a political one again. But even then it will be a long way to an accommodation of interests and a new alliance between the National Revolution and the indigenous identity.

June 1982

(Translated by Wendy Tyndale)

ROBIN SCHNEIDER:

BRITISH INDIRECT RULE:

MISKITO KINGS AND THE REPRESSION OF AUTOCHTHONOUS PEOPLES

If the past struggles and suffering of the indigenous population in the Central American Lowlands can be reconstructed at all, then it is only in the form of colonial and mission history. An indigenous history has not been written. Indigenous lowland societies are not without a history and are not static but their development on the Miskito Coast, today the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and Honduras, has been remoulded for more than 450 years by colonial practice. The war of the colonial powers in the Carribean against the filibusters - mostly Dutch pirates and freebooters of the 16th and 17th centuries - and the fight between the Spanish and British colonial kingdoms, determined by their strategic-economic interests in the natural resources, also directly influenced the indigenous communities; for their semi-nomadic way of life was obstructed above all by the restriction of their land.¹ At first it became a retreat for the filibusters, then because of the colonial production in enclaves and because of the discovery of the hinterland, it was conquered in expeditions of war or conquest against the invading Spanish troops. With the exception of the Miskito, the indigenous peoples were systematically driven out of large areas and many were wiped out by slave-work on

1. Before the colonisation, the autochthonous population lived scattered along the course of the rivers and coast. They practised semi-nomadic subsistence reproduction (fishing, hunting and some agriculture) and periodically led expeditions of war against each other. The groups living on the Wanks (Río Coco), known since the middle of the 17th century as Miskito, traded regularly with Europeans and thus received European merchandise, including arms and ammunition. They were, moreover, the only ones who did not observe endogamy, that is the law of marriage only within their own group. This was a prerequisite for the assimilation of the mainly male African slaves in the indigenous village communities.

the plantations.²

Before the militarily enforced annexation and before the colonisation in enclaves, centres certainly existed among the indigenous lowland societies on the Mískito Coast. Hunters and fishermen, who lived widely scattered, met together at the festivals which constituted the community and in the rites which socialised it. Surplus products of the hunt and later increasingly of small-scale agriculture, were also collectively consumed on these occasions. These centres were the heart of the mythical geography of small societies of this sort and the basis of the collective corporate land rights. An extensive territory of tropical rain forest around the fertile land along the river banks and the sea coast abundant in fish, embraced the domains of these segmentary societies. With the concentration of food resources under the ecological conditions of the tropical rain forest (see Carneiro 1970) and with the subsequent formation of village communities, land tended to become a scarce resource, which gave rise to competition and also bellicose disputes. But political integration beyond the level of the village did not begin. This ecological restriction was linked in the colonial situation to a "social restriction" (Chagnon 1968).³ For the people in the immediate

2. The Paya, who lived in the mountainous interior, fled to the north. The tribe which has been known as Sumu since the 19th century and the Rama were obliged to pay tribute. The relationship of dependence between the Sumu and the Mískito was continued by the mainly German missionaries of the pietistic Moravian Church (Community of Brothers) on behalf of the British colonial administration at the end of the 19th century by the fact that they preached in Mískito. Only the Ulwa (Sumu), Rama, Garínagu (Black Caribs) and Creoles (Afro-Americans) who lived around Bluefields were preached to in English. Creole English is still established as the second language of the Mískito today, but Mískito is the second language of the Sumu.

3. Using the example of the Yanomamö of the Amazon region, Carneiro (1970) says that political development was stimulated by (modest) social restrictions and (pronounced) restrictions caused by the environment.

area of the centre of a particular region, the effects of a relatively high population density in that region are similar to those caused by restrictions conditioned by the environment. These two sorts of restrictions converged on the Miskito Coast, above all at the Wanks (Río Coco) and became more pronounced after the colonial invasion. From the 17th century onwards tribes were formed in that area as "colonial tribes", above and beyond the mythical and linguistic community of the villages. They were societies which were a direct result of colonial policy or colonial force. Thus the Miskito, to the present day the dominant indigenous group in the lowlands of Honduras and Nicaragua, are an indigenous people, who, during the course of the 17th century mixed with Africans, mostly runaway slaves from Jamaica, and also lived in indigenous village communities.⁴ Their cultural and ethnic identity was therefore from the beginning dependent on the practice of colonialism. During the 18th and up to the end of the 19th century, the Miskito were allied to the British colonisers. From 1848 to 1949, there were German, Scandinavian, and in the 20th century North American missionaries on the Miskito Coast: it was an alliance against the Spanish and against the remaining autochthonous population. While signifying submission to the external pressure, at the same time it established the possibility for the Miskito withdrawal into the indigenous culture of the village communities but it also gave rise to resistance to the colonial rule in certain situations. The form their resistance took was essentially refusal to co-operate which was interpreted as passivity by the colonisers (Savery 1979:87-88).

4. As Conzemius (1932:17-18) can verify with different sources, ethnic interbreeding began in 1641 after the shipwreck of a Portuguese slave ship off Cabo Gracias a Dios. The Africans who survived were able to integrate into the indigenous society. The mother still determines the ethnic identity of the child among the Miskito today. Moreover, it is not the phenotype but the language which is the criterion for ethnic affiliation. Many Miskito look more African than Indian. Thus "Sambo" used to be a derogatory term for Miskito.

Through their society as colonised peoples, the Mískito, Sumu, Rama and Garínagu (Black Caribs, Garífuna) were saved from genocide. Today in Nicaragua there are still 32 Sumu village communities, five of the Rama and two of the Garínagu.⁵ The Sumu and the Rama (as well as their ancestors, the Voto), who were threatened with genocide during the entire colonial period, are regarded as pre-colonial tribes. The Garínagu are the descendants of the original inhabitants of the St. Vincent Islands. The Mískito, who have 184 village communities in Nicaragua today (MISURASATA 1980:4), held an important position as mediators in the political, economic and military relations between the British and the Spanish and between the British and the other indigenous peoples (Helms 1969:78). They traded in rum, clothing, machetes and other European goods in exchange for tortoise shells and furs, rubber and kopal (resin), (Roberts 1827:109) and, for themselves, dug-out canoes and paddles, pumpkins and calabashes, hammocks and corn (ibid.:20). The products which they demanded in payment for themselves were, however, mainly treated as tributes to be paid in the name of the Mískito King.

In their mediatory function, which was crucial both for them and for the British, the Mískito acted as extortionate tradesmen, forcing the village communities which were in "debt peonage" (ibid.:122), and in a "Helot relationship" (Lehmann 1914:6) to produce a surplus. Since the 19th century, in many villages this has turned into a partially collective cash crop production alongside the household subsistence mode of production.

Through their alliance, the Mískito achieved a formal political autonomy with a Mískito king, who played an

5. The Garínagu, known in the literature as Black Caribs (Garífuna), are descendants of the original inhabitants of the St. Vincent Islands, from where they were driven in 1797. They have interbred with the Creoles. Most of them live in what is Southern Belize today and on the Caribbean Coast of Honduras. Davidson (1976) gives an overview.

important symbolic role in what was later known as the colonial system of British indirect rule. In 1687, a Mískito leader was crowned by the British in Jamaica (Bancroft 1886: 599; Hooker 1945:34-51). His "Moskitia Kingdom" - Moskitia is a parody by the British of the word "Mískito", a confusion of the Indians with mosquitoes - lasted under British protection for over 200 years, until the annexation of the Atlantic Coast in 1894 by the new Nicaraguan national State.

Nevertheless, there was no centralised political system, no chief's state and no kingdom. The emergence of a state did not occur. The village communities were economically self-sufficient and politically autonomous societies and have defended many forms of their social organisation up to the present day. In the colonial system of indirect rule, the King was in fact only the colonial representation of the British colonial power, to carry through its interests - the Spanish in Latin America took over this position themselves through direct repressive rule. The King had no political importance (c.f. Helms 1969:82), and no possibility of exercising influence over the Mískito village communities. In the same way that the Mískito were used by the British colonial power, the Mískito subjugated the many other indigenous peoples and systematically exploited them. Some Sumu villages were still obliged to pay tribute after 1900 to a long since imaginary King.

This exploitative relationship was the basis of the colonial centre which was built up on the Mískito Coast as a vertical trade network for colonial merchandise. Theft and slavery were integral parts of the colonial economy - an economy which colonised people. The Mískito worked as slave hunters and thus, through making available a part of the work force necessary for the enclave economy of the plantations, were themselves spared from slavery. The African slaves who had managed to escape had mixed with the Mískito and became Mískito themselves and thus acquired the status of free men

with the British colonial rulers. African and indigenous slaves were the prerequisite of the colonial enclave production of precious woods, palm oil and rubber until 1833.

Although the Caribbean coast of Central America was claimed by the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico and Guatemala), the colonial administration never reached this area. But it was not only owing to the tropical rain forest and the inaccessibility of the deposits of precious metal that the relatively small indigenous population avoided Hispanicisation - which only began slowly at the beginning of the 20th century. At the end of the 17th century, the British saw a chance of setting up a retreat and a base on the Mískito Coast in Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon and Cabo Gracias de Dios, for their piracy against Spanish trading vessels in the Caribbean. They were moreover interested in some colonial merchandise and in possible natural resources, which they extorted from the indigenous population by trading indirectly through the Mískito. This unequal exchange was the beginning of the appearance of ethnocide. The formal autonomy of the "Moskitia Kingdom" seemed to the British to be a guarantee for the consolidation of their rule in the Caribbean with only a few colonisers. The battle between the British and Spanish colonialism was also for the possible control of an inter-oceanic canal from San Juan del Norte (Greytown) through the Río San Juan (St. John's River) and the Lake of Nicaragua up to San Juan del Sur on the Pacific. The region of the Río San Juan and San Juan del Norte was the only area on the whole Mískito Coast which repeatedly fell under the control of the Spanish. This was the land out of which the ancestors of the Rama were driven.

Following the military occupation of Bluefields in 1894 by General Cabezas' Nicaraguan troops, the expanding capitalism of North America controlled this area for the dictatorship of General Zelaya. (Bílwi was renamed Puerto Cabezas and except for the southern Department of Río San Juan, the Nicaraguan Mískito Coast has been officially called the Departamento

Zelaya since that time.) After the Monroe Doctrine of 1848, the British were forced to withdraw. Formally from 1860 onwards there was a "Moskitia Reservation" under Nicaraguan sovereignty but Managua had no presence on the Miskito Coast. The classical imperialist power of the United States exploited gold, precious woods, chicle (the raw material for chewing-gum), tortoises and later also oysters and lobsters, mostly by employing indigenous day-labourers. But the US too had their main geo-political interest in the project of an inter-oceanic canal through the Lake of Nicaragua.

The presence of the North Americans was very welcome to the indigenous village communities on many accounts. It supposedly offered a coalition against the Spanish-speaking Nicaraguans, who are still called "Spaniards" today on the Atlantic Coast. At the beginning of the 20th century, two railway lines were built in the forest to exploit the lumber. (They have long since fallen into disrepair.) In 1912, the US marines landed. In 1926 the Bragman's Bluff lumber company in Puerto Cabezas was, for example, with 3,000 wage-labourers, the largest expropriateur in the whole of Nicaragua at that time (Karnes 1978:115). In 1961, the US invaded Cuba from Puerto Cabezas. However, its neo-colonial exploitation, enclave economy, remained: the so-called original accumulation is still not generally established either in most of the indigenous village communities today. It is the ethnic identities which constitute the present-day social division on the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast, even if at the same time the social mechanisms of reciprocity, which make equality and solidarity obligatory, are still effective inside the indigenous village communities.

(Translated by Wendy Tyndale)

References

- Bancroft, H.H., 1886: History of Central America Vol II (1530-1800). In: The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Vol VII, San Francisco.
- Carneiro, R.L., 1970: A theory of the origin of the State. In: Science, No. 169:733-738.
- Chagnon, N.A., 1968: in Proceedings, VII International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences held in Tokyo & Kyoto, Vol. III pp.249-251.
- Conzemius, E., 1932: Ethnographical Survey of the Mískito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology. Vol.CVI, Washington.
- Davidson, W.V., 1976: Black Carib (Garífuna) Habitats in M.W. Helms & F.O. Loveland, Eds. Frontier Adaptations in Lower Central America, pp.85-94, Philadelphia.
- Edwards, B., 1773: Some account of the British Settlements on the Mosquito Shore, Drawn up for the use of Government. In: B.Edwards, 1819: The History, Civil and Commerical, of the British West Indies, Vol. V, pp.202-214.
- Helms, M.W., 1969: The Cultural Ecology of a Colonial Tribe. Ethnology Vol.VIII, No.1, pp76-84.
- Hooker, R.M., 1945: La reincorporación de la Mosquitia desde el punto de vista del derecho internacional y patria. (Tesis inédita), UNAN León.
- Karnes, T.L., 1978: Tropical Enterprise, The Standard Fruit and Steamship Company in Latin America. Baton & Rouge, London.
- Lehmann, W., 1914: Vokabular der Rama-Sprache, nebst grammatischem Abriss. Abhandlungen der Kg. Bayer. Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philos.-philol. und hist. Klasse XXVIII, Vol.II . Abh. (Diss.), Universtät München.
- MISURASATA, 1980: Lineamientos Generales. Managua.
- Roberts, O.W., 1827: Narrative of Voyages and Excursions on the East Coast and the Interior of Central America. Edinburgh.
- Savery, E., 1980: "Sie gewinnen uns jetzt oder nie!", Gespräch mit Ernan Savery, dem Vorsitzenden der Southern Indigenous and Creole Community (SICC)/ Religion, Dorforganisation und Gemeinschaftsarbeit an der Atlantikküste. In Tangermann, K.-D., 1980: Ein Vulkan, Zentralamerika, Politische Reisen durch Guatemala, El Salvador und Nicaragua. taz-Journal, Nr. 2, Berlin: pp.82-83,86-89.

CARLOS NUNEZ (FSLN):

"WE WILL NOT CONTINUE SOMOZIST TRADITIONS!"

Source: Barricada, August 2, 1979.

Two weeks after the victory over Somoza, the Comandante and present President of the State Council advocates the inclusion of the Atlantic Coast in the revolutionary development of Nicaragua. It is really necessary to work with political persuasion against any attempts at independence, against the expected counter-revolutionary attacks, on the other hand, the Sandinist army is needed.

"The Atlantic Coast will be fully integrated into the Nicaraguan revolutionary process and it should be properly integrated. We are not going to continue what happened under the Somoza regime when the people there were only approached in order to force them to vote", said Comandante Carlos Núñez, of the FSLN National Committee, in his interview with Barricada.

"We believe that political work must be intensified in the Atlantic sector and to do this we will use our own combatants who came from this sector originally and who have demonstrated their desire for a new Nicaragua", continued the Sandinist compañero.

"We know that work will be hard in this sector above all on account of the people's wish for independence strengthened by the Somozists and precisely because of this we must work hard with our people so that they also come to learn to love our Revolution".



Between the Atlantic port Puerto Cabezas and Waspán, the biggest settlement on the Río Coco, government ENTRACAR trucks stand in for the lack of buses, July 1981 (Michael Rediske).

Military Strengthening

Companero Núñez also explained that military forces have been strengthened in the Atlantic sector. "We know that the spearhead of the counter-revolution could happen there, due to the circumstances already mentioned." He stressed that in this military organisation, the militias will play an important part.

"We will therefore start by working with the Sandinist cadres we have in the region. We know that the work is going to be arduous because there are problems there of ethnicity and autonomy, amongst others, but we are sure that the Sandinist people of the Coast are going to join the revolutionary process in our country", said Comandante Núñez finally.

MISURASATA:

"TOGETHER WE WILL BUILD A JUST SOCIETY!"

Source: Barricada, November 27, 1979.

In the foundation-manifesto of the indigenous movement MISURASATA on November 11, 1979, cultural liberation and the satisfaction of economic needs are put down as the aims of the organisation to achieve integration into the life of the nation. Spanish is recognised as the official language of the country. At the same time the dissemination of the indigenous languages and cultures is to be promoted.

Four months after the Revolution's triumph over Somoza's repressive regime, the country is at present fighting against imperialist pressure as well as against the misery, ignorance and vices we inherited from the Somoza dictatorship which lasted almost half a century. Aware of the intentions of our revolutionary government and the FSLN popular vanguard to lead our people towards social, economic and political victory, representatives of 185 indigenous communities, members of ALPROMISU, now MISURASATA (MISKITU SUMU RAMA SANDINISTA ASLATAKANKA) met in Puerto Cabezas on November 8-11, 1979 to determine the part which we as an ethnic organisation should play and should develop hand in hand with our government and the FSLN to consolidate our revolutionary process. We issue this manifesto to the people of Nicaragua as well as to all the peoples of the world who support indigenous rights, the international proletariat and our Revolution.

During previous regimes and especially under Somoza's dictatorship, the history of our indigenous peoples (Miskito and Sumu) has been marked by an unprecedented marginalisation, constant exploitation and abuse of identity. Natural resources (minerals, forest and sea resources etc.) were objects distributed through a policy of "hand-outs" to foreign interests with no benefit whatever for our communities; indeed the reverse since their exploitation damaged the communities.

Saupuka: a Miskito community on the Río Coco, July 1980
(Michael Rediske).

Under the domination of imperialism and dictatorship, our culture was despised to such an extent that the Spanish language was imposed on us through the education "pilot project" which prohibited the use of our mother tongues in schools. The idea was promoted that the Indians were brutes and that our language and other aspects of our culture did not form part of the national values, but rather opposed them (even in the case of our own indigenous people).

In response to this denigration, we Miskito and Sumu peoples conscious of our needs as human beings and above all with the intention of fighting for the re-instatement of our rights and for the preservation of our cultural identity, set up ourselves the organisation ALPROMISU in 1974. Our organisation had to confront governmental bodies such as INFONAC etc. which were at that time the principal enemies of our peoples, for Somoza intended to use these bodies to destroy our lands and resources. Many of our leaders were gaoled and tortured because they defended these rights.



Today, as a result of our victory we have won back those rights and as participants we want to contribute to the development of our nation and to the consolidation of our Revolution. For this reason we came to this V Assembly, to outline the objectives, goals and work of the organisation.

Through an Assembly decision, the indigenous group, Rama, was integrated within the organisation whose name was subsequently changed to MISKITU SUMU RAMA SANDINISTA ASLATAKANKA (MISURASATA). This new name was ratified by Comandante Daniel Ortega Saavedra representing the government of National Reconstruction and the National Committee of the FSLN. By popular vote, the new organisation's own National Committee was elected.

We declare that our fundamental goals at this historic moment in the nation's life are:

1. To recover and promote our culture; as an ethnic entity we possess our own culture which is the product of our biological and social needs - an expression of our existence.

We realise that it is a priority for the Revolution to promote and conserve the range of Nicaraguan cultures as part of the national heritage.

2. To meet our economic needs; our organisation must pay special attention to the production and distribution of goods necessary for our survival.

Our tasks from now on will be:

- Reconstruction of our history
- Diffusion of our language and culture
- Collaboration in the literacy, education and development programmes of our revolutionary Government
- Learning Spanish which is the official language of the country
- Fighting racism and discrimination.

In this way, we will contribute to the real (true) integration of our peoples within national life and we shall build together a just and humane society in Nicaragua - the ideal of our Revolution.

Editing Committee: Hazel Lau, Julien Holmes, Brooklyn Rivera.

FSLN:

THE ATLANTIC COAST:INDIGENOUS PEOPLES; CULTURE AND REVOLUTION

Source: Poder Sandinista, Vol.I, No.7, December 6, 1979

This article was written by the editors of the weekly newspaper of the Secretariat for Propaganda of the FSLN, Poder Sandinista, which has since been closed down. It tries to give the inhabitants of the Pacific side of Nicaragua an understanding of the cultural traditions and way of life and production of the indigenous population on the Atlantic Coast as characteristic of a "people which has survived colonialism". The article refers to a statement of MISURASATA in which confidence in the FSLN is expressed but also to the fact that the indigenous population combines this with higher expectations. It urges not only that the latter be respected as a people but also that the positive aspects of its autochthonous development be put to the use of the Revolution as a whole.

The indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast have suffered from colonialism as an historical evil: English, Spanish, North American and finally the internal colonialism of the Somoza period. The indigenous population totals more than 150,000 and is composed of different ethnic groups including the Miskito, Sumu, Rama, Creoles, Sambos and Garínagu (Black Caribs). The extinction of the latter group is inevitable.

Colonialism in general has challenged the very existence of indigenous people by attempting to subject them and change their customs and traditions; so what is most surprising is the strong vitality of indigenous peoples, and the sense of pride they retain in their ethnicity through which they have preserved their own identity in spite of the many forms of aggression.

The Atlantic Coast is isolated geographically; no roads exist but only hazardous tracks, no bridges span either the large or small rivers and overall there is a shortage of means of communication. This has hindered the spread of technological changes fostering social development. But this isolation has also a positive aspect for it has impeded in part the ideological penetration of cultural and moral values foreign to the existing civilisation model; and where individualism, as a pattern of social relations with all its bourgeois consequences, has not been dominant.

The economic basis: production, exchange and distribution.

In Moskitia, three types of productive systems coexist: communal, neighbourly and individual. Characteristically under the communal productive system, production, distribution and consumption are all collective. This gives rise to a social division of labour that is strictly technical; all community members maintain their full rights. Some communities formerly had a Council of Elders before which problems were discussed. One example was Awaská, a turtle-fishing community where the catch was distributed equally, irrespective of how many participated in the fishing expedition.

The neighbourly system is a type of co-operative system. Land is owned on an individual basis but the work is undertaken collectively by all community members. The techniques employed are rudimentary; the plough is unknown. It would take too long for one person to weed, sow or harvest a hectare of land so either the whole or part of the community join together to labour collectively on that hectare plot and so complete the work in a single day. The following day, a plot belonging to another community member is worked collectively and so on. This labour is not paid and the harvest or product belongs to the owner of the land. The individualistic productive system takes place under the usual well-known conditions.

The principal crops grown are rice, beans and yuca while the sea provides turtles. These and dishes like "chabalete" and "rondón" form the basic ingredients of the indigenous people's diet. Subsistence production is the general norm. Exchange of products is carried through the presence of the multi-national companies and Chinese traders, who have virtual monopoly over local commerce so that the indigenous peoples have become subjected to the laws of the capitalist market and have encountered monetarisation and consumption.

A people which has survived colonialism

The strength and vitality of these people in the face of successive invasions are truly impressive. A revealing measure of this is the existence and perpetuation of their languages and dialects. Mískito are zealous in protecting their culture. Even though they have adopted Spanish as a language of communication especially in trading, their mother tongue is still Mískito and is the language they speak among themselves. The case of the Sumu is different. They usually do not speak their language while foreigners are around, partly through a sense of shame but partly in order to preserve it.

While it cannot be denied that the words and terminology of their language have been strongly influenced by Anglo-Saxon, the ways that ideas are expressed and sentences formed are purely their own. One should also mention the influence of the Moravian Church on language. The fact that the majority of the Moravians are "gringos" has had a powerful impact on language mostly on account of the hymns sung in English. In addition, the Church has censured the participation of women in festivals and dances.

The basic musical instruments include guitars most of which are purchased though some are locally made and instruments made from the jaw-bones of horses or drums with special skins.





We can start from the premise that the organisation of the family is determined by the material base. In this case the base has been a collective one and this governed the way in which goods were produced and work allocated within the family. Due to this and the isolation of the communities, relaxed family relations resulted that were characteristically non-possessive, and in which sexuality was more accepted and where other members of the family, that is to say the community, would take part in child-care and education. Because of a high rate of infant mortality and lack of contraception, couples have on average eight children.

The priests have intervened in family relations in a decisive way by imposing monogamy and by punishing incest etc.. In one word, they have destroyed indigenous forms of family organisation and imposed the concept of the bourgeois family and its moral values which they want people to believe are universal.

Relations with the Sandinist Popular Revolution

The Atlantic Coast did not participate directly in the insurrectionary struggle but it is nevertheless certain that in the Bocay region the FSLN's participation, and in some settlements Sandino's presence, are remembered in the collective memory. Through Radio Sandino, almost every community followed what was happening. And if one takes account of the fact that in the urban areas, indigenous peoples have always belonged to the most depressed social groups, then many sympathised objectively with the popular political stand of the FSLN. In addition they sympathised with the process as it accorded with their own collective character. However they do not trust ingenuously. Under all governments of all times they have suffered exploitation, marginalisation and misery and they are therefore anxiously awaiting the practical outcome of the Revolution. They thirst for speeches but at the same time, they carefully measure to the millimetre the relationship between the declarations made and their realisations.

They are aware that some sectors distrust an organisation which brings together marginalised ethnic minorities as is the case of MISURASATA (Miskito, Sumu, Rama and Sandinist United) fearing that this self-organising process could be used by the counter-revolution. But their organisation's standpoint is clear: "We believe that the Sandinist Revolution is for the people, that it is based in the people as are its objectives, which means that it is the expression of the wishes of the people and that it trusts the people. We representatives of 150,000 indigenous people have put our faith in the Government of National Reconstruction and the FSLN; we offer them our support and solidarity at the same time we are sure there will be a return for us; we wish that the economic, social and cultural aspirations of our indigenous communities also be those of the government and the FSLN."

Since they are no longer second class citizens, one must not only respect and reaffirm their existence as people, but also take up the positive aspects of their autochthonous development so as to be the heritage of the revolutionary process in its entirety.

There is a pointer closely watched by the indigenous people with which to gauge their incorporation into the revolutionary process and this is how the second great political battle of the Sandinist movement will evolve: this is the literacy campaign. They await with real hope that their particularity as peoples will be recognised in the planning of this campaign, that the campaign will be bilingual and will be carried out first in their mother tongue and later in the common language. They now wish their viewpoints concerning literacy and education in general to be taken into account.

MISURASATA:

GENERAL DIRECTIONS

Source: MISURASATA, 1982: Lineamientos Generales. Managua (500 copies).

The basic programme of MISURASATA finds its place in the centuries-long tradition of the indigenous resistance to conquest and domination and at the same time takes up the hope aroused by the Sandinist Revolution for the "abolition of the class society". A "multi-ethnic State" and the ownership of the communal land are central to the indigenous claims.

"The oppressed peoples will break the chains of humiliation which the imperialists of the Earth have used to keep us down. The trumpets to be heard will be war clarions, playing the freedom hymns of the oppressed against the injustice of the oppressors".

(Augusto César Sandino)

We, the indigenous peoples: Miskito, Sumu, and Rama, who have lived, are living and will continue in future in this now liberated fatherland of Nicaragua, raise our voice of life and hope through the manifesto on the General Directions of the organisation of our communities (MISURASATA) before brother peoples of the world and the revolutionary Government of the Sandinist Nation.

We are the descendants of our forefathers - the builders of our society - from whom we have inherited a communal way of life and a geographical location rich in natural resources.

Our ancestors were the first and only ones to coexist with nature in this zone - Nicaragua's Moskitia - and through history to accomplish its domination and transformation for the common good of the great indigenous family of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Historically, our native peoples have dominated entirely a large territory which extends over the Northern and Southern borders of the present Nicaraguan Republic, since their dominion ran from Awan in Honduras, to San Blas in Panama. This is proved by the Miskito brothers now living in those Republics because of historical circumstances that lay outside indigenous wishes. However, it must be said that for us indigenous peoples, there are no territorial limits either in space or in time; therefore, we declare that we feel a deep unity and solidarity with those brothers of our blood and race.

We are three groups of autochthonous peoples of the region, gathered within a single entity of indigenous brotherhood, our MISURASATA (Miskitu Sumu Rama Sandinista Aslatakanka), which is an indigenous organisation defending and consolidating the Sandinist Revolution in our social world. Each ethnic group in this entity possesses its own cultural identity and its own values and way of life. But we are all united by the ties of indigenous nature and the geographic, political and economic situation of our peoples. We are three ethnic groups which together make up a population of 176,000: 150,000 Miskito, 15,000 Sumu and 1,000 Rama.

Our Miskito brothers, forming the majority, live in 184 communities situated in the coastal strip, along the Río Coco, in the mining zones and in the plains of Puerto Cabezas and rivers of the Atlantic Coast and Jinotega. Our brothers Sumu live in 32 communities located along the Río Coco, the mining zones, Karawala and Río Wawa. Finally, our Rama brothers are to be found between Punta Gorda and Bluefields, living in 5 communities.

Our Miskito brothers are an indigenous group in contact with other social groups and the national society, able to preserve their identity at the same time. Our Sumu brothers clearly retain their traditional ethnic identity, - despite

the influence of the church - because of their isolation; while our brothers Rama are threatened with extinction and the loss of some of their ethnic values as a result of the direct influence of another national culture.

Our whole history shows us that from the first contacts with foreigners (conquerors, pirates and missionaries), our ethnic groups have been marginalised and subjected to a number of exploitative regimes. This fact becomes further evident with the oligarchic liberal-conservative governments through the dark history of our country. None of the traitorous and bourgeois governments which have misruled the country, have ever worried about the fate of the Nicaraguan people in general, or about that of the ethnic minorities in particular. We have never been treated as true sons of Nicaragua, but as second-class citizens, even as citizens from another country. They were only interested in an irrational exploitation of the natural resources of our land, forests, rivers and sea and the success of their dirty political interests.

During the Somoza dictatorship, it is well known that the Somoza family conspired with North American companies over the merciless exploitation of nearly all our gold, lumber, bananas and sea resources. Our region has always been - and still is - the richest in Central America with its bananas, mining, forestry and sea resources, despite the flagrant exploitation.

The Somoza regime not only exploited us economically, but also socially marginalised us and politically repressed us. Neither did it respect our cultural identity or the common feeling of our indigenous masses. This is how marginalisation over 45 years, repression against the former indigenous organisation ALPROMISU and ethnocide in our communities during the military dictatorship can be explained.

With this background, the Miskito, Sumu and Rama indigenous peoples of Nicaragua, have reached the conclusion that now, in our liberated country, we must ourselves become the authors of our destiny and not the instrument of alien ambitions. We believe that we must be the protagonists of our own destiny to achieve our own development.

From this arises the concrete need, today more than ever, for us to organise ourselves more strongly to participate on equal terms and directly in the tasks of the new Republic as worthy citizens and not as outcasts in our own land. To do this MISURASATA is the answer.

We declare that, as indigenous people, we are an entity with our own ethnic consciousness, and that we inherit and live by the ethnic values of our millennial peoples.

We affirm the cultural values and human potentiality of our peoples. We emphasise the following as being of importance for our brothers: Christian society, communal property, family-oriented society, unity of feeling and unyielding willpower. We are noble and fair, reserved, respectful and deeply religious.

We declare that the period of oppression lasting nearly two centuries proves that the indigenous peoples possess an inherent revolutionary vocation and a capacity to resist conquest and domination, by virtue of their own internal specificity and solidarity. These have served and continue to serve as a dynamic element, and possibly a revolutionary element in the struggle for internal and external decolonization.

Our national autochthonous groups have proved throughout history both their ability to resist and the coherence and continuity of their historical memory; we affirm the essential value of this historical potential as a mobilisation element in the building of a new society, and consequently, we recognise that they constitute a decisive power in the struggle against the many facets of imperialism.

Because of our common traditions, the national indigenous peoples are the most able to develop a revolutionary experience that is completely Nicaraguan. Our peoples (Miskito, Sumu and Rama) still preserve many of their cultural values - autochthonous models - which can be useful in the task of building a more brotherly, human and egalitarian society.

We declare that as national indigenous peoples, we follow a system of land use based on social principles, and not on individual ones, in perfect accordance with Biblical teachings both of the Old and New Testaments, relating to the ownership and the use of land. In this way, the possibility of some dominating others through individual exploitation of the means of production is completely eliminated.

All the production and the fruits of our labour or the benefits from the use of natural resources - is based on the subsistence needs of the people, not on profit-making. One produces in order to live; and work is not sought as a way of making a profit in such a subsistence (non-profit-making) economy.

Our survival is closely related to the land and its natural resources inherited from our forefathers. Therefore, the land, its riches, and ourselves are inseparable, since we are human beings living from the land. There is no discussion about our land ownership; we defend it with unshakeable conviction.

Finally, we declare that we will continue owning our communal lands, defending them from alien interests, exploiting resources they contain and developing our social and cultural values. We will go towards the future, as we are, with our heads held high, socially and culturally. For this MISURASATA is the expression of our aspiration.

Indigenous Rights

Based in the ethnic and historical values of our indigenous peoples (Mískito, Sumu, Rama) we maintain the following fundamental and inalienable rights:

Land

We, Mískito, Sumu and Rama, are the rightful inhabitants and owners of this land which we occupy at present and from which we draw our subsistence. Many of our



House of a Mískito Family in Bluefields, April 1983 (Klaudine Ohland).

communities possess proper communal title deeds, others have partial titles and although some have no titles they are still the true owners of those lands on historical and geographical grounds. Therefore, we believe that our revolutionary Government must recognise and guarantee each indigenous community ownership of its territory. Titles should be duly registered into collective ownership that is continuous, and inalienable and is geographically large enough to ensure the growth of the communities.

Education

Our education should provide our children with a knowledge of their own culture, so that they can be proud of it and in this way strengthen their ethnic identity, and in addition develop a broad knowledge of our country. For this, teaching at the community level must begin in the ethnic group's mother tongue during the first years and then pass gradually over to a bilingual system. Moreover, national history must be taught from the starting point of the authentic history of native cultures, so contributing to the creation of a national consciousness.

Culture

The Sandinist State must guarantee our indigenous peoples their right to exist, to live in accordance with our customs and to develop our cultures, since they constitute specific ethnic entities.- that is to say, the right to maintain and develop our cultures, languages and traditions. We do not want to imitate foreign forms, but to be as we are. Therefore, we strive that our Sandinist country be a truly multi-ethnic state, in which each ethnic group has the right of self-determination and a free choice of social and cultural alternatives.

Natural Resources

Our lands still yield sufficient mining, forestry and sea resources, for us to sustain ourselves. Therefore we must exploit this wealth of nature to meet our own requirements. Where this is completely impossible, such as in cases of deposits subject to special legislation, the communities should share directly in these workings.

Organisation

The revolutionary State must recognise the right of our indigenous entities to organise and govern themselves according to their cultural, social, economic and political needs, without this leading to a restriction of our civil rights as citizens. This right includes free organisation under the direction of the authentic leaders and representatives of our Mískito, Sumu and Rama peoples. We must be careful of manipulation by national political parties and factions, and by counter-revolutionary international institutions and organisations. Through our indigenous unity MISURASATA we will loyally defend and promote the principles and interests of the Sandinist Revolution against the imperialist machinations and the false claims of the counter-revolutionary sectors in this country, whether of the right or the extreme left.

Health

1. Health Promotion - To educate personnel specialised in health education and carry out periodic campaigns evaluating the situation in each community. At the same time, proceed with making our houses and work places more healthy.
2. Medical Attendance - We request the creation of hospitals in the larger communities, such as for instance in Big Sandy Bay, Sisín, San Carlos, Tasbapauni, Musawás, Ramacay, Raíti, etc. In sparsely

populated communities, we request the installation of health posts with qualified staff and medicine supplies.

3. Preventative Medicine - Vaccination of children and pregnant women to reduce the infant mortality rate.
4. Indigenous Medicine - Support of indigenous medicine and a strengthening in the patients' belief in its value (in a scientific way).

Work

It is the wish of our indigenous peoples that our Revolutionary Government adopt the economic measures necessary to prevent the indigenous peoples from being forced to leave the communities. To this end, the Government must provide the necessary means so that communities can exploit the natural resources of our lands for our own benefit. Work opportunities must also be created near the communities and for this, it is necessary to assist the creation of production, distribution and consumption co-operatives in the communities.

In addition, indigenous peoples should not be confined exclusively to the tasks considered the most unpleasant, nor demanding the greatest physical wear and tear such as mining and diving for lobsters.

Indigenous Policy and the Sandinist Revolution

Ethnic identity comes historically earlier than the formation and consolidation of national social classes and will last long after their dissolution. Therefore, the national ethnic plurality constitutes a fundamental element in the defense and consolidation of our Revolution and for the reconstruction of the new Nicaragua. That is to say, ethnic plurality and differentiation are not only means to achieve national transformation, nor an incidental fact within the global process. They constitute the very basis of any

revolutionary process which strives for the suppression of the class society and the planned construction of a pluralist and self-determining society, thus able to offer its own, historically different alternative of human co-existence.

The full transformation of our country is impossible, if we indigenous peoples do not feel that we have in our hands the creation of our own destiny. This does not mean isolation and ostensible self-sufficiency, but on the contrary, it indicates the use of all resources and experiences in the national society, so that we can choose our own options and lines of action, freely and together. This presupposes, therefore, our participation in a larger framework and a dialectical interaction with the whole society. In this way, doors will be opened to a process of egalitarian and fraternal interaction, as we proceed to the reconstruction of the New Nicaragua.

The Sandinist Revolution bases itself on the basic principles of: NATIONALISM, ANTI-IMPERIALISM, INTERNATIONALISM, POPULAR POWER AND DEMOCRACY.

We, national indigenous peoples, declare that these principles are the most appropriate and effective with respect to our national reality in general, and with our indigenous reality in particular.

We declare that nationalism is the correct response if our country is to reach full and total liberation. This is expressed in the search for our identity as a nation and with the decision to direct our labour and wealth to the fulfillment of our own national requirements.

To recover our identity is to discover what is our own. It is precisely to permit a distinction to be made between what creates economic and cultural wealth for the country and the mechanisms which destroy our cultural variety, and prevent wealth from being used for the benefit of the majority of the Nicaraguan people.

We, as an indigenous population, represent what is autochthonous (national). We have much to contribute to the formation of this identity, not only by adding our cultural richness to the national heritage, but also by offering a system of cultural values and traditions. This is why our indigenous society supports the national unity, upheld by the Revolution. Unity in diversity, concretised in the acceptance and even promotion of a cultural pluralism, as a true expression of the respect which should be given to ethnic groups in any popular democratic system.

We, national indigenous peoples, must be the most resolute enemies of multi-faceted imperialism. How can North Americans be our friends, when protected by the Somoza family they have stolen our gold, pine woods, lobsters, bananas etc., leaving behind only misery and pain among our peoples, and when they have submitted us to marginalisation and dominated us during so many decades? Imperialism is the prime obstacle to the development and liberation of the peoples of the world in general and to the indigenous peoples in particular.

But we also consider our enemies all those who deny our ethnic values, way of life and solidarity, those who consider us as second-class citizens, those who humiliate us and do not respect us as human beings and those who seek to dominate us still for the benefit of their personal or class interests. Those people are responsible for provoking the discontent and anger of our peoples. Somozists who infiltrated revolutionary organisations, try to confuse us and continue to toy with the interests and consciousness of our indigenous peoples. Delegates sent by national organisations and institutions, without any deep knowledge of us or our struggle and solidarity, give out irresponsible opinions that are harmful to our people.

We maintain that the Sandinist Revolution is for the liberation of all those oppressed and exploited in the

country. That fundamentally the Revolution is for the workers and peasants. We belong to these broad groups; and so we believe that this Revolution will restore our rights and bring about the full and complete liberation of our peoples.

We maintain that the Sandinist Revolution is of the people, that its base is of the people and likewise its foundations. This means that it is the expression of the people's will, of all Nicaraguans. We believe in the expansion and greater effectiveness of this principle, so as to allow the country to have governments which truly act as representatives of the Nicaraguan people's power, of which indigenous power is a part.

The Sandinist Revolution declares its solidarity with the struggle of oppressed peoples for liberation throughout the world. The Nicaraguan indigenous peoples are aware that in the world at present there are many peoples struggling for their liberation, with whom we should identify and affirm our support for their cause and struggle.

As can be easily seen, the principles based on the example and thought of Sandino (the greatest national hero) consistently agree with the interests and aspirations of our indigenous peoples, that is to say with the national indigenous population. Owing to these revolutionary reasons, our indigenous unity MISURASATA carries with pride the word "Sandinist".

We also see that the Sandinist Revolution integrates us, since today we have freedom to organise and great possibilities for the development of our communities. So we repeat our support of and confidence in the Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction and the popular vanguard, the Sandinist Front for National Liberation FSLN.

Indigenous Internationalism

As indigenous people in a liberated country, we feel solidarity at this time with everything in the world, especially in Latin America, which tends towards the liberation of individuals and peoples, in particular indigenous peoples.

We recall the sufferings, the persecutions that afflict all parts, but also the struggles waged at the present time by indigenous peoples to carry on their commitment to achieve the final triumph: TO BE FREE MEN.

We condemn the reactionary governments of the world which subject indigenous peoples to marginalisation and ethnocide in their respective countries. Many governments through their conservative politics create mechanisms to destroy indigenous peoples. Others through their "progressive" paternalistic "indigenist" policies take away from indigenous people the role of being the protagonist in the formation of their destiny by imposing laws from above without consultation. It is thought that if the Indio is to be liberated socially, there must be an end to his being an Indio; that is to say to crush his ethnic specificity and naturally integrate him into the national society. Certainly you may sometimes hear about the need to preserve cultural values, but these are empty words for nothing is done to put them into practice.

Certain dogmatic Marxists also stubbornly ignore the question of ethnicity, despite the empirical facts. The complexities of inter-ethnic friction are squeezed into the narrow mould of the class struggle. What this type of Marxism does not realise is that indigenous populations are able to act from a political consciousness that stems from an ethnic consciousness.

As indigenous peoples of Nicaragua, through our movement MISURASATA (formerly ALPROMISU) we are part of the

World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP) with headquarters in Canada, an organisation which unites indigenous peoples of the world and promotes their full and total liberation. We are also members of the Regional Council of Indigenous Peoples (CORPI) with headquarters in Panamá. We declare that through these international organisations we shall earnestly promote solidarity in the liberation struggle of all the peoples of the world, especially indigenous peoples.

Some observations and recommendations

We indigenous peoples want economic development but starting from our own values. We are convinced that there will only be development in the countryside and throughout the land when we are the instigators of our own development and masters of our own destiny.

Since the economy is the basis of society, our communities should pay special attention to the production and distribution of those goods necessary for our survival. There will be no possibilities of development if we do not pay special attention to the most important economic activities, those which have been traditionally exploited by the North Americans under the Somozist dictatorship.

Rural schools are foreign to our cultural reality by virtue of their methods, their programmes, their language; not only do they try to convert our children into a kind of undefined Mestizo without personality, they also pursue a policy of assimilation into the national, capitalist culture.

Almost everything still has to be done: there are no hospitals, there is no electricity or public works, etc.. Thus it is vital to construct bridges, roads and tracks in order to break down the isolation and transport difficulty in which our communities generally live.

For the self-determination and independence of our peoples within the revolutionary process, we present the following recommendations:

Land: The Agrarian Reform should allow indigenous people to be the legitimate owners of their lands without any form of discrimination or subdivision. For this, the full and partial titles possessed by our communities should be recognised and the places we have traditionally occupied should be legally indicated.

Education: That our children receive instruction in their mother tongue in accordance with our culture and traditions. To do this we want our own people to be trained sufficiently in order to teach our languages and customs and also to teach the Spanish language. We formally propose that our native languages Mískito and Sumu be officially recognised, Mískito as the second official language in the country for it is the most important language after Spanish. Furthermore, we suggest that these native (and national) languages are included within the educational system in the country, at all levels, in order to promote a genuine integration.

Publications (newspapers, journals, pamphlets, books etc.) should be published in our own languages to contribute to the enrichment of national culture. In concrete terms, a newspaper could be issued in our three languages which would serve as a means of communication and for social integration.

An institution of ethnology, anthropology and linguistics should be created to research the millenarian culture of our peoples.

Politics: Our indigenous communities should participate directly in the political and economic tasks facing our new republic so that on this basis they can solve the present political, social, economic, cultural and educational problems. For this, we propose that through our organisation MISURASATA there should be representatives

at the Council of State which will be constituted next May 4.

There should be direct participation in the Nicaraguan Institute for the Atlantic Coast (INNICA), a governmental institution created for the development of the Atlantic Coast. We recall that we represent the majority in this area. We understand that that in practice, this body is in charge of planning in the Atlantic Coast and we, as indigenous peoples, demand that we are present and participate in a direct and effective manner.

Finally, we propose the genuine integration of our peoples in the national life. This integration means the development and progress of our communities through the participation of our autochthonous peoples, free from imposition by dominant groups. Our fundamental right should also be guaranteed that we can advance our own means of cultural, linguistic, social, religious, economic and political expression.

"EVERY PEOPLE HAS THE RIGHT TO WORK FOR THE
TRIUMPH OF THEIR OWN CULTURE"

Charter of the United Nations

For Indigenous Unity

MISURASATA

BROOKLYN RIVERA (MISURASATA):

"AN INDIAN WITHOUT LAND IS NOT AN INDIAN!"

Source: Schneider, Robin, 1982: Kultur und Sprache de Rama. Tieflandinianer der nicaraguanischen Atlantikküste. Berlin, (mimeo) pp. 108-110. (A transcription in Creole-English.)

In a speech in Creole-English on September 19, 1980 in the indigenous village of Rama Cay, the centre of the Rama Indians of whom fewer than a thousand remain, the co-ordinator of MISURASATA calls upon the people to defend the land of the indigenous peoples and its riches and to fight for the autonomy of the inhabitants - Indians, Creoles and Spanish-speakers - over production and administration.

"It is not time to wait for somebody, neither to wait for the Government. What we need is unity, is strength. We have to work hard, so that we can grow. Our biggest problem is that we don't have power where we are living. Others are trying to control us. So we are still marginated by the rest of the people and the past government. We have no good living. Together with the Creoles them and the same Spanish speaking people we are trying to conquer again our land. The Government don't support us. We want to get the power, we don't have to wait, we ourselves, we try it. Real freedom is what we need. So we are fighting for our riches, Indian riches, not resources, riches that the Lord gave us in our own land. We live in a communal way and that is to conserve!

"The Government don't want problem with the Indians and they are real worry about the Indian land. INFONAC, INRA have problems with Miskito and Creoles. We have to defend our land with machetes and sticks. The Government has understood that: An Indian without land is not an Indian!



Brooklyn Rivera speaks at a MISURASATA meeting in Tuapí, July, 1981 (Michael Rediske).

"1979 was the foundation of MISURASATA. Daniel Ortega said, you can't organise yourselves. But our people said, sure we can. Him get mad and went right away. Came back the last day: 'Every study people will close their mouth and only the oldest and poor people should talk' he said. 'Cause founder of ALPROMISU only ignorant people'. So the old people said 'The Lord is moving among us! Maybe we have many people to destroy among our people but the Lord will never permit the destruction of our organisation'. An old Sumu said: 'We will not go home, better to stay here and die here, if they don't permit us to organise. It is better to die like a man,

than to live like a slave! It is time to get our freedom, growth, we as a people, as Nicaraguan citizens. We have our rights!'

"And so we have our organisation now. But we must not loose our unity. Plenty times they tried to touch us and they tried to bring us to something so that we will be destroyed. But we can't be prohibited. Our movement, our work will never end. We will get plenty problems, many leaders are in a dangerous position.

We have to fight and we have to continue! Our work is beautiful, for our own rights, working to solve our problems. We are not counter-revolutionaries with a separation spirit. We are not against the Government, nor against the Revolution. Our movement try to participate in the process of revolution. But we are trving to participate by ourselves! We are not against the Revolution because revolution is for the poor people. We hope to get our rights in this process. It is not time to get afraid for somebody! But we are ready to die for our rights. And when we cannot continue, well, we have to fight. We have to strengthen our organisation. In the future we have to look, how we can get the power in this Atlantic Coast. We have to work for the autonomy of the Atlantic Coast! Power in production and in administration of the Coast. And we are very worried about education. We don't need to go to somebody from Managua, like from INRA. When our youth get the education, come back from the university and use it, so we can get the power. When not we will drown. So after the alphabetisation all children have to go to school. And we will work together in co-operatives. Alone you cannot become a king. We have to control our production!

"Our life is very short. How much money make an Indian in a year? Money, nothing. The living of the Coast people is very very low. But our system of living is different. They making money, they have work, but we work for ourselves.

Just for subsistence, just for living - not for growing. And that's the problem: ENABAS make the price. And then we have to buy our own things back. That's the difference of the economic situation. But we have to supply our needs first. We are not only asking for our land but we have to use our land, to use the riches. 80% of the riches has to stay here, but when all the riches go to the Pacific for the reconstruction, then nothing stay with us. There are millions of córdobas what they transfer.

"And there is a difference between money riches what they have and our cultural riches. It is no good that they bring all these institutions to us. In the future we must do that ourselves. We must not fold our arms and wait what the Revolution bring us. We must participate and realise our growing. The Revolution is marching, we have to be ready for us and our children to do something for us and for our children. We mustn't think only on today, on a hospital, on a plant. We must think on the future, on our children, on tomorrow. And what MISURASATA can do for us and what I can do for MISURASATA. When they have problems then they come. When you not really identify with the organisation, with your brothers, the Indians, then we are not powerful. The secret of the power is in you, the people. When you are united, we are strong, we can fight even against the devil.

"We need unity when we work. Try to come together like one man: when one has a problem, it must be the problem of all. For example when somebody is ill. - We want unity in action! All Christians must live together, in love. Right or no? - But there is one thing not right: Nobody can eat waiting! You will die when you wait! Look, now the flood comes to Wanki (Miskito name for Río Coco) and 5,000 have no houses. We all have to look for a solution. And when there is no solution we make one, all together. Our organisation of the brotherhood of all Indians and Coast people!"

MISURASATA:

"WE ASK FOR UNDERSTANDING!"

Source: El Nuevo Diario, October 15, 1980.

This communiqué from the leadership of MISURASATA and senior representatives of the Moravian Church, dates from the days directly after the "October disturbances" of 1980 in Bluefields, in connection with which the leaders of the Creole organisation SICC were arrested, accused of having organised an anti-communist demonstration. Without directly going into events, the signatories criticise the Nicaraguan press for continuing to spread the "old prejudices" and for defaming the inhabitants of the coast as racists, separatists and counter-revolutionaries when it was a case of a protest and the claiming of rights. An "open and positive" attitude to participation in the Revolution is expressed.

Dear Brothers,

We, who have signed this letter, representatives of the organised brothers in the Atlantic Coast of our country, want to reach you through this letter to communicate and discuss some specific worries we have concerning recent events taking place in our region. As all Nicaraguans know, our Atlantic Coast has been subjected to centuries of marginalisation, exploitation, ethnocide and internal colonisation by all the regimes which have mis-governed the country and sold it down the river. In truth, no government has shown concern for the fortunes of the Nicaraguans in general, and especially not for us from the Atlantic Coast. Never have they treated us as real sons of the Fatherland, but as second class citizens or even as foreigners from another country. As a result of this, the brothers on the Atlantic Coast have never been used to thinking of themselves as true and proud sons of Nicaragua. But who's fault is it that we have thought this way?

The Somoza dictatorship was only interested in shamelessly plundering all the resources in the region: such as gold, lumber, fish, bananas etc. for its own dirty political interests in collusion with Yanqui imperialism. That is to say, Somoza not only marginalised us socially but also exploited us economically and repressed us politically. When we people from the Coast began to understand the crude reality of our social situation, we expressed our worries and discontent many times and in many different ways. But Somozism wrongly attributed this situation of non-conformity and protest to separatism and racism. In this way the lie was



House of a Miskito family on the Río Coco, March 1981 (Volkmar Gross)

planted in the minds of our brothers in the Pacific Coast that those on the Atlantic Coast were set apart by their rejection of Nicaraguan nationality. This was continued, of course, in order to keep the Nicaraguan people divided and thereby perpetuate their control of power.

This is how our brothers on the Pacific Coast were deceived and fooled for many years; slanders and untruths were spread - so characteristic of the evil dictatorship - against their brothers on the Atlantic Coast. They accused them of preferring England and of installing a Miskito King; accusations benefitting only the dictatorship which was intent on separating more and more the two regions of the country and therefore fuel feelings of regional identity among Nicaraguan brothers.

The triumph of the Sandinist Popular Revolution has brought a new dawn to all our forgotten brothers. We people of the Atlantic Coast, like all other Nicaraguans, are beginning full of enthusiasm and hope to participate in an organised way in the process of the revolution. We are convinced that in our liberated country now, all groups in the country should organise themselves to participate directly in the tasks which lie ahead for the new Nicaragua that is full of promise, all joining together on an equal basis. On this, we must affirm absolutely that we brothers in the Atlantic Coast have an open and positive attitude towards the Revolution. However, owing to the reality in which we find ourselves and our specific characteristics, we have been participating in the process to the extent that our capacities and limitations will let us. It is easy to understand why one should not expect the people of the Atlantic Coast to behave in the same or in a similar way to those of the Pacific. This is because of the differences that exist in their roots, form of historical development and socio-cultural reality.

At the present time, it is really sad and painful for all Nicaraguans that still even within the revolutionary process there are raised old slanders against the brothers on the Atlantic Coast. It is sad because these brothers have enthusiastically and confidently embraced the Revolution being strongly convinced that they will recover their rights as citizens which had been trodden underfoot for decades. It is particularly painful that in the present situation attempts are made to inculcate prejudices in the Pacific Coast against us. Why must they raise yet again the same accusations that the people of the Atlantic Coast are anti-nationalist and racist? Why must they keep alive in the minds of the people things about the English flag and a Miskito King? Why do they not give correct and objective information to the brothers in the Pacific Coast?

Through this letter, we ask the authorities of the revolutionary Government to interpret more accurately the true feelings of the brothers in the Atlantic Coast and become thoroughly aware of their roots, their historical background, traditions, cultural values and their socio-economic reality as a way of being able to understand and evaluate in a revolutionary way, the anxieties and behaviour of these Nicaraguan brothers. In the same way we ask those in charge of information that a true, full, realistic and serious picture be made available to the peoples of the Pacific Coast with respect to those on the Atlantic Coast. That we are no longer branded as racists, separatists, counter-revolutionaries or Somozists in the Pacific Coast. That when our brothers express their concerns and protests about anomalies existing and demand their rights, that they are not called counter-revolutionaries or independentists but in an objective and revolutionary way they can inform the other Nicaraguans. Because the people of the Atlantic Coast are tired of hearing the same accusations - the scratched record - which is a reproach to all of us. These accusations even now serve only to arrest the

steady march of the revolutionary process and are creating situations of discontent and confusion among Nicaraguans.

Finally, with this sincere and fraternal declaration, we are hoping that brothers on the Pacific Coast will have a better understanding about the real feelings of the people on the Atlantic Coast, in order that it will thus be possible to achieve a reconciliation and a true identification among all Nicaraguans.

FOR NATIONAL UNITY, WE THE PEOPLE FROM THE COAST DECLARE:

THE ATLANTIC COAST..... PRESENT!

Brooklyn Rivera Bryan, Co-ordinator of MISURASATA,

Reverend Fernando Colomer, Superintendent of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua,

Hazel Lau Blanco, MISURASATA delegate on the literacy programme in indigenous languages,

Leonard Joseph Bent, Director of the Moravian Theological Institute,

Richard Zelaya, Regional Director for the mines area, MISURASATA.

STEADMAN FAGOTH (MISURASATA):

UNITY AND FRATERNITY BETWEEN MISURASATA AND FSLN

Source: El Nuevo Diario, October 19, 1980.

The representative of MISURASATA in the State Council explains in an interview with the daily newspaper El Nuevo Diario, sympathetic to the Government, that the indigenous communities have similar interests to those of the Sandinist Revolution on account of their proletarian, semi-proletarian and peasant class affiliation. Tension between MISURASATA and the FSLN is based rather on the lack of knowledge of some State employees from the Pacific Coast about the special characteristics of the population on the Atlantic Coast - problems which must be solved together.

Question: How would you define the organisation MISURASATA at the present time?

Answer: At the present time, the organisation MISURASATA is the revolutionary body for the Miskito, Sumu and Rama indigenous peoples. It aims to support and consolidate the conquests of the popular movement in their entirety.

Question: Where on the Atlantic Coast is its sphere of influence?

Answer: We would say that it is the whole of the Atlantic Coast with the exception of the region around Bluefields which is inhabited primarily by Creoles.

Question: In what part of the Atlantic Coast is MISURASATA strongest?

Answer: I should say in Zelaya Norte which is defined geographically as having a triangular shape: one of the sides is the Río Coco, from the Pacific at Santa Isabel to Pearl Lagoon and then up to the border with Honduras at Sandy Bay. MISURASATA's sphere of influence lies in that triangle where some 190 communities constitute its basis of support.

Question: How important are the Miskito, Sumu and Rama indigenous peoples to the revolution?

Answer: From our particular point of view, the existence of the indigenous people is of fundamental importance for the future of the Revolution. The indigenous people are found on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and in the most inaccessible, most mountainous part bordering Honduras and also towards the Caribbean. From a geo-political point of view, MISURASATA is of vital importance for the defence and consolidation of the revolutionary process.

Question: What does the Sandinist Revolution mean for the indigenous people?

Answer: If you just had a brief look at the devastated plains and the devastated savannah lands of the Atlantic Coast, you would realise how the foreign companies have demolished the forests and by bringing about the erosion of the soil, have left only misery. They have felled the woods, ransacked the ocean for its fish, exterminated the turtles and actually left 60% of the miners with silicosis, and tuberculosis. Or we can make the point clearer still with the example of the Sumu people who were exterminated in the mines of Siuna, Bonanza, Rosita and whose total numbers have been reduced to a mere 12,000. The Miskito people were saved from this because they lived along the Río Coco. That inheritance of exploitation shows the significance of the Sandinist Revolution for the Miskito, Sumu and Rama. That is to say, it is within the framework of the Sandinist Revolution that the majority of the semi-proletarian indigenous people can reach their true cultural, racial and political identity.

Question: What does the organisation MISURASATA hope for from the Sandinist Front for National Liberation - FSLN - with respect to the unity of the popular movement?

Answer: We have already said that the indigenous peoples occupied half the territory of Nicaragua and there were about 300,000 people. That is to say, the indigenous peoples are an integral part of the popular movement and MISURASATA expects the Sandinist Front to take a fundamentally unifying position with a coherent outline regarding class which will allow the powerful integration of the popular movement in order to resist any sudden attacks by the Central American counter-revolution trying to approach and wipe out the nascent revolution which is the hope of the oppressed.

Steadman Fagoth, July 1981 (Leo Gabriel)



Question: What class characteristics has the indigenous movement?

Answer: From the point of view of class, the indigenous movement is a proletarian and semi-proletarian movement. It is proletarian because of the impact of the agricultural, fishing and mining companies which gave rise to the development of the most powerful enclaves of the national proletariat. For example, approximately 1,700 face-workers are found in the cursed mines of Cerro Dorado, Bonanza and Siuna. At sea, there are some 4,000 divers and in the forest areas exist some 800 wood-cutters linked with the capitalist economy. Thus there exists a strong proletarian nucleus in the mining, forestry and fishing sectors. These can be put together with 200 communities whose land is held communally; it is not private land but belongs to the indigenous communities which are semi-proletarian in character. Communities where the land is communally owned have developed subsistence agriculture cultivating rice, beans, yuca and 'pajibaye' palm, and selling part of their produce to the market. Thus from the perspective of class, the indigenous movement is not structurally different from the popular movement because in the Atlantic Coast there is no bourgeoisie.

Question: How do these characteristics fit in with the Sandinist trajectory?

Answer: The Sandinist trajectory is defined as a popular democracy of workers and peasants. Obviously MISURASATA endorses the Sandinist trajectory of a worker-peasant popular democracy since the people it represents are workers and peasants.

Question: From what we know, frictions have existed between MISURASATA and the Sandinist Front for National Liberation. Why is this?

Answer: It is difficult to chart the various origins of the frictions but as a preliminary approximation, we should say

that there has been a lack of understanding about the essential characteristics of the class movement in Puerto Cabezas and in other regions of the Atlantic Coast, and at the same time we have been repudiated by state officials. We do not consider these officials as representatives of Sandinism, but as persons employed there who have committed serious crimes against the political and administrative order. These have angered the population and generated a spiral of differences and bitterness which have created the frictions. They are in nobody's interests and they threaten to injure the profound unity which the popular movement should possess.

Question: How does MISURASATA think the frictions between brothers could be cured?

Answer: Basically we think the following: MISURASATA is an integral part of one of the central pillars of the popular movement in the Atlantic Coast; it is necessary that frictions within the popular movement should be cured in an atmosphere of strict brotherhood and fraternity. That is to say, it is necessary to express again from the point of view of the interests of the proletariat, the peasantry and the semi-proletariat a programme of joint activities between MISURASATA and the Sandinist Front which will permit a deepening of their unity. This will make possible the firm defence against the threats of the counter-revolution. Obviously, the population of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast possess particular ideological characteristics which have to be taken into account in this process towards unity and which must be developed. That is to say, we hope for a better understanding between MISURASATA and the Sandinist Front with regard to our united tasks.

Question: What do you think about the events at Bluefields?

Answer: We think that they were not treated adequately. They were not dealt with in the best way and so degenerated into a spiral of violence. In this, obviously the loss is

felt by the popular movement in its entirety. This is because an inadequate intervention by the Government, like what happened in Bluefields, threatens to create severe frictions inside the popular movement. We hope for greater understanding from the National Directive of the FSLN so that they know how to distinguish which are the problems that lie at the root of the matter.

Question: How should the matter of the Bluefield's population have been dealt with?

Answer: We think that the only possible way is to recognise that certain claims have been made in Bluefields and sit around a negotiating table and see how great an importance these claims have for the people of Bluefields and so resolve the issue in an atmosphere of fraternity.

Question: What is the economic situation at present on the Atlantic Coast and what are the perspectives for the next four months?

Answer: The economic situation on the Atlantic Coast is of the following order: the majority of the population lives from growing rice, beans and yuca and from hunting a few animals and fishing in order to eat. The first harvest, which yielded the best, was all sold by the communities for prices were very low and the people needed to buy essential goods such as matches, salt, kerosene, a few clothes. So the communities were left without supplies and without money. They hoped they would recover through the second harvest, but what with the bad weather and the rivers Prinzapolka and Coco breaking their banks, the harvests have been destroyed along the Río Coco in the regions of Bonanza, Musawás, Española, Fruta de Pan as well as the regions near Puerto Cabezas, Kligna, Lapan, Layasita, Kasata, which puts us in a really alarming situation. The communities are going to have enormous difficulties which can only be resolved through the unity of the people around MISURASATA and the Sandinist Front of National Liberation.

GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION JGRN:

LAW ON EDUCATION IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES ON THE ATLANTIC COAST

Source: La Gaceta, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 279, December 3, 1980, Decree No. 571.

On the initiative of MISURASATA, the parliament-like Council of State and the Government Junta pass a law which provides for the introduction of bilingual teaching in primary schools on the Atlantic Coast - in Miskito or English as well as Spanish. On account of the technical and economic difficulties, however, this regulation is to be put into practice only gradually and in accordance with the possibilities.

The Government Junta of National Reconstruction of the Republic of Nicaragua

Through the exercise of its powers and with a basis in Article 18 of Decree No. 388 of May 2, 1980,

Makes it known to the Nicaraguan people: that it approves the draft presented by the Council of State on "The Law on Education in indigenous languages on the Atlantic Coast" which fully and precisely says:

The Council of State of the Republic of Nicaragua, meeting at an ordinary session on the 30 of July, 1980 - Year of Literacy.

With respect to

I

That from the triumph of the Sandinist Popular Revolution and the establishment of a Government of National Reconstruction which works for and watches over the interests of all the Nicaraguan people and for the development of cultural education, the economy and politics in the country, it is now possible to attend to, integrate and develop those sections of the population which were plunged into backwardness and criminal neglect as a result of the former regime;

II

That it is the concern of the Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction and of the FSLN to integrate in the shortest possible time the brothers in the Atlantic Coast with the rest of the country and in this way stimulate the developments which the people of this region have right to as human beings and as Nicaraguans;

III

That in Europe (Spain, Yugoslavia, Switzerland, USSR) as well as in Latin America (Peru, Paraguay, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador) in the regions or places where ethnic and linguistic minorities exist special programmes have been set up in education and in cultural advancement, and the right to an education in the mother tongue even forms a part of the constitution in some countries;

IV

That in order that the ethnic groups in the Atlantic Coast as well as in the rest of Nicaragua can exercise this right, it is necessary to implement a bicultural, bilingual teaching programme which responds to the ethnic minority groups' need for integration especially in the Department of Zelaya where to our knowledge are: Miskito, Sumu, Rama and Creoles, who supported by their ethnic identity and the historical reality of the country, will be able with the Sandinist Popular Revolution to emerge from under the exploitation which they were subjected to during the Somoza dictatorship, which never promoted a system of education capable of attaining a form of teaching to develop cultural values in the region, but on the contrary, the sporadic and deficient education programmes set up tended to lead to disintegration and exploitation;

Blackboard in Bluefields: "Open the book, raise the fist!"
March, 1981 (Volkmar Gross)



V

That teaching in the mother tongue constitutes a fundamental factor in giving a sense of identity to individuals as well as peoples and is a determining factor in the process of integration and for the consolidation of National Unity;

VI

That the directives on cultural politics elaborated by the Ministry of Culture for establishing the re-evaluating

culture at a national level, allows the development of cultural demonstrations among the peoples of the Department of Zelaya, and that linguistic and cultural plurality is in accordance with national culture which identifies all Nicaraguans.

VII

That huge technical and economic limitations exist hindering the full and immediate institution of a bilingual educational programme taking into account that the Rama and Sumu languages lack written grammars so that the translation of the texts and outlines of the education programme is almost impossible in the short run on the one hand; and on the other our poverty-stricken economy cannot take on the high cost of translating a large number of texts into Miskito and English or of training teachers to set this programme up. It is possible only if it is done gradually.

Through the exercise of its powers decrees:

Article 1

The present law authorises the teaching at the pre-primary level and in the first four grades of the primary level in Miskito and English languages in the respective zones occupied by indigenous and Creole communities in the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. At the same time teaching in the Spanish language has to be introduced gradually.

Article 2

The present law obliges the Ministry of Education to plan, organise, co-ordinate and evaluate the teaching authorised under Article 1, putting it into practice gradually and in accordance with its capabilities starting in the school year 1981-1982.

Article 3

The Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Nicaraguan Institute of the Atlantic Coast INNICA

will set up programmes with the aim of preserving, salvaging and promoting the Mískito, Sumu and Rama cultures as well as all other indigenous cultures which still survive in the country, and will study the feasibility of providing an education in the respective indigenous languages in the future.

Article 4

The present Law abolished whatever Decree, Law or Order which is opposed to the principles of this one.

Article 5

This Law will come into force from when it is published in La Gaceta, the official report.

Issued in the Meeting Chamber of the Council of State,
in the city of Managua, 30 July, 1980, "Year of Literacy" -
Bayardo Arce Castaño, President
Hugo Tórres Jiménez, Secretary.

It is agreed that this should become a Law of the Republic,
to be executed and published.

Issued in the city of Managua, 25 November, 1980, "Year of Literacy".

Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction:

Sergio Ramírez Mercado,
Moisés Hassan Morales,
Daniel Ortega Saavedra,
Arturo J. Cruz,
Rafael Córdova Rivas.

Facsimiles from the English and Miskito Alphabetisation
Workbook



REVIEW EXERCISE 4

1.- Read the words.

destroy

afraid

encourages

power

identity

integration

respects

language

consolidate

situation

different

native

2.- Make sentences with these words.

3.- Let's read.

Cultural Survival

Somoza wanted to destroy the culture of the Atlantic Coast.

He did not want the people to be united.

He was afraid of the power of a united Atlantic Coast.

Now, the situation is different.

The FSLN wants the total integration of the Atlantic Coast.

The Revolution respects and encourages the language and the culture of the people of the Atlantic Coast.

The first step is the Literacy Crusade in native languages.

This will consolidate the identity of the people of the Atlantic Coast.

Therefore, we must participate in the Literacy Crusade.

4.- Discuss the meaning of the sentences above.

REVIEW EXERCISE 5

1.- Read the words.

roads

rights

dictatorship

welfare

society

establishing

health

giving

back

schools

justice

taken

2.- Make sentences with these words.

3.- Let's read.

The Atlantic Coast

The Atlantic Coast is rich in natural resources. During Somoza's dictatorship, roads were built only to exploit these resources.

The Atlantic Coast did not have enough health centers nor schools.

Social welfare was also lacking.

The FSLN considers the Atlantic Coast a very important region.

It promotes the formation of a new society.

It gives back to the people what was taken from them.

The Ministry of the Atlantic Coast is establishing revolutionary justice in this area.

4.- Discuss the meaning of the sentences above.

1.- Kaisa ulbanka na aitsikaikaia:

Sandino Rebulusan ta uplika.

2.- Kaisa bile na aitsikaikala:

ta uplika

3.- Kaisa bilabaikra nani na aitsikaikala:

a u i

A U I

4.- Kaisa bilabaikra nani na aitsikaikaia bara sim ulbala:

a u i

a u i

u i a

i a u

A U I

A U I

U I A

I A U

1. Kaise ulbanka na aisikaikala:

Wan tasbaya Pri Sakaia Daknika (FSLN) tawan ta brin,
wan kuntri pri sakan.

2. Kaise bila na aisikaikala:

Daknika

3. Kaise bila na bilabelkanka ra dekbi sakaia:

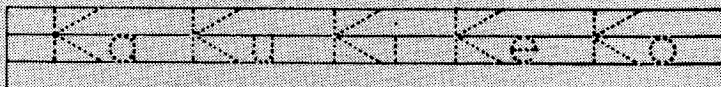
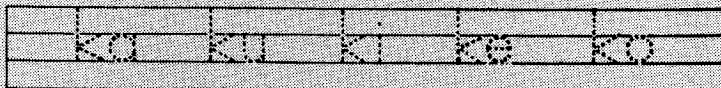
Dak ni ka

4. Kaise bilabelkanka nani na aisikaikala:

ka ku ki ke ko

Ka Ku Ki Ke Ko

5. Kaise bilabelkanka nani na aisikaikala bara sim ulbaia:



6. Kaise bila nani paskaia bara sim ulbaia bilabelkanka kakaia nani wal:

MISURASATA:

PLAN OF ACTION 1981

The programme of action of MISURASATA for 1981, the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Council at the end of December 1980, not only assesses the current literacy campaign in the indigenous languages and English but also goes briefly into the "historical claims" of the indigenous peoples. The announcement of an "intensive consciousness-raising campaign" and possible "massive demonstrations" in order to push through the land claims, is interpreted shortly afterwards by the FSLN as a declaration of war and, described as "Plan 81", leads to the arrest of the MISURASATA leadership on February 19, 1981.

Introduction:

The Committee of MISURASATA having relied essentially on the general aspects of the outlook of the Organisation as outlined in the Assembly of its cadres between December 26 and 29 in Bilwaskarma:-

The present document "Plan of Action for the MISURASATA Movement in 81" has been prepared which will serve as a guide for organised action and inspiration for the regional leaders in this next year of 1981. The general plan is centered on five areas of the Movement's work: organisation, politics, socio-economics, historical claims and minimal claims, describing and presenting the main tasks to be done for each aspect of its work. This document will be presented to the meeting of the Movement's cadres on the 13th of the current month in the community of Tuapi.

Spheres of work:

A. Political:

1. Training:

a) Permanent study groups on indigenous politics at the level of the communities, colleges, work centres, etc.

b) Indigenous training centre.

c) Seminars and talks at the community and regional levels.

2. Municipal:

a) Look into the work set in motion by the co-ordinators of the Juntas.

b) Create the conditions for their reorganisation.

3. INNICA: Taking over its political-administrative function.

4. JGRN: Indigenous seat; official and public communication to the National Directive of the FSLN.



La Rosita - in the mine region, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).

B. Organisational:

1. Youth:

- a) Appointment of brother Steadman Fagoth as the delegate in charge of Juventud MISURASATA (JM).
- b) Restructuring the youth organisation (seminar to be held this week).
- c) Programmes of action.
- d) Planning for the unity of the youth from the Atlantic Coast within Juventud MISURASATA (JM).

2. Women:

- a) Appointment of sister Hazel Lau as delegate in charge of Mujeres de MISURASATA (MM).
- b) Organisation of sisters in the whole of the Atlantic Region.
- c) Planning for a single women's organisation under Mujeres de MISURASATA (MM).
- d) Regional and general assemblies of the women in MISURASATA.

3. SUKAWALA:

- a) Supervise and co-ordinate all activities of the Project.
- b) Implement new programmes and funding through the Projects.
- c) General Assembly of SUMU Communities (SUKAWALA).
- d) Political seminars for its cadres.

4. Indigenous Confederation:

- a) Creation of the indigenous Federation of Pacific communities, partly promoted by MISURASATA.
- b) Promotion of the organisation of a National Indigenous Confederation, formed by MISURASATA and the Pacific Federation.

5. Elders Council:

- a) Creation of the Council on December 29 at the Assembly of cadres in Bilwaskarma.
- b) Appointment of the Reverend Mullins Tillet as President and Ronas Dolores as Vice President of this indigenous legislative body.
- c) Organisation of this Council through the selection of 30 suitable elders between 60 and 70 years old from the three ethnic groups.
- d) Installation of the Council in the capital indigenous community.

6. Socio-pastoral:

- a) Promotion of the spiritual life of the organisation.

- b) Organisation of indigenous clergymen within the movement.
- c) Promotion of reconciliation and unity among all churches of the Coast.

C. Socio-economic:

1. Co-operativism:

- a) Organisation and promotion of the production, distribution and consumption co-operatives in the communities.
- b) Preparation of economic projects for the maintenance and growth of these co-operatives.

2. Sindicalism:

- a) Organisation of new Trades Unions in the working centres.
- b) Consolidation of the Trades Unions already functioning.
- c) Elaboration of economic projects for their maintenance and growth.
- d) Promotion and organisation of the Confederation of Atlantic Coast workers' Trades Unions, under the movements' directives.

3. Finances:

- a) Financial projects.
- b) Promotion of regional support by communities.
- c) Celebration of "Indigenous Day" in the Coast.
- d) MISURASATA's farms.
- e) Promotion of 1% contribution fee from the working members.

D. Historical Claims:

1. Land (in the process of being legalised)

Description:

- a) Socio-economic and legal arguments put together in a paper.
- b) Historical arguments (domination, traditions, millennial situation, culture) recorded on cassette tape.
- c) The areas of domination drawn on a map, omitting the precise geographical location.
- d) These documents will be given to the Committee on February the 10th.

Tasks involved:

- a) Launching of an intensive consciousness-raising campaign at the community level to prepare the political conditions for the handing over of the documents to the authorities.

- b) Mass demonstrations at regional level when indicated by the Committee.
- c) Appeal to the representatives of each community to sign the historical documents before delivering them to the JGRN.
- d) The search for moral support from other sectors and organisations.

2. Literacy Campaign:

Description:

- a) High rate of desertion amongst literacy campaign teachers.
- b) Lack of moral support from leaders in some regions.
- c) Laziness in the cadres in Departmental and Municipal bodies.
- d) Cadres of the organisation based in the bodies to identify themselves as such to the communities and others.
- e) Lack of initiative to control discipline.
- f) Lack of support from the base (community).
- g) Literacy campaigns in all Departments.
- h) First Congress to be held this week.

Tasks in the final offensive: The final offensive will take place immediately after the Congress.

- Ensure that the Churches fulfill their support role.
- Detect the deserters and force them to study in each community.
- Support and supervise contact with the Municipal and Department bodies.
- Approach and become acquainted with the brigadists in order to awaken their consciousness and stimulate them to increase their efforts.
- Write a strong communiqué at a regional level calling for the total support of our communities.
- Co-ordination of the CEPSES in native languages.
- Elaboration of the teaching material necessary to consolidate the reading achievements in the post literacy campaign period.

3. Education in the mother-tongue:

- a) Draft law to be passed by the Council of State for teaching in Mískito and English in the communities until the 4th grade.
- b) Official meeting with the Ministry of Education to concretise the project.

- c) Creation of an investigatory-executive Working Group for the teaching sector.
- d) Establishment of a Working Group responsible for the elaboration of a four language dictionary (Miskito, Sumu, English and Spanish).
- e) Active participation at the regional level in the National Education Consultation.
- f) Campaign in the communities to standardise and purify the language.

4. Culture:

- a) To give body to the Language Academy of the Atlantic Coast.
- b) Promote a rescue project for the Rama culture.
- c) Organisation and promotion of culture amongst the people of the communities.
- d) Cultural competitions.
- e) Cultural exchanges with other ethnic groups.
- f) Projects aiming to obtain equipment and other materials.

E. Minimal Claims:

1. Health:

- a) Building of clinics in all communities with the participation of the organisation, INNICA, and the local bases.
- b) Training of health leaders (CENDER). Supply medicines, nurses and doctors to the communities.
- c) Congress of empirical doctors (traditional healers).

2. Education:

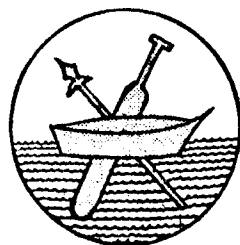
- a) Repair and construction of schools in all communities with the participation of the Movement, INNICA and the local people.
- b) Gathering of students who have passed from Elementary Education into the Secondary Education Centres together with the participation of the organisation, INNICA, Ministry of Education and the heads of the household.

3. Operation Centres:

- a) Construction of regional offices in Waspán, Rosita, Bluefields and Puerto Cabezas.
- b) Outline communal development projects.

MISURASATA leadership

Emblem of MISURASATA



INNICA, IRENA, MISURASATA:

AGREEMENT ON NORMS FOR LUMBER-FELLING

Source: Barricada, February 14, 1981.

The negotiations of July and August 1980 between the Ministry for the Atlantic Coast INNICA, the Ministry for Natural Resources IRENA and MISURASATA were concluded with this contract. It was only ratified in February 1981. It is agreed that the indigenous village communities will have an 80% share of the proceeds from the lumber felling in the so-called "conflictive areas" which are claimed both by the Sandinist Government and by MISURASATA. The money is earmarked for village development projects. The date for the presentation of the land claims of the indigenous movement is fixed anew for March 31, 1981.

An important agreement regulating the extraction of lumber from national and communal lands in the Atlantic region of the country was signed by representatives of the Nicaraguan Institute of the Atlantic Coast INNICA, the Nicaraguan Institute of Natural Resources and the Environment IRENA and the organisation of Miskito, Sumu and Rama MISURASATA.

This agreement ratifies what was agreed at the meeting on August 5, 1980 which considered that lumber extracted from lands legally belonging to indigenous communities should be bought for a price set beforehand by the people's commercial corporation and the community.

However, there are also trees growing on lands for which the communities possess no legal title but which they have traditionally occupied.

The National Directive of the FSLN decided that the position of these lands be looked into once MISURASATA has presented a project for discussion with the FSLN. This will determine definitively the position of these lands and issue legal titles to particular parcels where warranted.



A Miskito man works with his "dory" (canoe) - the most important and means of transportation on the Atlantic Coast, April 1981 (Klaudine Ohland).

MISURASATA promised to submit this survey last year but expects to do so by 31 of March, 1981.

The agreement signed also considered what should happen if problems or differences arose between IRENA and MISURASATA. In the first instance, these should be resolved by the Nicaraguan Institute of the Atlantic Coast represented by its Director Minister, Comandante Guerrillero William Ramirez.

The agreement serves to resolve recent problems which occurred in the Atlantic Coast when indigenous communities refused to allow the cutting of wood. This attitude originated partly because of the delays in the payment for wood on the part of IRENA and it is hoped that in future MISURASATA will carry out the signed agreement to avoid breakdowns in understanding.

In addition, the agreement stipulates that the money earned through the extraction of wood should go into a special fund. Communities can then present projects outlining the ways in which they wish to invest this money, such as in schools, houses, health centres etc..

In order to draw out this money, once granted for the project, three signatures are necessary: one from the community itself, one from a MISURASATA compañero and one from the Nicaraguan Institute for the Atlantic Coast.

The following is the text of the signed agreement:

Agreement:

By this present Document, the undersigned representatives of the Nicaraguan Institute of the Atlantic Coast INNICA, the Nicaraguan Institute of Natural Resources and the Environment IRENA and MISURASATA agree to the following:

1. To ratify the agreements of August 5, 1980, discussed and approved by the Government Junta in Managua in which Comandante William Ramirez representing the Government Junta and representatives from IRENA and MISURASATA participated and which consists of the following:

- a) Cutting wood on national lands will not cost IRENA a centavo and can be done whenever considered convenient.
 - b) Neither IRENA nor the indigenous communities must cut wood from so-called disputed lands, which are those claimed by communities but for which they have no legal title. If wood is extracted, IRENA must pay up to 80% of the value of the wood extracted, in accordance with the agreement with MISURASATA.
 - c) In communal lands, IRENA must pay for the wood extracted.
 - d) MISURASATA is obliged to deliver a juridicial map within two months in order to begin negotiations with the government on the demarcation of community lands. (We should clarify that it has been impossible for a number of reasons to keep to this point and the date has been postponed until March 31, 1981.)
 - e) The value of the wood should be set aside in a special account to be drawn upon for projects which will benefit the communities under the signature of a representative of INNICA, a representative of MISURASATA and one from the community requesting the funds.
2. Should any problem arise between MISURASATA and IRENA, through the delay of payments or for any other reason, in the first instance it should be resolved by Comandante William Ramírez in the name of the Government Junta guaranteeing that production will not be stopped.
 3. We further agree to issue publically these agreements declaring our support for the Popular Sandinist Revolution, and so avoid manipulation by reactionary sectors.

We sign this present agreement on February 12, 1981, in the city of Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

Comandante William Ramírez, Minister of INNICA;
 Brooklyn Rivera, MISURASATA;
 Jorge Jenkins, IRENA.

SANDINIST ARMED FORCES FAS:

COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY PLAN SUBDUED IN THE ATLANTIC COAST

Source: Patria Libre, No.11, February 1981.

On February 19, 1981, shortly before the completion of the literacy campaign on the Atlantic Coast and the beginning of the land negotiations, the entire national leadership of MISURASATA was arrested by the security forces. In this article in the monthly magazine of the Sandinist Armed Forces FAS the programme of action of MISURASATA for 1981, under the name "Plan 81", is condemned as "separatist" and a connection is made between the MISURASATA leaders who have just been arrested and Steadman Fagoth's separatist plans. An eye-witness describes the armed conflict which took place in Prinzapolka during the attempt to arrest the Miskito leader, Elmer Prado. At the same time Minister William Ramírez emphasises that the arrests are not directed against the existence of the indigenous movement MISURASATA itself.

At the very moment which saw the triumph of the Popular Sandinist Revolution on July 19, all the files of the evil Office of National Security OSN with cards on more than 35,000 Somozist agents and collaborators fell into the hands of the people. From then on departments in the Ministry of the Interior followed the trail of a group of separatists and counter-revolutionaries operating close at hand and led by Steadman Fagoth Müller in the Atlantic Coast.

Fagoth Müller together with Jimmy Hodgson, Ana María Hazel Lau, Tomás Morales Meléndez, Brooklyn Rivera, Fadyán Richard, Carlos and Armstrong Wiggins had already prepared in full a "Plan 81". This was to deceive and manipulate the Miskito, Sumu and Rama ethnic groups, living in the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua into proclaiming "independence" from the rest of the country and later on to seek annexation to England, betraying the good faith of the thousands of inhabitants of that region which during Somozism were condemned to the most desperate neglect.

Plan 81

To carry out his Plan 81, Fagoth collaborated with foreign agents who possibly included members of the CIA or of a transnational oil company interested in potential deposits of this valuable product on Nicaragua's maritime shelf. He went to the lengths of using the official voice of the FSLN (Radio Sandino) to broadcast messages at night in Miskito, which is a language spoken by very few people in our country. He gave the impression to the innocent inhabitants of that region, that his plans were known by the Revolutionary Government, thus making use of the climate of extensive liberties which exists in our country.

"Plan 81" of Fagoth's group envisaged persuading the Revolutionary Government to incorporate one of their deputies in the Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction and five of their members onto the Council of State. They also envisaged placing separatist elements in all the Municipal Juntas in the Atlantic Coast, to break the institutional unity of Nicaragua by creating parallel bodies and then later proclaiming the "independence and sovereignty" of that region.

The destabilisation plans

These unilateral demands together with the destabilisation plans that were already underway, were to culminate in the restoration of the imperialist domination in the Atlantic Coast.

Fagoth's group acted under the cover of MISURASATA "Association of Miskito, Sumu and Rama", which is an organisation recognised by the FSLN. It set in motion a number of criminal schemes aiming to discredit the authorities among which was the boycott of all projects set up by the official bodies including the Institute for Natural Resources IRENA and the Ministry of Development of the Agrarian Reform MIDINRA, assaulting all the drivers of the official cars of these departments in order to prevent their working in the region.

Fagoth's gangs went so far as to bar the way to those vehicles if they did not carry a permission signed by Fagoth allowing them to drive on the region's roads.

At other times, they threatened the workers of the departments named above with machetes and other weapons trying to stop them from working for the Government. They even got to the point of assaulting and expelling from the region whole families of indigenous people who did not share their separatist point of view.



In Tasba Pri, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).

In addition to these schemes there were the huge forest fires they started in the zone leading to great losses for the state and also an armed conflict with soldiers of the Sandinist Armed Forces FAS resulting tragically in nine deaths in Prinzapolka (two members of the EPS, two from State Security DGSE and five civilians); these were outlined in Plan 81.

A falsehood is corrected

As it is accustomed to do, a local newspaper, serving the reactionaries and imperialism, last Friday, February 26, 1981, "informed" on its front page that "a Cuban" was responsible for the blood bath that happened in the church at Prinzapolka. That infamy, as well as the other slanders and insults systematically thrown at the leaders and revolutionary bodies were foiled as soon as Miskito citizen, Mauricio Martínez Cornejo, technical secretary of the literacy crusade in native languages, spoke to the whole nation at a press conference about what really happened.

Martínez Cornejo recounted: "When a member of the State Security (who was unarmed), asked the minister of the Moravian Church that he hand over Elmer Prado, Prado's followers surrounded the compañeros of the Armed Forces and started to beat them up and finally cut their throats. Meanwhile the others fired indiscriminately at everybody else.

From blows to atrocities

"It happened at 9.30 pm, while diplomas of the literacy crusade in native languages were being handed out in the Moravian Church in Prinzapolka. Then Elmer Prado, who was a member of the literacy crusade, realising that the soldiers were coming to arrest him, started to shout separatist political slogans." Elmer hit a member of the State Security who was asking for him, according to eye-witness account, and five of Prado's friends began shouting and preventing his arrest, due to his involvement in "Plan 81". "They formed a circle around the member of the Security Forces to stop Prado

being captured. Ariel Zúniga shouted out: 'Prado will not be taken; only over my dead body!'", affirmed Martínez.

Disregarding the voice of authority of the Armed Forces, Ariel Zúniga threw himself onto the compañero from the State Security and wrestled with him until he got his gun.

Later, Anastasio Peralta, another of Prado's followers, attacked a second member of the State Security with his fists. "Everybody beat him with sticks and then shot him", said the witness Martínez, technical secretary of the literacy crusade in Prinzapolka.

The rage of the aggressors turned from blows to atrocity. According to the eye-witness account, Anastasio Peralta, from Prado's gang, beheaded the compañero from the State Security.

"He did this in front of the participants at the closing of the literacy crusade", he said.

After assassinating four members of the Armed Forces, Prado's group took their arms and those taken from the soldiers and began to fire indiscriminately at those present, wounding the minister of the Moravian Church amongst others. "They fired in bursts", recounted the witness. "I saw all this close to, for I hid myself in the church and could observe all that went on."

The men involved in the crimes according to this witness were: Ariel Zúniga, Enerbio Dannis, Mack Zamora, Anastasio Peralta, Porfirio and Kali Hernandez.

In addition, Martínez Cornejo reported that at a meeting of the literacy crusade Orlando Pengla outlined a plan about a map which consisted of the division of the Atlantic Coast from the rest of the country and the introduction of gringos and counter-revolutionaries based in Honduras to carry through successfully Fagoth's plans. This proposal was made in November, he said. He also said that Steadman

Fagoth and Ana María Hazel had come several times to Prinzapolka but "only on short visits".

The Director of State Security, Comandante de Brigada Lenin Cerna, explained that Mauricio Martínez Cornejo had not come as a prisoner but as a witness, and that he had left after the press conference for Prinzapolka.

Call to the Press

The Minister of the Nicaraguan Institute for the Atlantic Coast INNICA, Comandante Guerrillero William Ramírez, issued a call to the press that they handle information on what happened in the Atlantic Coast with patriotism, steadfastness and responsibility.

"It is necessary that the press deals with the problem seriously and responsibly and so bring peace and try to be of influence in the ending of the non-conformity. We believe that your role must be extremely positive", said Comandante Ramírez to the journalists. He urged that the journalists make it clear in their reports that this is a problem which affects everyone. It is a national problem. It does not just affect the FSLN or the Miskito or the Moravian Church, but all Nicaraguans.

"We want peace to return and the violence to stop; we want respect preserved and composure maintained and that no violence of any kind occurs", Comandante Ramírez continued. He commented that a prior condition within our vanguard's policy searching for a solution to the problem posed by a group with political aspirations is that it is necessary that this separatist group hand over its arms to avoid bloodshed; that "they hand over their arms at the churches".

MISURASATA should be maintained

Comandante Ramírez added "We want it to be understood that we are not trying to destroy MISURASATA, rather we want to avoid serious problems for the country

and for the organisation itself through the arrest of the ringleaders of this movement".

The Minister for the Atlantic Coast further commented that the situation stirred up "is really serious and important for us . There are nine dead on account of it, and another ten wounded. We want there to be no more shedding of blood."

"We believe, of course, that in spite of everything, what happened could have been even worse from the plans that were discovered. Their object was the open confrontation with our authorities but fortunately we were in time."

The prisoners

Up to now those arrested by the General Committee of State Security DSGE are: Steadman Fagoth Müller, Jimmy Hodgson, Ana María Hazel Lau, Tomás Morales Meléndez, Brooklyn Rivera, Fadayán Richard, Carlos and Armstrong Wiggins.

Agreement reached

An agreement signed last Thursday, February 1981 between members of the Provisional Commission of MISURASATA and Comandante William Ramírez has been observed 100%. All those who fled after the events at Prinzapolka had surrendered to the authorities and were then set free with the exception of Elmer Prado, Peralta Chow and Ariel Zúniga who will be brought to trial at Puerto Cabezas. The arms which had been carried off by the group (eight heavy guns) were handed over yesterday by members of the Prinzapolka Commission to Comandante Ramírez. Two pistols and much ammunition as well as military supplies were given up as lost at sea, after the boat carrying the fugitives capsized.

FSLN:

NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY ATTACKED BY SEPARATISM

Source: Barricada, February 24, 1981.

An editorial in the daily newspaper of the FSLN Barricada comments on the geo-political prerequisites for separatism on the Atlantic Coast and its historical roots. At present separatism is directed against the sovereignty of the Nicaraguan State. But in fact the integration of the Atlantic Coast not only serves the defense of the Revolution but also offers far better economic and social perspectives for the indigenous population.

The grave events occurring in Prinzapolka yesterday are the first results of a separatist plan in the Atlantic Coast of a group led by ex-OSN agent Fagoth, who conspired with internal and international reactionary forces.

But such a project cannot come out of thin air. There are bases existing in the Atlantic Coast where the counter-revolution is trying to organise a movement of this type.

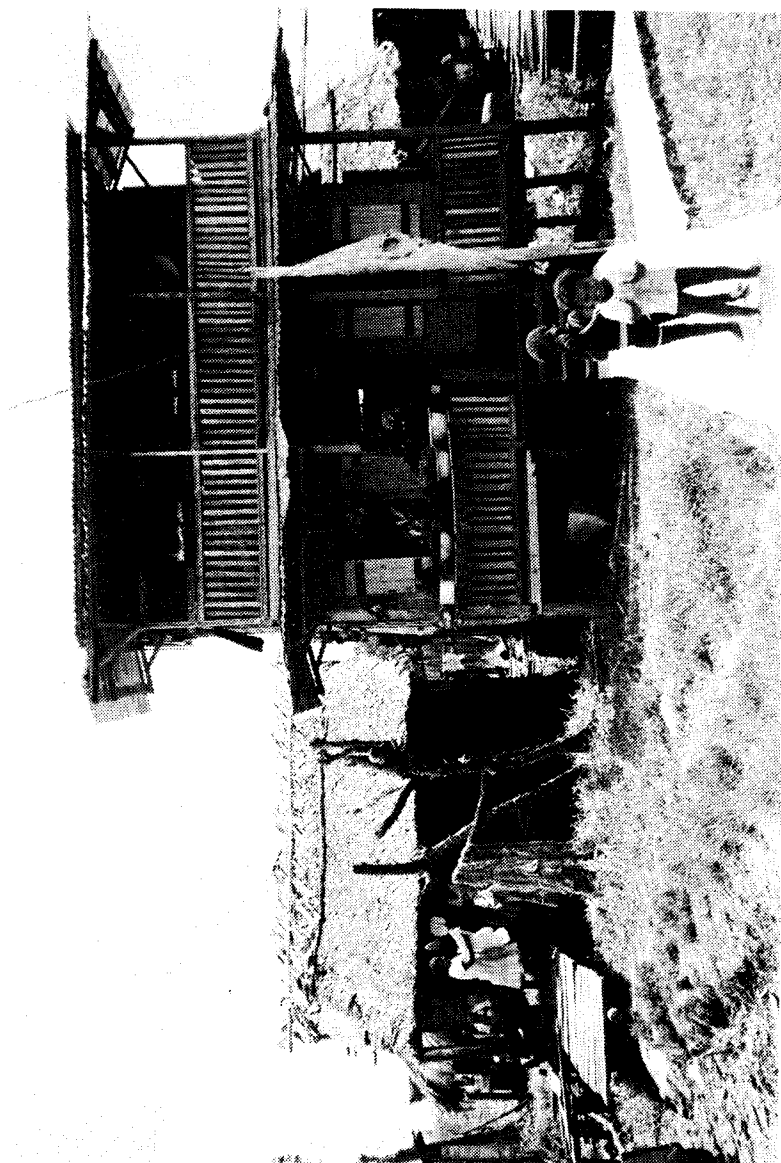
Historically, the Atlantic Coast has been subjected to pillage first by British and then by North American imperialism. The people were colonised economically, socially and culturally by the agents of imperialism and their enclaves. As soon as Moskitia was regained at the beginning of the century it was colonised again, this time by North Americans who acted more brutally there than they did in the rest of the country. From the rest of Nicaragua they knew only the face of genocide and starvation under Somoza. Their historical claims, the right to land and to progress were never met. Even the development of their integration into Nicaraguan nationality was restricted.

And when our Revolution emerged triumphant, that population with their unsatisfied claims - claims which this Revolution is unable to meet in the short run - were transformed into a tool by the imperialist enemy to try to attack our sovereignty and the self determination of Sandino's people.

Decades of economic, social and cultural penetration, paternalism and corruption under Somoza that became rooted in certain sectors and a large group of paid agents all led to conditions favouring the integration of the Atlantic Coast in imperialism's plans against the Sandinist Revolution.

It seems crazy that anyone would put forward a plan for secession in a region so economically and socially backward. In the first place, separation from whom? From Nicaragua and the Sandinist Revolution. It seems obvious that the only possibility of economic and social development in this zone would come through its economic, social and cultural integration with the rest of the country. Furthermore, separation in order to unite with whom? Because development is impossible beyond the fringes of more advanced economies and societies. Experience has shown that the imperialist alternative only leaves in the Atlantic Coast backwardness, misery and cavities as much in the lungs of the workers as in the mountains of gold - or they have simply laid our hillsides bare.

And it is the Revolution which in spite of the structural limitations that it inherited, has proposed since the emergence of the FSLN the integration of the Atlantic Coast in the national and social development of Nicaragua. The literacy campaign in native languages, medical services, roads, means of communication are all expressions of the efforts made by the Revolutionary Government to integrate the Atlantic Coast. This is the only alternative. This is especially so because given the geo-political conditions of Central America, strangled by imperialist domination, Free Nicaragua presents the only real possibility for the national and social liberation of the Atlantic Coast people.



In a Creole quarter of Bluefields, April 1981 (Klaudine Ohland).

But the machinations of imperialism and internal reaction against our people, of which the ethnic groups of the coast form a part, have converted the process of integration of the Atlantic Coast with the rest of the country into a problem which involves our very territorial integrity, the defence of the fatherland and of the Revolution. Integration of the Coast means today the defence of the Revolution.

The aggressions take place there. The standard bearers of separatism are a small minority who in the past were agents of Somozism and imperialism and who today try to continue serving a foreign master. They have shown their hand: to profit from the limitations of the Revolution in order to meet the needs of the Atlantic Coast and to make use of the cultural and social backwardness to deceive the Miskito, Sumu and Rama.

Faced with these facts and the existence of a strategic plan formulated by imperialism and local reactionaries, our Revolutionary Government has to act with maximum force against the agents of the counter-revolution. Revolutionary justice must be the implacable foe of these elements.

Our Revolution is unique in the world for its generosity and it has to defend itself. For a Revolution that is not capable of defending itself ceases to be a Revolution.

FSLN:

THE SEPARATISTS ARE NOT THE ATLANTIC COAST

Source: Barricada, February 28, 1981.

An editorial in the Sandinist daily newspaper Barricada gives its separatist and counter-revolutionary activities as the reason for the arrest of the MISURASATA leadership. While the Government is making every effort to tackle the backwardness of the Atlantic region through building up the infrastructure, their efforts are boycotted by the MISURASATA leaders.

Our revolutionary process has leapt ahead and assures a high level of popular democracy. Many changes have been put into effect but many problems have been encountered which must be overcome through the people acquiring a higher level of consciousness and by the Sandinist militants putting themselves at the forefront of the people's rightful claims.

The year 1980 was rich in experiences for Sandinism and many destabilisation attempts blending the interests of imperialism with internal reactionary forces were successfully aborted.

Given these precedents, we can analyse the present problem in the Atlantic Coast as a state of affairs not unconnected with other strategems. The Atlantic Coast, despite its area of 66,000 square kilometres, is the most backward region in the country. The connecting roads are terrible; communication is difficult; the misery, backwardness and ill health are desperate and are the product of the inheritance left by Somozism and imperialism which never concerned themselves with the population of the Atlantic Coast except to appropriate the huge resources found in this zone. These are the truths that are never printed in the paper of the reactionary forces.

In the Atlantic Coast there are three ethnic groups: Miskito, Sumu and Rama, each with its own language, culture and traditions. They are indigenous brothers who struggle together with the Revolution to break away from their backwardness.

Deliberately, reactionary forces conceal the facts that a road is being constructed to unite the Atlantic with the



Moravian Church in Puerto Cabezas, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg)

Pacific Coasts, that six ships have been bought to facilitate trade and the movement of passengers, that more than 35 IFA trucks exist to help transport in North Zelaya, that despite the many difficulties the literacy campaign in native languages has gone ahead, that schools and health centres have been built, that the level of employment has been raised, that paths and bridges have been constructed to connect communities, that a Ministry exists for this sector (INNICA) making huge efforts to solve collectively the fundamental problems faced by the population, that the Revolution helped to set up an indigenous organisation on November 11, 1979, as a guarantor of the interests of the Miskito, Sumu and Rama of that region.

And now that a separatist conspiracy has been aborted, the newspaper La Prensa comes out in defence of these individuals and tries to make out that the FSLN and the Revolution are enemies of our indigenous brothers.

MISURASATA is an indigenous organisation which must represent the interests of the indigenous groups of the Atlantic Coast and not be the instrument of a counter-revolutionary clique trying to manipulate and confuse a people who possess such a revolutionary potential.

Steadman Fagoth Müller is a person with enormous political ambitions, who was linked to the Somozist dictatorship through the OSN; the evidence presented by the State Security is undeniable. During the Spanish literacy campaign he travelled with Brooklyn Rivera in the communities of Sisín, Antia Pihni, Santa Marta, Kuakuil, Tuara and Boom Sirpi at Easter Week telling the indigenous people that they should not learn to read or write. They were saying the same as the reactionary forces and La Prensa against the crusade. The result of this counter-revolutionary campaign was that there were communities refusing to participate in the campaign and when the brigadists were taken from these

communities and placed elsewhere, Steadman Fagoth, Hazel Lau and Brooklyn Rivera boycotted the Popular Education Collectives CEP in Kuakuil, Maniwattla, Saupuka, Ulwas, Sisín and other communities. But their activities did not stop there.

On September 11, 1980, they held a demonstration where they demanded the expulsion of Sandinist brothers from this zone; the expulsion of Creoles and Spanish (whom they call Mestizos). In the mines they tried to instigate strikes to the detriment of our brother workers, and did the same in the camps of Sukatping and La Tronquera. In the community of El Palomar they expelled more than 50 mestizo families. Through Radio VER they spread information on the separatist position and hatred of Sandinism and officials of the State.

Hazel Lau was a trained teacher in the literacy campaign in native languages and even though she was employed by VIMEDA, did not do her job because she was involved in the counter-revolutionary conspiracies in the communities.

On Saturday, February 14, 1981, they held a demonstration where tempers flew, and they demanded the expulsion of all Sandinists, Creoles and Mestizos reaching the extreme of falsely claiming for themselves the heritage of the whole Atlantic Coast. There was more to it than that; the activities of these individuals cannot be seen as being unassociated with North American imperialism's aggressive plans, with the bands intent on genocide operating smugly in Honduras, with the reactionary activities of the anti-patriotic José Esteban Gonzales, and the groups conspiring against the revolution such as the MDN, PSC, PCD, and La Prensa.

The arrest of the separatists was necessary for the defence and consolidation of the process by which peace and order are guaranteed to the population, to avoid bloodshed which serves only to injure the people, to avoid the manipulation of a population, to avoid the preparation of subjective conditions which would permit the invasion of our national territory.

The people must understand this situation and must know who are their friends and who are their enemies who endanger the Revolution, how they make use of the media such as La Prensa to create uncertainty and lack of confidence and how they try to denigrate the leaders of our revolutionary process.

Headlines in La Prensa are criminal: "Cuban gives the order to fire at Prinzapolka", "FSLN ordered Fagoth to infiltrate", "Immunity is not respected" and others referring to the state of affairs. Julio Lopez is not a Cuban, as La Prensa asserted but a campesino who joined the struggle against Somoza's dictatorship and who is more Nicaraguan than those who pour out venom with their pen, seated in an office.

The separatists are not the Atlantic Coast, in the same way as their reactionary allies are no part of the Sandinist Revolution. The Coastal people become more convinced every day that their freedom is inseparably united with the Sandinist Revolution and the defence of the sovereignty of the Fatherland.

GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION JGRN:

STRONG DENIAL OF LA PRENSA'S ALLEGATIONS

Source: Barricada, February 28, 1981.

The Government denies a report in the opposition newspaper La Prensa according to which the armed conflict between Miskito and Sandinist soldiers in Prinzapolka was started off by a Cuban giving the order to shoot. The role of the Cuban "internationalists" in Nicaragua is explained and a comment is made on the freedom of the press and its misuse.

On February 26, the newspaper La Prensa gave scandalous prominence to a totally wrong piece of information under the headline: "Cuban gives the order to fire at Prinzapolka". This news not only falsified the facts which the Government had already duly informed the people about and had presented as an eye-witness account; it also put in grave danger the security and physical well-being of the Cuban teachers and doctors dedicated to their internationalist work in many communities in the Atlantic Coast.

The Junta asked the newspaper La Prensa for a definitive correction of this false and tendentious news and once the directors recognised the departure from the truth perpetuated by the paper, promised to rectify it.

But in the edition of February 27, La Prensa instead of recognising the falsity of the news, did nothing except to add to the confusion on the matter. After recognising that "two members of the Junta of Government have informed us that the version is untrue" went on to say that "therefore the version is no more than one of the many that are circulating". In this way the affirmations of the heads of state of the Republic are denied gravity and authority.

This means that the newspaper La Prensa persists in its negative and falsifying attitude to these facts, attributing the events at Prinzapolka to an imaginary Cuban citizen, a fact which the Government has categorically denied. The Government has also reaffirmed in a categorical manner that members of our Armed Forces on that occasion were victims of a traiterous aggression which started with the terrible beheading of a brave and modest soldier of the people.

The Cuban internationalists have been working in the country since the triumph of our Revolution. They have shown a spirit of sacrifice and unreserved dedication to their tasks, under the most difficult living conditions, without hope of recompense and without receiving any salary whatever. In the Atlantic Coast they have no form of protection whatever by which they could defend themselves against attacks arising because of false information like that carried in La Prensa. A hostile attitude against Cuban teachers and doctors has already been encouraged in the past by some of the press. The Government of National Reconstruction has nothing but gratitude for the Cubans' unselfish work on behalf of our people.

The liberty of the press guaranteed by the Revolution cannot go on being used to forward confusion and lies. Within this liberty of the press, there must exist sufficient courage and honesty to rectify categorically any false information that is damaging to the reputation of the country and persons that collaborate with our Revolution. Otherwise, the climate of truth and respect will be destroyed and without this climate no liberty of the press can live.

Emilio Baltodano C.

Minister-Secretary of the Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction, Managua, 27 February, 1981, "Year of Defence and Production".

NORMAN CAMPBELL (MISURASATA):

"WE ARE NOT AGAINST THE REVOLUTION!"

Source: La Prensa, March 3, 1981.

In answer to the State Security Forces' accusations against his organisation, a member of the MISURASATA leadership makes a statement to the press in which he defends the programme of action for 1981, which has been attacked as separatist. The programme is democratic and in no way counter-revolutionary, he says. It is concerned with proposals for the development of the indigenous village communities and with the preservation of their traditions and languages. The draft for collective land titles has not yet been submitted owing to the arrest of the indigenous leaders.

La Prensa has asked in MISURASATA's office for "Plan 81" which was formulated by that organisation. This "Plan 81" was denounced by Comandante Lenin Cerna, head of State Security as a separatist plan which questioned the authority of the Revolution. According to Cerna, the official action taken against MISURASATA was based on documents found at the organisation and in "Plan 81".

We carry here a telex sent by Norman Campbell, international co-ordinator of MISURASATA on "Plan 81".

With reference to the press conference given by Comandante Lenin Cerna, the indigenous organisation MISURASATA should inform the people of Nicaragua and the indigenous communities in particular of the following:

1. "Plan 81" was formulated in Bilwaskarma between December 26 and 28, 1980. It was a measure taken by leaders of our organisation to reach economic consolidation for the full development of the indigenous communities of the Atlantic Coast so that these indigenous communities develop in accordance with our culture and specific nature.

2. The Council of Elders has a symbolic function just as it had among the indigenous peoples of Nicaragua before the conquest and which is still the case, so that it is normal in Nicaragua. Members of the Council have much experience and their principal function is to give wise council to the leaders. The actual co-ordinator is the Reverend Tillet of the Moravian Church who had participated actively in Sandino's time.

3. The press conference demonstrated clearly that our Sandinist leaders do not know the problems in the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. If we talk in Miskito, in Sumu, in English or in Creole and if we think and act as indigenous people, it is because we are indigenous people and do not want to be Gringos, nor Englishmen, nor Spaniards nor Russians.

4. MISURASATA is rooted in the power of the people and in the true democracy of the people. If the Sandinist Front cannot make headway with its political ideology and its cadres of officials are incapable of winning the affection and recognition of the people of the Coast, it is not because of the leaders of MISURASATA but because of the problems of ideology and domination.

MISURASATA plainly collaborated in the transformation and in bringing the revolutionary process to the Atlantic Coast such as in the literacy campaign in native languages. MISURASATA is also the Revolution and we are Nicaraguan revolutionaries. We love Nicaragua and also the Atlantic Coast and we cannot conceive of Nicaragua without its Atlantic Coast

5. Our document on the demarcation of communal lands is ready but due to the recent events, we cannot present it to the Government until our brothers and innocent leaders, including compañero Fagoth, are set free.

I appeal to the good sense and patience of the members of our organisation. We are not against the Revolution nor against members of the Sandinist Front.

I appeal to all democratic organisations and institutions, especially to those which sympathise with the indigenous cause, to the brothers of Subtiava, Monimbó and Sébaco as we need their solidarity and understanding.

Long live the Nicaraguan Revolution and indigenous unity today, tomorrow and always.

MISURASATA

Signed Norman Campbell

BROOKLYN RIVERA (MISURASATA):

"WE ARE PART OF THIS REVOLUTION!"

Interview by Micheal Rediske, Managua, April 1, 1981.

In this interview the co-ordinator of the indigenous movement first gives some details about the arrest of the MISURASATA leadership and the armed conflict in Prinzapolka. Rivera sees in the indigenous traditions a long-existing basis for the "building up of a communitarian society" in Nicaragua. He stresses the close ties of the Atlantic Coast to national politics and names language and communication as one of the most difficult problems between the different cultures: "The Sandinists have not understood what MISURASATA is".

Question: What is the relation between the origin and development of MISURASATA and the Sandinist Revolution?

Answer: We admit that MISURASATA exists because of the Revolution. The Revolution opened up new opportunities for the indigenous peoples to organise themselves and participate widely in the tasks of the Revolution. We were confident and began to work. But the contradictions arose when the organisation prospered and advanced, firmly consolidating its bases with an autonomous line. The communities organised themselves in accordance with their own idiosyncracies and their own reality. Certain doubts now exist about the organisation, and above all, uncertainties as to the strength of the organisation.

Question: How did Somoza treat the Miskito?

Answer: The Government never bothered. It only selected people to represent the Miskito in Managua. Only in two aspects were the Miskito allowed a presence. First, when they were holding farcical elections the Government would send a few cadres with sweets, thus obtaining the votes. Second, for exploitation of the natural resources. In reality, therefore, there was never any real or effective relationship between the Miskito and the Somoza regime.



In Tasba Pri, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg)

Question: But there was a Miskito organisation from the Seventies on, ALPROMISU. Did it suffer repression from Somoza?

Answer: At the beginning of ALPROMISU there was repression against certain honest leaders. But Somoza bribed some leaders, giving one the position of deputy and another that of mayor. The most able leaders were thus co-opted. The

most consequential were repressed. As they did not have strong grass roots organisations, the people were only organised hierarchically. Popular participation was absent. There was no strong resistance in the face of repression.

Question: Obviously the strength of MISURASATA led the Sandinist Government to fear that your organisation could convert itself into a danger for the Revolution.

Answer: It was not certain that this organisation was a danger or obstacle to the revolutionary process on the Coast, because the policy that we have pursued closely mirrored the most important principles of the Sandinist Revolution. All the time we were striving to address ourselves to the reality of the Atlantic Coast, and above all to the project of the Sandinist Revolution.

Question: But there are concrete contradictions, as for instance the plans MISURASATA has got and the ones of the FSLN, concerning the landed properties and local administration in the Atlantic Coast.

Answer: Before those events took place (the detention of the MISURASATA leadership in February 1981; editor's note), we felt that there was no contradiction, because on the land issue the Government itself had told us via an agreement that the indigenous community lands were going to be legalised. For this reason the Government requested that a legal map be submitted, so that they could recognise the lands. A similar situation arose on the question of administrative autonomy for the Coast. Comandante Ramírez said repeatedly that the Atlantic Coast was going to be administered by the Coastal people.

Question: So there have not been aggravating problems before the detentions in February?

Answer: Well no. The only problem that made us ponder over the position of the Government was the decree on the Bosawas

forest reserve. IRENA published a decree establishing its control over 7,400 km² of land in the north of the country, lands belonging to the Sumu.

Question: Why did they detain you?

Answer: Personally, the violent manner of my detention came as a great surprise to me. Later, throughout the course of the interrogations, which began on the day following my capture, I demanded that they inform me of the reasons for my detention. I never got a clear and precise answer to this question. I recall that on the very first day, when one of the officers saw me and knew that I was Brooklyn, he told me that I should collaborate in order to clear up the situation with Fagoth, and that I should not be afraid to do this because another compañero, Hazel Lau, had already openly co-operated with them. From this moment I had the impression that my detention was due to the fact that they wanted to use me in relation to the Fagoth case. However, on the day following my detention I saw that the situation was a little confused, because at the first stage of my interrogation, the questioning was concerned with the accusation against me for being a leader who was promoting the separation of the Atlantic Coast. In other words, they directly accused me of being a separatist and claimed that we were bringing in arms from the northern frontier in order to bring about an armed uprising against the Government. We were also supposed to have clandestine contact with England.

Question: Why England?

Answer: They never explained this to me. Truthfully, they did not explain this. They accused us of agitating among the indigenous masses, against the Sandinist Government.

Question: Did you get the impression that they interrogated you on the basis of information already in their possession

or did they not start to investigate your case until your detention?

Answer: It appears to me that the two are related. It was as if they had received some information, but a very limited amount and none of significance. On the basis of this they wished to investigate further into the matter. For example, they possessed information about my trips to certain communities, about the people I met, even including dates, and my speeches which I delivered to the people. They had information, but it was very distorted and slanderous.

Question: And specifically on the subject of arms?

Answer: They made this accusation too, just like that, just informally.

Question: Did they name places and give dates?

Answer: No, definitely not. And when the Prinzapolka incident took place, where there was the clash, they began about this, saying to me that it was proof of the flow of arms which I was meant to have smuggled in and given to the people. This is why Elmer Prado and a group clashed militarily and why there were so many deaths. But this is the only case that they mentioned with specific information.

Question: Where did the arms used at Prinzapolka come from?

Answer: Eleven soldiers came to the church when the closing ceremony of the literacy campaign was taking place. So, five soldiers came in with the intention of capturing Elmer Prado. When one of the soldiers, the commander I think, found Elmer, he pointed his gun at him and ordered him to leave. But Elmer quickly grabbed his weapon, and a fight developed. Thus the other brigadists overpowered the remaining soldiers, confiscating their rifles and killing them. They killed all those who were inside. But before killing them one of the soldiers let off a burst of gun fire that practically blew off one of Elmer Prado's arms. When they saw this the other

soldiers who were outside fled, and were chased by the militiamen. Although some of those who fled escaped, according to the report, eight were killed. In other words, it was the soldiers own rifles which the youths took off them that were used to kill the soldiers.

Question: While you and other MISURASATA leaders were released after three weeks, Steadman Fagoth still remains in detention. What is your opinion about the fact that he has been working for the OSN, Somoza's security service?

Answer: We have agreed with the defence lawyer on the need to begin on the defensive, accepting as a fact his participation in the Somoza Government's security forces. This is due to the fact that Fagoth himself has admitted this. It is preferable to try and justify with forceful arguments that his participation was due to infiltration by the Socialist Party. Second, his participation has not been of an important nature, one that has greatly effected the struggle of the Nicaraguan people.

Question: Did you have prior knowledge about Fagoth's activities as an informant of the OSN, or did the news surprise you when he was detained?

Answer: Some leaders knew about it. I personally knew from about nine months back when he told me in person about his involvement, but as infiltration by the Socialist Party.

Question: It is mentioned that Fagoth renewed his relations with the OSN in 1978 but this time not by being infiltrated by the Socialist Party.

Answer: I believe that there was no second time. In December 1979 Evertz (leader of the PSN, one of Nicaragua's orthodox communist parties - editor's note) told me that it is true that the instructions to infiltrate had been given to Steadman by them, that the information passed by Steadman to the Socialist Party was very valuable, that this information

was transmitted to Comandante Doris Tijerino and by this way to the Sandinist Front. He had verified all this with the Sandinist Comandantes and they told him that they were aware of the affair and that Steadman was not going to be reproached with this case.

Question: How is the detention of Fagoth and his past as an agent for Somoza's security force understood by MISURASATA's base, by the people in the communities?

Answer: His participation in the Somozist security force carries no taint of criminality in the eyes of the Miskito, because for them Fagoth has been a leader who all of his life has done them favours. They view Fagoth as irreproachable, as somebody who has been very upright in all aspects of his life as a leader. Despite all the efforts we have made to make them basically understand, they do not comprehend the significance of Fagoth's participation in Somoza's security forces. They answer: the only thing that we know is that Fagoth is our leader. For this reason all the strategies used by the Government to unmask Fagoth's deeds have failed. This is because the Indians have never experienced such a relationship during the Somoza era, they are unaware of this reality.

Question: Another problem for the Sandinist Government that the Miskito are not aware of is the border with Honduras where thousands of ex-National Guards prepare themselves to fight against the Sandinist Revolution. On the other hand for you, the indigenous, the zone north of the Río Coco bordering on Honduras is part of your Nicaraguan land, historically called Moskitia. What is MISURASATA's attitude when considering this contradiction?

Answer: The affirmation that for we indigenous people no frontier exists, is a relative, not an absolute conception. We are agreed that no frontier ought to exist, although in reality we have to accept that there are frontiers between

countries and we should respect them. Although this frontier with Honduras exists, throughout the ages the Miskito of Nicaragua have crossed freely into Honduras and vice-versa. The Miskito of Nicaragua have relatives over there, and they need to go. Travelling without papers and without permission, they have not had any problems. They go for one month and then return. Today this situation has altered somewhat due to the reasons that you mentioned: the presence of Somoza's ex-National Guard, and due to the fact that the Honduran Government does not look favourably upon the National Revolution. For these reasons the situation has become more difficult. We are aware that we have to concern ourselves with this situation, which could be a source of problems in the future if we do not co-operate with our Government to protect this frontier.

Question: You mentioned the approximately 40,000 Miskito living in Honduras. What is their conduct towards the military regime of that country?

Answer: They are organised in MASTA. But MASTA is equivalent to ALPROMISU here during the Somoza years. In other words, our brothers are rather backward. They have an organisation there, but in name only. There is no mass participation. Thus they have arranged themselves although they live in misery, backwardness and distressing conditions. But they are afraid to do anything. They prefer to stay as they are, not demanding their right to organise themselves and work for self-improvement. Although already as a result of their contact with MISURASATA, many Honduran Miskito have become active and there is a movement among them to rise up and organise themselves.

Question: So they take MISURASATA as an example?

Answer: That's right.

Question: What does the term socialism mean for MISURASATA? Do you think that a synthesis of your indigenous culture and

socialist conceptions could be realised?

Answer: Although there exists a strong influence from other cultures (i.e. English, German, etc.) our indigenous society still preserves many customs and traditions which are unique and are fundamental to the construction of a self-governing or communitarian socialist society. For example, landholding is organised on a communal basis, as are work practices. Also, in spite of the fact that they have tried to introduce capitalist values, as yet they have not enjoyed much influence. All of this acts as a base, the beginnings, for the construction of a true socialist society.

Question: Some of the Nicaraguan political parties, e.g. those calling themselves Democratic Socialists, showed solidarity with MISURASATA when you were imprisoned. What do you think of them and do contact exist?

Answer: In principle, we are grateful for the solidarity that they have publically voiced. However we do not have total confidence in them. In the first place this is because some of them are old parties, even though they have changed their name, as in the case of the Conservative Democratic Party. When the Conservatives were in government they were never interested in the Coastal people. Thus, quite frankly, we do not believe them. Others, such as the MDN we have very little knowledge of. I do not know to what degree they are conscious of the indigenous problem.

Question: MISURASATA claims both a certain regional autonomy and yet more influence in Managua at the same time. Is that correct?

Answer: Yes, we are conscious of the fact that we cannot just develop our activities at the regional level. That would be a mistake because in reality we are part of this country and part of the Revolution. All that happens directly affects us. Thus we ought to involve ourselves in the economic and

political affairs of the nation. We have to admit that in the past we acted and worked simply as leaders of a movement, and never as politicians. Today we realise the importance of a national perspective. As well as what goes on here, MISURASATA also has to be involved at a national level.

Question: In the meantime Vice Minister Comandante Luis Carrión has called MISURASATA publically the legitimate representation of the indigenous population. Did this affect real changes of official policy towards the Atlantic Coast?

Answer: More than this, Comandante Ramírez said that without MISURASATA there can be no revolution in the Atlantic Coast, which may be seen as more explicit than the statements of Luis Carrión. We see that there are no changes, rather that they have increased the military's presence. The central office of MISURASATA is still in the hands of the military and although they have said that we can repossess it, the people reject this. They don't want to. Also there has been the persecution of the leaders in the zone, and many have had to cross over into Honduras because State Security agents are after them.

To tell the truth: I don't believe that the Sandinists understand what MISURASATA is. They work on the level of suppositions and told us confidentially that they are not able to comprehend the Atlantic Coast. It's deplorable, but all political cadres and mediators who were sent to the Atlantic Coast were disastrous for the revolutionary policy. They made mistakes almost everywhere because they came with a fixed mentality. For this reason all their plans conflicted harshly with reality and with the concrete interests of our indigenous bretheren. At the level of the FSLN leadership and government we know some people who on the other hand have more realistic and correct ideas about the problematic situation of the Atlantic Coast, Comandante Jaime Wheelock for example. But even so, even Jaime Wheelock knows too little

about the concrete reality of the Coast. William Ramírez understands something, also Luis Carrión has shown openness towards us. Tomás Borge, on the other hand, measures up the problems of the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts in the same way. The other leaders show little or nothing on this question. They go completely astray.

At the leadership level in the Sandinist Front there is going to be a restructuring in order to take a closer look at the problems of the indigenous population. These are almost the very words which Comandante Carrión said to us at a meeting two days ago. It appears that now it will not be Wheelock who will be charged with relations with MISURASATA, but Carrión. They are worried about their image in the Atlantic Coast, and now want to conciliate with the people once again. For this reason they have said that they are going to make important changes in their cadres and that new people will be sent with different approaches to their work.



MISURASATA - Seal

LUIS CARRION (FSLN):

ETHNIC MINORITIES AND THE REVOLUTIONARY CHALLENGE

Source: Barricada, May 6-7, 1981.

In the midst of the tense situation, when the Miskito are demanding Steadman Fagoth's release with massive demonstrations, in an interview with Barricada, the representative of the National Leadership of the FSLN for the Atlantic Coast, goes into the connection between the various problems. These range from the colonial history, through the land claims of the indigenous peoples, the Sandinist concept of integration and economic development for the Atlantic Coast to the future relationship between MISURASATA and the FSLN.

Question: Comandante, we understand that you have been in close contact with the problem of MISURASATA and the indigenous communities. What is the present situation and what are the background problems?

Answer: To understand the present situation of the Miskito communities we have to look a little at the history. Our country's Atlantic zone, inhabited by several ethnic minorities, Miskito, Sumu, Rama and Creoles (as they call persons of the Black race there) did not share much in the historical process taking place in the rest of the country. When the Pacific region of Nicaragua was being colonised by the Spanish, the local indigenous tribes there were forced into servile work which gradually separated them from their communities and they gradually became racially mixed with the Spanish and lost their own socio-cultural characteristics. This did not happen in the Atlantic Coast.

In the first place, there was no Spanish colonisation. Secondly, the Atlantic Coast was under English domination and the English did not act as colonists, but mainly established commercial relationships with the indigenous tribes there, mostly with the Miskito. The English used this region fundamentally as a base for pirate ships and for their activities

against the Spanish. Later on, the reincorporation of the Moskitia was established as a result of a pact between Nicaragua and England, and which meant a geographical and political reintegration of the Atlantic Coast, but not a cultural or economic integration.

Question: What were the effects of this kind of domination?

Answer: During the period when the English dominated the Atlantic Coast, they maintained throughout a policy aimed at



(From left to right:) Leticia Herrera, Luis Carrión, Sergio Ramírez, October 1981 (Cordelia Dilg).

provoking in the indigenous tribes a hostile attitude to the Spanish, and by extension, in the post-colonial period, one that was hostile to the Nicaraguans. For their part, the indigenous communities remember the Spanish through their oral tradition, only in terms of their unsuccessful attempts to conquer and subdue them. This is how we have here some tribes with their own languages, their own culture, and with a very primitive social organisation which is different from that of the rest of the society. Later on came the phase when North American companies penetrated the region: the mining, lumber, bananas and rubber companies, most of which were temporary enclaves. They tended to influence without really colonising this region of the country, especially in the northern part of the Atlantic Coast. In this way, the reintegration of the Moskitia meant passing from English influence to that of North America. And the specific commercial and labour relations etc., existing there for many years, were established by the North American companies which totally dominated this region. From the perspective of these indigenous tribes, what they have felt is only a succession of oppressors: first the Spanish, then the English, later the North Americans and finally the Nicaraguan Government, in this case the Somoquist dictatorship. All those powers in each and every case collided with the indigenous way of life, destroyed their culture and never tried to establish any communication. Logically, under the dictatorship the indigenous struggle for their rights was very weak, almost non-existent. They had an organisation called ALPROMISU, which had been founded some years before the Revolution, but which didn't have the characteristics of a combative, a fighting organisation.

Question: But with the victory of the Revolution the opportunity to organise opened up?

Answer: The triumph of the Revolution opened the way for all liberties and the possibility for organising. This accelerated

the movement towards organisation and towards the struggle for what they consider are their rightful claims. Then MIS-URASATA was created and its leaders were drawn from young people who had had the chance of studying and of reaching university level with a higher cultural level and understanding of the world than the previous indigenous leaders. We got to grips with this reality from the time of the triumph of the Revolution and we came to know what has happened there for so many years. We found communities surviving in a very primitive state of development; which have not been divided internally into social classes except to a very small extent, and which retain communal forms of ownership. They do not feel themselves identified with the rest of the nation and they continue to call all those who are not indigenous "Spanish" as they have done for a hundred years. We have then the problem of a minority with its own particularities, and also with a great ideological backwardness. They claim the right to their language, they claim the right to possess communal property and they claim participation in the administration which they say will be controlled by themselves.

Question: How would you define the challenge which this presents to the Revolution?

Answer: The big problem for the Revolution is how to truly integrate for the first time those indigenous people which in the case of the Miskito number about 160,000 and in the case of the Sumu some 15,000.

Question: How can a national consciousness be given while at the same time respecting their own peculiarities, their own characteristics and their specific claims in the process of integration?

Answer: In the past, (and I refer to the colonial period) the integration of the indigenous people was attempted through the use of armed violence and ideological penetration especially through religion which led to the cultural destruction

of our indigenous people. In 1981, in the Popular Sandinist Revolution, the basis for integration cannot be these. They must be others. They must be radically different and revolutionary. It is logical that this is a difficult process because of their being a backward population, and because nevertheless they have stored up a great distrust throughout the centuries and have been subject to great repressions, oppressions and marginalisation. Communication is difficult; understanding is difficult. Their claims must be explained and clarified through a long and complicated process, through dialogue, through discussion etc.. The Revolution cannot and ought not go there as a conqueror, but we should go there as revolutionaries in search of solutions.

Question: What is the concrete situation now after the events of North Zelaya and the problem with Fagoth?

Answer: There is a tense situation, I should say, in view of the series of violent events during the last months culminating in the situation at Prinzapolka as a result of which four military compañeros and four Mískito civilians were killed. Fagoth is, for the Mískito, a leader with whom they feel identified; that Fagoth was involved in OSN is something which has no importance for them. There has been much excitement over Fagoth's detention and there have been disruptions in both attendance in school classes and production activities. In addition to this, the Somozist radio has been broadcasting programmes in Mískito and creating distrust in the region, and what has happened as a result is that some people have gone to Honduras.¹ Within this context the figure of Fagoth is much less important than the need to resolve strategically the problem of the real integration of the ethnic minorities, Mískito and Sumu. He is less important than the necessity of changing the situation of tension which exists within the population and which facilitates the activities of true counter-revolutionaries. In addition one must take into account 1. Editor's note: They numbered about 3,000.

that the Revolutionary Government has made mistakes too, out of unawareness rather than ill will or evil intentions. One must understand that two completely different mentalities are confronting each other, and that at times it is not even possible to talk because one speaks Spanish and the other speaks Miskito and so there have arisen misunderstandings, frictions and prejudices. In the opinion of the Sandinist Front, the important point, the fundamental point, is this; to transform this situation and if the measures we take with regard to Fagoth help to overcome the problem, which as I have explained is very complicated, then those measures are greatly justified.

Question: What has been the purpose of the discussions which FSLN have recently had with MISURASATA and have there been any achievements?

Answer: In the first place, for us, MISURASATA is not a counter-revolutionary organisation, we can have many differences, we can have different opinions over many things, but we consider that it is an organisation which has its legitimacy in the way in which it represents these indigenous communities in some form and in this capacity is obliged to communicate with the Government in looking for solutions to these problems. Reaching any solutions of a definitive nature will take many years, but we must begin to take those steps now.

Question: What is the substance of these discussions?

Answer: Well, we spoke with them about the precise nature of the MISURASATA organisation, of the need to give it a more legal basis, of the way to confront together with the Government this problem of the Miskito who have gone to Honduras and whom both we and they would like to return, of the process for surveying the lands of the Miskito communities as well as to discuss a whole range of minor specific problems which are present in the development of Government activities in that

region of the country. In our opinion, the great responsibility of the MISURASATA leaders is that of knowing how to manage maturely and responsibly this process of seeking solutions together with the Revolutionary Government, in such a way that they can satisfy, where possible and reasonable, the claims of the Miskito, but at the same time in a way that they may give a decisive contribution towards a new consciousness in the Miskito people, this is their great responsibility.

Question: It has been said that Fagoth will possibly travel abroad, is this certain?

Answer: According to what the leaders of MISURASATA said on the last trip we made to Puerto Cabezas and Waspán, Fagoth is going abroad to study and we approve the proposal of MISURASATA that he go abroad to study because we consider that it would be a way which really could and can contribute to the improvement of the situation here, to re-establish a climate of greater calm, greater peace, of greater harmony, which puts us in a better position to guarantee the defence of this part of our land from the counter-revolutionary aggression, that is the fundamental reason.

Question: And where is he going to study?

Answer: At the moment we do not know, because we are making arrangements and we do not want to say anything until we have really confirmed it.

Question: And how long is he going to be outside the country?

Answer: Well, that will be seen by how long he studies.

Question: There has been mention of the Soviet Union?

Answer: No, we are not making arrangements with the Soviet Union, we are making arrangements with other countries which for the time being we are not going to name.

Question: What plans has the Revolutionary Government, especially the National Directive, for the material development

of these areas, that is to say, how to integrate all these communities into the development of society as a whole?

Answer: We can give some ideas first of all, we are making an effort to improve the ordinary management of government here and the National Directive set up a commission to look into the questions of the Atlantic Coast, which at the moment, among other things is making an examination of the structure and function of INNICA, to give it a greater capacity for co-ordination in government action, to give it greater authority and greater force; at the same time to find formulas to allow the participation of representatives from the ethnic minorities of the Atlantic Coast in the discussion, the analysis of all the problems arising from government action there. From a general point of view, we think that economic development is the crucial question. The Waslala-Siúna road is going to create for the first time the minimum conditions to push into that region economic progress of some expansion, which can really raise the material conditions of the population in that region of our country. But that is not enough, because economic development is a question on a very long time scale, and the problems are there now. Their immediate claims are not economic, but are of another character, they plan for example, to learn part of their primary education in their mother tongue, that there might be a survey for their land claims, that they might be given some participation in the administration of the region, that their own cultural forms be preserved and developed, that their forms of organisation be respected, all these things must begin to be talked about now and answers must be looked for; because this in its time is going to facilitate the development of these economic programmes of which we are speaking which could be in the line of agriculture, fishing, lumber work or the mines there.

Question; And were these claims all mentioned in the discussions which were held here last week?

Answer: We already knew of them before, they have already explained them, right now what we are working on is the subject of the lands.

Question: Is there, say, a channel open between the Directive and MISURASATA for discussing these problems?

Answer: Yes, in the first place an immediate channel in the Atlantic Coast is INNICA and a member of the National Directive, which in this case is myself, responsible for the management of the affairs of the Atlantic region. And these channels they have and use.

Question: When will the next meeting be between you and them?

Answer: The next meeting will be in this month of May.

Question: Do you have any agenda arranged yet?

Answer: Yes, we are going to find out in detail their plan about the lands, that is to say, what it is that they are demanding; we are also going to discuss with them a working agenda to enter all these claims, they will be the two principal things we will look into at the next meeting.

Question: What is the basic question on the problem of land?

Answer: They, as I was saying before, live in a state of development still based on communal property, that is to say, there has never occurred a massive decomposition of communal land property into private property, so they cultivate their lands as a community. There is no parcelisation and they want their communities to be recognised legally as the property of one extension of land. They must work out which lands they are claiming for us to sit down and discuss. It is a complex problem because there are people who have lived for years in that region who are not Mísktio and who also have rights and the Government is obliged to protect those rights.

SERGIO RAMIREZ (JGRN):

"WE WILL NOT ALLOW RACIAL SEGREGATION IN OUR COUNTRY!"

Source: Monitor-Dienst Lateinamerika May 20, 1981

On the occasion of the inauguration of a school in Pueblo Nuevo, Sergio Ramírez, member of the Government Junta, warns against a worsening of the conflict between the Miskito and the FSLN. In a radio interview with Radio Sandino of May 18, 1981, he admonishes "some of the Miskito leaders" - a clear allusion to Steadman Fagoth - saying that the propagation of a separate nation denotes racial segregation in Nicaragua and violates the "integrity of the State territory".

It is known that the problem of the Miskito is not a problem which exists between the Miskito and the FSLN. A deterioration of this problem could lead to a crisis affecting the Nation, our nationality and the unity of Nicaragua. Some of their leaders lie to the Miskito, telling them that they are another nation and the the Miskito who live in Nicaragua and those who live in Honduras are the same nation.

This is a very dangerous situation and the aggravation of this situation is even more dangerous, for then Nicaragua itself, the unity of the Nation and the integrity of our state territory are affected. We Nicaraguans will not allow racial segregation in our country. We have never been so mad as to say that there is another country within Nicaragua and that it is therefore necessary to separate off a part of Nicaragua. This danger exists, and there are people who are playing with this danger. We must warn them and call their attention to the fact that this is a very dangerous situation through which the national sovereignty can be damaged and that it is as dangerous as the threat of war from the members of the Somozist Guard who have installed themselves on the other side of the frontier and from other people who are also staying on the other side of the frontier.

I wish to say to you, *compañeros*, that we need peace in order to consolidate this Revolution and in order to be able to create more educational centres like the one whose inauguration we are celebrating today. This year we are going to open 30 educational centres like the one which the Revolution in Pueblo Nuevo is entrusting to its destiny.

MANUEL CALDERON (FSLN):

"WE HAVE THE JOB OF FORGING A CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS!"

Source: Intercontinental Press, June 29, 1981. Interview by Lorraine Thibaud and Mathilde Zimmermann in Puerto Cabezas May 1981.

In an interview with the North American Trotskyist weekly paper "Intercontinental Press", the military commander of the northern Atlantic Coast, known as "Comandante Rufo", describes the guerilla war in the mountains of the mining area of the Atlantic Coast and the social and cultural problems between the indigenous and non-indigenous population. These can be solved through the creation of class consciousness.

Question: When we visited the gold mines of the Atlantic Coast, representatives of the unions explained to us how the miners are divided along racial lines. Can you explain to us how this problem affects not just the mines but the whole region of the Atlantic Coast?

Answer: Under Somoza, one's status here was defined by race more than by social class. This is the way Somoza kept things in control.

North Americans were at the top, the people who could do anything. Then came the Chinese, who didn't speak Spanish and were the merchants. Then came the Blacks whose status was lower but who had a special relationship with North Americans because they spoke English and with the Spanish because they learned Spanish quickly. Still lower were the Miskito, and then below the Miskito the Sumu, and lower still the Rama.

Somoza took advantage of all these divisions, pitting the Miskito against the Blacks, the Sumu against the Miskito. The Rama were hardly considered worth worrying about.

The "Spaniards", those who spoke Spanish, were always the ones in government posts, so here the person who speaks

Spanish has come to represent exploitation, humiliation. The "Spaniards" learned English, but they didn't learn Miskito because there was no economic or social reason to learn Miskito. The Blacks already knew English and they learned Spanish too. The Miskito learned English better than Spanish. The Sumu almost never spoke their own language. They spoke Miskito because the Miskito had higher status.

Question: How did this situation come about?

Answer: The Atlantic Coast was colonised by the English, not the Spanish. It was not until 1894 that this region was incorporated into Nicaragua, but even then it was only a legal incorporation. There was no economic relationship, nor social, nor cultural, no recognition of the special character of the Coast.

What happened was that the foreign companies came to exploit the area and they built economic enclaves. They built big company stores and hired lots of people - as laundry women, ironers, wood cutters, drivers and mechanics.

The people of the Coast, because of their political backwardness, did not see how they were being abused by the companies. The truth is that imperialism exploited this area even more cruelly than other areas.

At least in the Pacific Coast they allowed a certain amount of economic development, but here they did nothing. There wasn't even the development of class consciousness here because of the racial divisions.

What they said was - "You're a Sumu, you can't do anything. You can't either, you're a Miskito. You're a Black, maybe you can be a mechanic. You're half white, or half Spanish, maybe you can be a boss."

In this area you can have two workers, one Miskito and the other Spanish-speaking, and they don't think of themselves as workers. They have racial consciousness rather than class consciousness. The companies taught them racial consciousness, although of course they never solved the problems they have as a race.

When people here resisted this domination, they resisted on the basis of being Miskito, or Black, or Rama. Never on the basis of being workers, or being desperately poor.



Farmwork in Tasba Pri, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).

Question: What kinds of problems are these divisions causing today, and to what extent is imperialism able to take advantage of this situation?

Answer: There is an organisation here called MISURASATA (Miskito, Sumu, Rama and Sandinists United). But the top leader of this organisation, whose name is Steadman Fagoth, turns out to have been a police agent for Somoza. He has been leading the organisation to take anti-Government positions, and this was made easier by the isolation of the area.

This is a population that didn't know how to read and write, a population that wasn't organised in any way. And they are upset and don't understand why their leader has been arrested. They don't understand, even though we've tried and tried to explain. We even brought Fagoth here so that he could explain.¹

As revolutionaries, we have to understand the concerns of our people who are ignorant of the facts, or are being tricked. The reactionaries are taking advantage of this situation. Recently articles have been coming out in the Honduran press saying that the Miskito are fleeing to Honduras because they are being repressed, because the Sandinist Armed Forces are after them.

There is also the matter of the radio station called "15 Setiembre". It calls on the people of Nicaragua to follow the example of the struggle of the Miskito people, who are rising up against the Government to win their final liberation. It calls on Miskito to come to Honduras to join the Somozists, to join the ex-National Guard who will liberate them.

1) Note by Intercontinental Press: Since this interview, Fagoth was released from house arrest in Managua and allowed to return to Puerto Cabezas. He had promised to use his influence to persuade Miskito youth who had left for Honduras to return to Nicaragua. Instead Fagoth himself fled to Honduras, where he made broadcasts in Spanish and Miskito on the Somozist's radio station attacking "the Sandino-Communist Government".

Question: What is being done to overcome these problems?

Answer: The organisation of trades unions has helped a bit. The unions are formed by Miskito, Blacks and Spanish-speakers. They elect their own leaders - it's not a question of the FSLN choosing leaders for them. Little by little, this is the starting point for improving things.

We know that overcoming these divisions will take a long time. We need time. The problem is that this is an extremely undeveloped area.

There are no means of communication. There are no sources of permanent work. There are no good schools or good health centres. There are no vocational schools. The illiteracy rate is very high. For example, there were areas where 90% of the population was illiterate. The population is very dispersed.

The economy is basically one of subsistence. People grow food in order to live, in order to eat. This is not because they want it that way - it is because they have no way to sell their products.

In 1980 we went into the countryside. We handed out all kinds of loans to peasants, but we did it in a romantic way, only to find out later that there was no way to get out the products they had grown.

This cost the country millions of córdobas. But as revolutionaries we can't take away a peasant's little plot of land. That would be anti-Sandinist. So we have a real problem.

Question: Do you think that economic development is the most important way to win the confidence of the residents of the Coast?

Answer: It is a many-sided task. A lot of different elements have come into play. The revolutionary war never reached the Atlantic Coast. If you haven't lived through a war, if you

haven't experienced the difficulty of this struggle, then how are you going to know the Revolution except through its accomplishments? And here, frankly, the Revolution has not accomplished great things because we just haven't been able to.

There is a problem with communication. We are trying to finish this landing strip so that big planes can land. We weren't able to finish the Waslala-Siuna road (linking the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts) because the rainy season came early. Water transportation is a problem we haven't been able to resolve.

Here even a little project costs 10 million córdobas. Providing drinking water just for the town of Puerto Cabezas costs 9 million córdobas. Improving the landing strip costs about 8.5 million. Another example is the housing we are building for the miners. We know that these houses won't be fit for living in in five years. But we don't have the resources to build better houses. The ones we are building cost 49 million córdobas. We have to bring the prefabricated houses in by sea, and then by river to Alamikamba, where we take them off the boats and put them on trucks to take them to the respective mines. And we don't really have the trucks and the big boats to transport them. It is an enormous task.

Question: What kind of role can an organisation like MISURASATA play in helping to change this situation? What types of demands does MISURASATA put forward?

Answer: The role it plays depends on what kind of orientation it has. If the organisation had a nationalist orientation, if its purpose was to build a nationalist sentiment or patriotic sentiment, it could help.

In the first place it could unite the three different indigenous groups. Then at least the problem of racial antagonisms among the three groups could be resolved, and it would be easier for them to move forward if they were united.

The problem is that the individuals who are heading the organisation tend to lead it in another direction.

One of the demands MISURASATA puts forward, for example, is that 80% of the Coast's earning should be kept here for the development of the Coast. The truth is that if we limited ourselves to 80% of the Coast's earnings, this region wouldn't be developed in 100 years.

The total earnings of the Atlantic Coast are less than 100 million córdobas a year, because the industry that produces the most is mining, and their goal for 1981 is 70 million córdobas. But in 1981 the Government plans to invest 250 million córdobas in developing the Coast.

Question: But don't people believe that the mines are producing tremendous wealth which is being stolen from the Atlantic Coast by the Pacific region?

Answer: The leaders of MISURASATA certainly know that is not true. They know that the Siuna mine, up to recently, was losing almost two million córdobas a month. Rosita was losing a million or a million and a half. Up to recently Bonanza was the only mine producing a surplus, and the leaders certainly know this.

Part of this problem could be a lack of communication. It is the same problem of a lack of human resources. A person can't be in every different community. And then there has been a language problem, which we are trying to overcome.

Question: Does MISURASATA carry out activities like other mass organisations, organising literacy classes, the militias, community projects, and so forth?

Answer: It has played a role in some areas. It participated in the literacy campaign in Miskito, Sumu and English, for example. On the other hand, in the current vaccination campaign it has done nothing.

Question: What is the history of this organisation?

Answer: There was an organisation called ALPROMISU formed in 1974. In the beginning it was against Somoza, but Somoza was able to buy off some of the leaders, and the organisation almost died. It stopped causing Somoza any problems.

Then with the triumph of the Revolution, this new organisation was born. There was an assembly in which it took the name MISURASATA which gave the false impression that it was going to be a Sandinist organisation. I don't think it is fair to say that it is anti-Sandinist. It is a question of understanding the whole history of this region. The truth is that the people of the Coast are Nicaraguans, and they are oppressed. The Atlantic Coast has always been considered very far away. When I graduated from High School, I thought all there was on the Atlantic Coast was Bluefields. I didn't even know Puerto Cabezas existed, or the mines, or anything, because in school we never learn anything about the Atlantic Coast.

Question: When did you come to this area?

Answer: I've been here since the Revolution, as head of the region on the military level and as a member of the provincial leadership committee of the FSLN.

Question: But you also fought here during the war. People have told us that during the war the Sandinists got a lot of support from the peasantry of the Coast but not from the miners. Can you tell us if that is true?

Answer: It is not right to put it like that. The truth is that we never tried to do political work among the miners because we didn't think we were strong enough. There were only three of us working in the area of the mines, and our most urgent task was to organise a support network among the peasants - a logistical base that would enable us to come in and out safely and bring in arms, because it was a question of arming people for war.

It was a question of giving people military training, organising arms caches, couriers, organising guerilla columns. We couldn't go into a barrio, work alongside the people, have meetings, discuss their problems and their demands, or resolve those problems. All we could do was grab the most active types and recruit them to the FSLN.

Question: How much time did you spend in the mountains?

Answer: I spent a little more than four and a half years in the mountains and a total of seven years in the FSLN before the Revolution.

I was recruited in León, as a student. I grew up on a farm outside of town. Then I spent three years at the National Seminary in Managua, studying to be a priest. I started working in the high-school student movement in 1970, when I was sixteen. Then I worked in the student movement in Managua inside the seminary. Then they threw me out of the seminary.

So when the earthquake came in 1972 I went back to León and started to study at the Instituto Nacional del Occidente. There I began working with the FSLN as well as continuing to work in the student movement. I was doing political work in the student movement and also work in the barrios with the FSLN, so I got burned (known to the police) fast. I was burned at school and burned in the barrio, so I had to go underground.

Mostly because of my physical condition - because I was used to the country and used to walking long distances - they decided I should go directly into the mountains. And I never came out until the victory.

Question: And you lived with the campesinos in the mountains?

Answer: We had some contact with the campesinos in order to get information or food, but we tried to stay off on our own as much as possible to avoid their being victimised.

Sometimes we had to walk half a day or even a whole day to get food when we were camped. It was a very irregular life. Sometimes we camped two or three days. Sometimes we could camp fifteen days, but at other times we couldn't. Sometimes we would come down and carry out two or three military actions and then go back and watch and see how the enemy would react. We were part of what was called the Pablo Ubeda Brigade. It included Comandante Hugo Torres, Comandante William Ramírez, Comandante Francisco Rivera. Who else is still alive? Comandante René Vivas, Comandante of the Revolution Henry Ruiz, and also Comandante of the Revolution Víctor Tirado López. At its biggest it was about 100 people.

The Pablo Ubeda Brigade was almost wiped out in 1977. We were reduced to about eleven people as a result of CONDECA getting involved. People were captured, and there was brutal repression in the area.

I only came out of the mountains once. I got a LANICA plane in Bonanza, along with a nun who was pretending to be my sister. This disguise enabled me to get to Bluefields, where I had to have an X-ray because of a little matter of a bullet. I had been wounded in 1976 and the bullet stayed inside. When the war ended, I stayed for the liberation of the mines and then came here to Puerto Cabezas. When we got to Puerto Cabezas the National Guard had already left.

Question: You helped organise the taking of the mines. What was the reaction of the miners?

Answer: It was positive. Just in Rosita and Bonanza, about 300 young people joined us. That was on May 28, before the victory. And mine workers joined us too. The first response of the miners was to want us to burn down the mines. We said no, we couldn't do that. And we explained why. We told them that they would need a place to work afterwards. And we told them we would win within a month and a half. Then for the first time they believed that victory was close. The workers

here, such as the miners, don't have ideological or political vices. The problem is the one I described to you earlier, the lack of any experience with organisation. There has never been a political life here before, no meetings, no seminars. These things cannot be acquired overnight.

But the miners, for example, have told us about some attempts at sabotage or theft, and they are the ones watching out for these things. In the mines we have had tremendous problems getting spare parts, and the miners themselves have had to make them from the parts that are there. When the gringos left they said that in six months the mines would close for lack of parts. It has been a year and a half and they haven't closed, and they aren't going to close. There have been difficult times. At one point the miners had to make something out of cloth to replace a screen that was broken. They knew that it wouldn't last more than a week, but that was enough time to look for the part. The miners go through the old dumps where the gringos threw things out looking for old parts they can use.

Another example is the participation in the People's Militias. We are at the point of forming a Reserve Battalion in the mines. There are departments where all the workers want to join the militias, although it has not been possible to organise everyone yet. The fact is that we are still fighting a war, and a harder war than before. Before, you could see what imperialism was doing. It was right in front of your eyes and you had a motive for fighting it. Now we have thrown out the foreign companies. But we still have the job of forging a class consciousness in order to take on the huge problems of development which we face.

BROOKLYN RIVERA (MISURASATA):

"GREAT ANXIETY PREVAILS IN THE VILLAGES!"

Source: Interview with Michael Rediske, Puerto Cabezas, July 12, 1981.

On the day after the failure of the last attempt to hold a National MISURASATA Congress, Brooklyn Rivera describes the situation of the organisation and of the indigenous village communities. The climate is set by the fear of the political and military confrontation. Rivera indicates that his "independent line" between Fagoth's alliance with the Somozists on the one hand and an FSLN strategy aimed at military security on the other, has already been almost crushed. He explains that what is wanted is first to carry out discussions in the village communities and then to prepare regional meetings. But after a few weeks it is already apparent that even this modest proposition is not compatible with the real situation. There is no more political freedom of movement for MISURASATA any more.

Question: How do the Miskito perceive the apparently tense atmosphere in the Atlantic Coast?

Answer: Historically, the indigenous population of the zone have lived peacefully, even during the years of the dictatorship. Here the military's presence was minimal, and armed actions did not occur. Lately, the military's presence in the region has greatly increased with activities such as military training; for example, in the base which they maintain here. This, therefore, in addition to the events at Prinzapolka, which resulted in deaths, and that of Alamikamba, has created a climate of tension and insecurity.

There is much fear among the Miskito. Travelling around the communities we see that our brothers are not sleeping peacefully. When a vehicle out of the ordinary passes, the people are scared. Some don't even sleep in their homes but in other places or in the hills where they have shacks.

Question: What is the atmosphere like when a Mískito meets a soldier? Yesterday I was told that the Mískito do not want to sell coconuts to the military. What relationship do they have in everyday life?

Answer: I see that there is no relationship, nor any feeling of brotherhood. The Mískito consider the soldiers to be their enemies and vice versa. The military feel that at any moment there may be an uprising of the people against them. So, there could be a soldier sat over there, and a brother from the community sat nearby him. Even though the soldier is a Mískito, there is no confidence between them, and the two seated men would not even approach one another to talk. This clearly shows that things are not developing well at the level of personal relations.



Mískito and Creole children in Puerto Cabezas, May 1982
(Cordelia Dilg)

Question: Are there still Miskito who are soldiers?

Answer: Yes, there are many Miskito soldiers.

Question: They say that some of them have been stripped of their arms when conflicts have occurred.

Answer: We do not have much accurate information on this. Only rumour has it that they have been disarmed. But we are not sure about this. However, we have been informed about desertions, although we do not know the exact number.

Question: The authority of the leadership of the group to which you belong has been questioned. For example in the meeting held last Friday and attended by Comandante "Rufo". In practice, what authority do you possess when you speak with representatives of the Government?

Answer: We have observed in the past few days that the delegates of the Sandinist Front in this zone have made insinuations questioning the representativeness and authority of ourselves, the leaders of the communities. Although it appears to me that they clearly perceive us to be the most important leaders of the organisation, the situation that is developing on the other side, in Honduras, is causing a good deal of confusion among the people about their leaders. It appears to me, therefore, that they are attempting to take advantage of the situation to undermine the authority and the formal representativeness of ourselves as the leaders of the organisation. Their plan is to utilise all the means open to them to try and render the organisation ineffective. The people themselves are very united. The three ethnic groups are very close. However, at the leadership level we have a problem of orientation. Thus, these men who represent the Sandinist Front in the zone are trying in the first place to erode the moral force and support by the rank-and-file for their leaders. It appears that this is what happened in the assembly of Tuap1.

Question: Yesterday you said in the meeting at Tuapí that a national assembly of MISURASATA could not go ahead for two reasons: i) the fear of the people, and ii) the propaganda made by Fagoth on the other side to impede it. Apart from this did the meeting which did take place have any outcome?

Answer: We recognise that the Tuapí meeting could not be regarded as an assembly of the organisation due to the number of community representatives who attended. Fifteen communities were represented out of a total of 250. However, we could not turn away the people who had travelled from distant communities, as for example the communities from Río Coco, who had begun their journey five days before the event was due to take place. Therefore, with the delegates who attended we spent some time meeting to discuss the situation we are confronting and our immediate tasks. We practically spent a whole day objectively analysing the situation of the communities, their position, their fears, the situation of the leaders, the position of the Government and the policy it is trying to implement in the zone, as well as what is taking place on the other side of the river in Honduras. We noted that the leaders are in a very delicate situation with respect to their physical safety. To develop our activity in the zone implies a lot of risk. The most that we could do was to form a work team at the regional level, to undertake a clarification exercise similar to that done in that meeting, and after to organise regional assemblies in each of the zones. The four regional assemblies are programmed for August and September, one with 82 communities from the Río Coco district, another with 55 communities from the Puerto Cabezas district, a third with 50 communities from Las Minas and Prinzapolka (including the Sumu), and a fourth comprising the 40 communities of the southern zone.

Question: Did the areas of work for each of the commissions come out of this meeting as well?

Answer: The commissions have two lines of action to pursue. One is to report back to the people in the communities, to inform them of what has taken place and to clarify the present situation, the future of the organisation and all that is about to befall us. Secondly, they have to promote assemblies in every community in each of the regions.

Question: Has a position been reached concerning the Government with regard to the counter-revolutionaries on the other side of the river, and the question of Steadman Fagoth? Can you draw up clearly a line of action for your "intermediary" position?

Answer: Due to the absence of many delegates, it was not possible in this meeting to debate resolutions and make decisions. Secondly, the very situation which is so complicated and complex, means that it was very difficult for us to try to decide objectively, "this is our line of action; we favour this; we are against that".

Question: Hazel Lau and yourself have received criticisms for your attitude to the Government. You have been called "officialists", and have received death threats. Would it not have been convenient to have given in that meeting - even though it was not representative - clear support for the organisation's leadership to strengthen its hand vis-à-vis the Government?

Answer: The delegates voiced total support for the leadership. They also argued to promote, at the level of the communities which they represent as well as in neighbouring communities, a policy of total support for the organisation's leaders. We see that until now the situation of the leadership has been quite delicate, due to the fact that our people are very confused about whom to follow. There are those influenced by certain elements who are working at a community level saying that we have sold out to the Government, to the Sandinist Front. They say that the Government has brain-washed

us, and that they cannot follow or believe us. Our people, obviously are confused. We believe that there is still confidence in us at a general level, in spite of the type of propaganda being made by certain elements from over the border who have been sent by the other side with the aim of discrediting us and of controlling the communities completely. On the other hand, we see that the Sandinist Front also has no confidence in us. It has been said, even to my face, that we are working with positions taken from the other side, that we receive instructions from Steadman Fagoth and that we are underhandedly implementing subtle work at the community level to create conditions favourable to the counter-revolution. Although they have no proof, they insinuate this. They believe that the commission which was held on the other side of the border and which I headed, was to reach an agreement with them so that they could continue to work in this zone as well. We are honest and sincere. We are here at the side of the people. We still believe that the solution to the problem is here in Nicaragua, and we still have confidence in our Revolution. That's why we are here. If we were working for the policies of the other side, would we be here risking our skins while they are over the border living peacefully? We feel free of any blemish, that we are doing our utmost to solve the extremely difficult situation that we are confronting. But now, if we are the target of Government doubts, lack of confidence and threats, then we are in a highly delicate situation on all sides. From the other side, comrade Hazel, other leaders and myself have received letters from the counter-revolutionary 15th September Legion, stating that they are going to try us because we have betrayed Fagoth and the Miskito people. At the same time, the Sandinist Front through its representatives here, is attempting not to recognise the leadership; more than this, it is trying to compromise the leaders by claiming that they are involved in counter-revolutionary activities with which we have no involvement

whatsoever. Rather, we are endeavouring to get out of the situation in which our communities find themselves.

DANIEL ORTEGA (FSLN & JGRN):

"WE HAVE TO INTEGRATE THE INDIANS TOTALLY, SO THEY BECOME UNITED WITH THE SANDINIST FRONT"

Source: Barricada, July 20, 1981.

In a passage of his speech at the central rally for the second anniversary of the Revolution, the Co-ordinator of the Government Junta, Daniel Ortega, advocates the "total integration" of the Atlantic Coast so as to prevent its inhabitants from being misused for counter-revolutionary actions.

With respect to the land problem in the Atlantic sector, the Ministry of Agricultural Development MIDA is responsible for the elaboration of concrete proposals that will help us face up to the problems there. We cannot ignore the Atlantic Coast, which is part of our national reality, and part of the historical debt that has been passed on to us. We cannot shut our eyes to the problems that have arisen in the Atlantic. The efforts made by our Revolution to deal with the problems of the Atlantic Coast are public knowledge. We have made great efforts. We have invested large amounts of economic resources there to try and integrate the Atlantic region socially, economically and politically into the rest of Nicaragua. We have confidence in this effort now that the fruits are beginning to be seen.

At the same time, however, we cannot ignore the latent danger that exists, because the Somozists have pin-pointed the Atlantic region as a favourable zone in which to develop counter-revolutionary activity. They know that if they appear this side, if an ex-National Guard tried to gain support in the districts of Managua, Masaya, León or Chinadega, the people would lynch him because they experienced the brutality, the cruelty and the criminality of Somoza's National Guard. But in the Atlantic region this situation does not arise. For

this reason, we are obliged to double our efforts to consciously integrate the Atlantic inhabitants into the revolutionary process. We have to compete for them with the counter-revolution, with those who are conspiring, with those who train themselves in Miami, with those who invade our territory and assassinate Nicaraguan citizens. Clearly, the moral force of the Revolution is great, and with this problem in the Atlantic region the moral force of the Revolution has been strengthened. A case which might appear a little ingenuous, a little crazy, was our treatment of a certain Steadman Fagoth. However our treatment of Fagoth in fact served to expose his real character. Here there were enemies of the Revolution who were keen to convert Steadman Fagoth into a hero, a leader of the Atlantic, and they defended him in a newspaper that we all know, and in declarations by political parties that are known to us all. Let them now defend him, now that he is in Miami. Let them now defend him now that he accompanies Somoza's Guardsmen. Let them have the bravery to defend him. Let them show themselves once and for all for what they really are. The truth of the Revolution was strengthened by this case because they tried to suggest that we did not understand the problem of the Coast, that we accused Fagoth unjustly; that we jailed Fagoth without reason. But we say that the Revolution was strengthened when Fagoth showed his true colours, and we are obliged to continue making efforts to integrate our brothers of the Atlantic, who to a large degree have become integrated in the revolutionary process.

We have to integrate them totally, so that the Miskito of Waspán, Puerto Cabezas, Siúna, Rosita and Bonanza, as well as the Rama, the Sumu, the Blacks from Bluefields, are as they say in Miskito: "asla takanka" - to become united with the Sandinist Front, with the Nicaraguan people and with the Nicaraguan Revolution.

GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION JGRN:

AGRARIAN REFORM LAW - ARTICLE 30

Source: JGRN, Decree No. 782, July 23, 1981.

In: DEPEP (eds.), 1981, Ley de Reforma Agraria, Managua.

In the Agrarian Reform, announced on the second anniversary of the Revolution, there is a "special provision" for the Atlantic Coast, according to which as much land as they need will be made available to the indigenous village communities.

The State shall make available the amount of land necessary in order that the Miskito, Sumu and Rama communities can work them individually or collectively and in order that they benefit from their natural resources, with the aim that their inhabitants can improve their standard of living and contribute to the social and economic development of the Nicaraguan nation.

MISURASATA:

PROPOSAL ON LAND-HOLDING IN THE INDIGENOUS AND CREOLE
COMMUNITIES OF THE ATLANTIC COAST

The land negotiations between MISURASATA and INNICA were to begin under the supervision of the international indigenous councils CORPI and WCIP with the "proposal on land ownership". The "map", that means the land claims of the indigenous movement, was to be handed over to the Government first in the Autumn of 1980 and then in the Spring of 1981. The open conflict about the accusations of separation against MISURASATA made the submission and publication of the document impossible. In this last offer of negotiation by the MISURASATA leadership on July 28, 1981, political arguments are now given preference over legal ones.

I. Our Ethnic Rights.

Historically, ethnic identity precedes the formation and consolidation of natural social classes, and will outlive their dissolution. Thus, the formation of the nation state historically follows the formation of the indigenous nations which today exist in various countries of the world. This leads us categorically to affirm that:

"The right of the indigenous nations over the territory of their communities holds more importance than the right over the territory by the states".

Therefore any sovereign and highly nationalist country should recognise, without any discrimination, the inalienable right of territory belonging to the indigenous nations that are to be found within their respective territories.

The existing indigenous nations of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast descend from the ancient Miskito, Sumu and Rama tribes, and we live on the land we inherited from our ancestors.

We, the Miskito, Sumu and Rama of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, sustain that:

A. We are indigenous

We are indigenous because we are descended from our ancestors, the original inhabitants of the territory which is today known as the Atlantic Coast or the Departamento Zelaya. They were settled in the region before the tenth century prior to the formation of the State in the country. We are indigenous because we inherited from our ancestors our own customs and traditions of a social, economic and cultural nature. These are preserved to the present day, and identify us as people. That is to say, we are the possessors of our own identity, which is an essential defining feature of a people.

To define ourselves as indigenous, we have necessarily to define ourselves as people, because it is the reason for our existence, and we are people because:

1. We possess an inherited territory from generations back for one reason only: because our forefathers, at the cost of their own blood and life, were able to pass on our territory for the benefit of present and future generations.
2. We possess our own language, which we also inherited from our aboriginal ancestors.
3. We possess our own cultural tradition, which is reflected in our music, funeral rites and medical practices.
4. The great majority of our people, by means of their cultural and traditional customs, have demonstrated a profound understanding of their own reality and background, and have become aware of their own historical destiny: self-determination as an irrevocable right.

Internationally, an indigenous population is defined as: "Those peoples whom, residing in countries whose population is comprised of different racial or ethnic groups, descended from the original inhabitants of the area, and whom, as a community or a group, do not control the national government of the country in which they live." The members of a people possess a common origin and identity, usually characterised

by a mutual area, a common language and culture, along with a mutual system of social control. Although one of these characteristics might be lacking in an individual case, the others characterise the person as a member of the ethnic group. Each individual belongs to a people, and although the world is organised in states, it is populated by peoples.

We repeat that in our condition as an indigenous people we are an entity with an ethnic consciousness, inheritors and executors of the cultural values of our millennial peoples, independently of our Nicaraguan citizenship.

B. We sustain our rights as an Indigenous People

1. Self-determination.

"All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and the free pursuance of their economic, social and cultural development".

Our fundamental right to self-determination is an "aboriginal right". The indigenous peoples had this right from the outset, and it has been the dominant immigrant peoples who violated this right, above all where the indigenous peoples were not in circumstances whereby they were able to resist. Because of this, in the light of historical events, we can sustain that the present system of social production in the country is not the product of progress. Rather, it is a consequence of external colonising forces that beat down our aboriginal people, almost completely exterminating them in the Pacific region, and causing them to maintain themselves in the Atlantic region of the country. It is here that the indigenous people today put forward their basic demand: the recognition by the Revolutionary State of their territory.

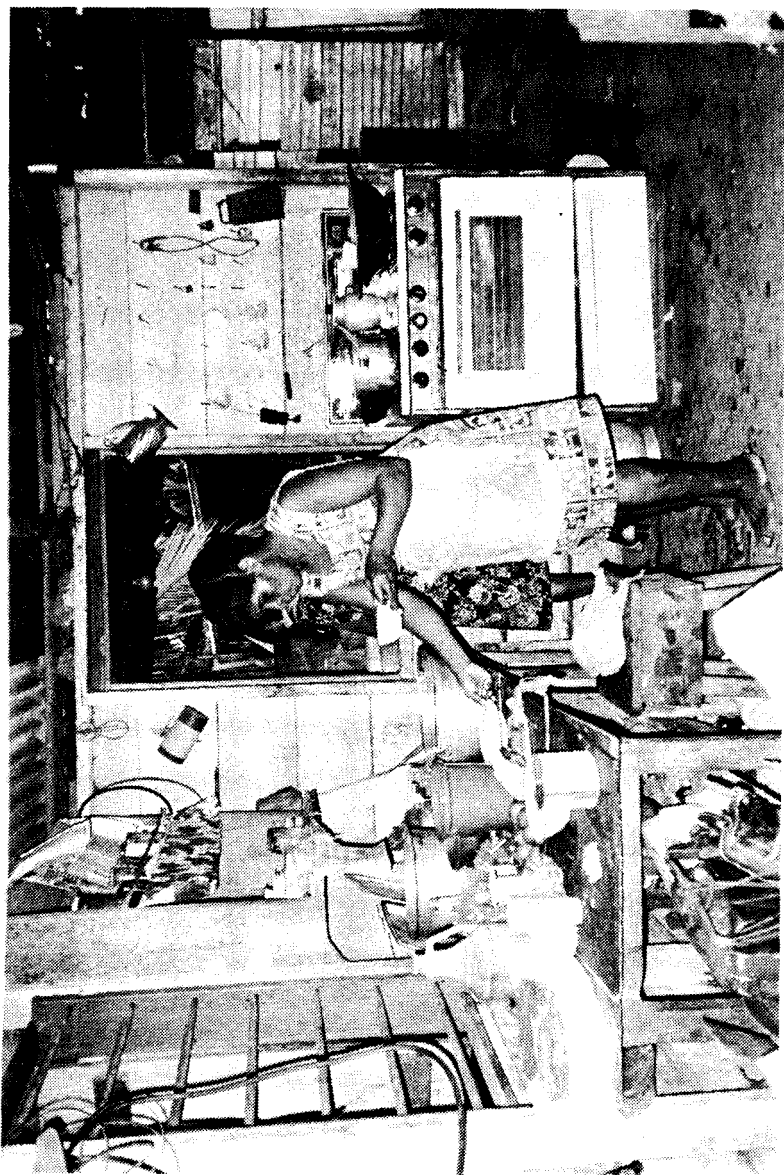
"Each state within which lies an indigenous people, will recognise the population, the territory and the institutions of the indigenous people. Disputes over the recognition of

the population, the territory and the institutions of the indigenous people will initially be decided by the state and the indigenous people. If no agreement is reached, these matters can be decided upon by the Commission of Indian Rights and the Tribunal of Indian Rights, as is subsequently established." (International Agreement on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Part 1, Article 4.)

The concept held by the different indigenous peoples that "Our land is our life", is very true for the Mískito, Sumu and Rama peoples. As peoples, and in order to sustain our life and cultural styles, the right to land and the water of those lands we inhabit, is a vital question. Literally-speaking, our indigenous territory is the basis of our existence as Mískito, Sumu and Rama peoples and an absolute prerequisite for survival. It is the source of natural development for our economy and culture, and is a guarantee for the future indigenous generations. It gives the freedom to elect a Mískito-Sumu-Rama alternative. Our land is the basis for the construction of our future.

We, the aboriginal indigenous peoples Mískito-Sumu-Rama, have the right to the territory of our communities, the right to self-determination and a special, positive treatment, rights which are so obvious such as those of other peoples or nations for the purposes of deciding and regulating their future.

Today, indigenous peoples in all the world are activating a struggle to recuperate their rights and one of the fundamental elements of this is their territory. The recognition of rights in territory implicitly implies a recognition of the right to self-determination (autonomy). For these just demands the gorilla-governments inflict upon indigneous peoples cruel massacres and extermination.



"Miss Mildred" in the kitchen of her Coffee-House in Blue-fields, April 1981 (Klaudine Ohland)

Within this indigenous international movement of the Fourth World, we minority groups affirm the principles of human rights and liberties based in the fundamental principles of the United Nations as well as international conventions and agreements.

Based on the precedent that certain revolutionary governments have recognised the autonomy of minority ethnic groups in their countries, the perspective of the indigenous peoples of Nicaragua within the actual revolutionary process, would herald a historic event without precedent in Latin America. This would be the moment when the Revolutionary Government reacts favourably to the just demands of the indigenous peoples. The Nicaraguan Ambassador to the United Nations, Alejandro Bendaña, stated in the June 1980 Conference of the International Indian Treaty Council that, "The Revolutionary Government of Nicaragua recognises the right of the indigenous people to their autonomy and works to preserve their culture".

The Minister for the Atlantic Coast, Comandante William Ramírez, in a just interpretation of the indigenous people's interests, presided over an agreement on the payment of a percentage for the lumber extracted from the communities. The Governing Junta of National Reconstruction in the assembly held on 19th July, 1981 at the plaza, proposed a decree law that outlines the special treatment that the Government will give to the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast. Under this policy the proposal on indigenous and Creole land-holding will be presented.

2. Our Civil and Political Rights

"The revolutionary State must recognise the right of our indigenous entities to organise and govern themselves according to their cultural, social, economic and political needs, without this leading to a restriction of our civil rights as citizens. This right includes free organisation under the

direction of the authentic leaders and representatives of our Mískito, Sumu and Rama peoples." (MISURASATA: General Directions.)

Internationally it is recognised that it is desirable for indigenous peoples to have a national organisation or national organisations of our own making and structure, independent of the organs of the state. Moreover, when poverty impedes the functioning of an organisation, the state should provide funds for its establishment and maintenance.

3. Our Economic Right

The right of indigenous peoples to land includes the rights to the surface and the subsoil, to inland waters and the coast, as well as the right to appropriate them, even including the coastal economic zones. Thus, the indigenous peoples can freely control the land's riches and natural resources. Under no circumstances can a people be deprived of its means of subsistence.

"Where the indigenous groups have an economy based wholly or partly on hunting, livestock rearing or cultivation, they have the right to the lands and waters that they utilise or which are necessary for these ends. The states are obliged to respect these territories and waters, and not act or authorise acts that could prejudice the use of the said lands and waters". (International Agreement on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Part III, Article 4.)

4. Our Social and Cultural Rights

The cultures of the indigenous peoples are part of humanity's common cultural heritage. The indigenous people's shared beliefs of co-operation and harmonious relations are recognised as a fundamental source of international law.

"The Sandinist State must guarantee our indigenous peoples their right to exist, to live in accordance with our customs and to develop our cultures, since they constitute specific ethnic entities - that is to say, the right to maintain and develop our cultures, languages and traditions... We strive

that our Sandinist country be a truly multi-ethnic state, in which each ethnic group has the right of self-determination and a free choice of social and cultural alternatives."

(MISURASATA: General Directions.)

II. The location of the indigenous and Creole communities of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast.

We define an indigenous community as a human group ethnically and culturally united, who sustain an economy and have rights over lands that they collectively own and work. Throughout the ages they have maintained a communal (collective) style of life in personal and productive relationships, with each family obtaining their needs.

The territory of the communities cannot be alienated and not even divided up among heirs. The lands laid aside for one family cannot be bought or sold.

The indigenous communities of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast are mainly found on the banks of the large rivers and the river mouths along the seaboard. They extend from the Río Coco in the North to the Río Kukra in the South and number approximately 275 communities.

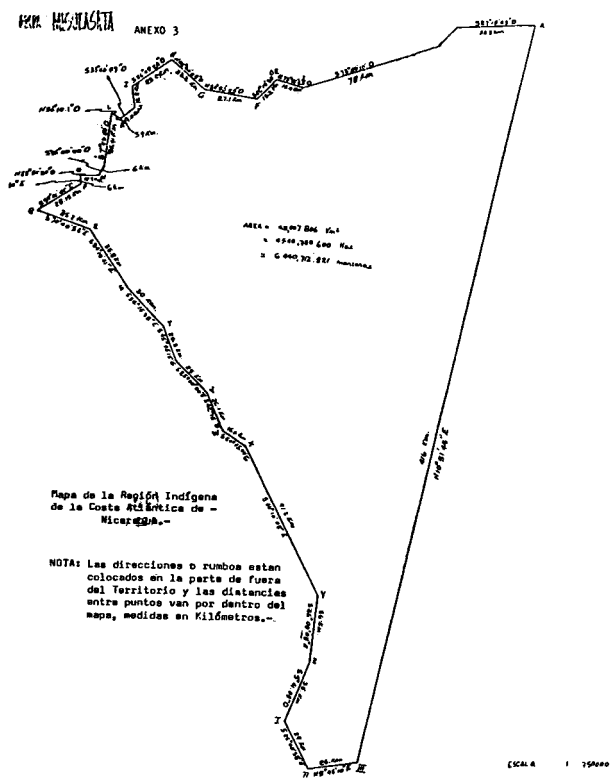
1. Miskito communities: these are found all along the large rivers Coco, Prinzapolka, Grande de Matagalpa, Ulang and their tributaries. They are also sited on the banks of lagoons such as Pearl, Bihuma, Haulover and Pahara, as well as the plain of Puerto Cabezas. They total 200 communities.
2. Sumu communities: these total 32 and are located on the banks of the rivers Waspuk, Bambana, Prinzapolka, Bokay, Coco, Grande and Wawe.
3. Rama communities: these are mainly found by the river Kukra and Rama Cay in Bluefields lagoon. They number five communities (Rama Cay, Cane Creek, Wiring Cay, Diamante and Punte Gorda).
4. Creole communities: these are mainly sited in the coastal zone of Zelaya in the South and Río San Juan. The majority of the population is concentrated in the town of Bluefields, Corn Islands, San Juan del Norte and Pearl Lagoon etc..

Along with this document MISURASATA attaches a map of the lands over which the indigenous and Creole communities exercise a claim (see below). This territory equals 45,407.806km², and it is presented for consideration and legal recognition as indigenous and Creole community lands by the Revolutionary Government.

III. Land-holding in the indigenous and Creole communities of the Atlantic Coast.

1. Introduction

The history of the ignominious European colonisation of



MISURASATA: Indigenous and Creole Territory on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. Source: Carrión: 1982

Pre-Columbian peoples, and the effect that this has exercised on the shaping of Latin American states, could be summarised as the systematic destruction of native cultures and the alienation of their lands by the "conquistadores".

These peoples - including our own - are still the victims of this infamous colonialist policy. They have survived the despoilation and ferocity of capitalist expansion in the modern era thanks to a heroic and sacrificial struggle that they had to wage under unfavourable conditions to defend themselves and live with a modicum of dignity.

As a result, any policy that attempts to compensate for this enormous historical injustice that our ancestors have been victims of, and which we continue to suffer, has to be based on the fundamental premise that the land occupied by our indigenous communities and peoples needs to be respected by governments. All that has been stolen has to be returned. Land is as vital and important to us as the air we breathe. Without land, we Indians cannot live because our lives would no longer have any meaning.

Undertaking a succinct analysis of history and its effects on our peoples, we can highlight the following:

During the long period of Spanish colonialism (1524-1821), the Spanish were never able to incorporate under colonial domination the territories of the indigenous communities and peoples of today's Atlantic Coast. A number of geo-political, economic and military reasons explain this fact, such as: the fierce resistance of the zone's inhabitants, legitimate representatives of the Miskito, Sumu and Rama peoples, who cherished their liberty; the distance and lack of communications between the zone and the coloniser's centres of power; and the poor economic prospects of this zone when compared with others that were much richer etc..

The English

From the second half of the 17th century (1655) the English, driven by political motives, their ambition to control the potential canal area of the Río San Juan and their expansionist goals in the zone, strove to displace the Spanish. They percolated into the life of the Atlantic Coast via commerce. Later the Empire intervened more directly and forcefully in the Atlantic Coast, declaring the whole territory a Protectorate under their jurisdiction and domination. But the English granted political and juridical autonomy to the Moskitia with respect to the central Government of Nicaragua, through the Treaty of Managua of 1860 between the English Crown and the Nicaraguan Government respectively.

National Lands

The military occupation of the Atlantic Coast perpetrated by order of the central Government marks the beginning of a larger escalation in pillage and plunder against our peoples from 1894 with the breaking of the Treaty of 1860 between the English Crown and the Nicaraguan Government.

The Government violated the independence of the Moskitia, refusing to recognise and acting against the right to autonomy for indigenous peoples' territories which the same State had recognised and signed in the aforementioned Treaty.

This is explained by the character of the nascent and mainly coffee-financed liberal agrarian bourgeoisie, headed by President Zelaya, whose project was to create a strong national bourgeoisie which would possess certain autonomy vis-à-vis foreign interests. But at the same time, coffee production in Nicaragua was from the outset closely integrated into the world market. This explains why the British Empire comes to agree with the Altamirano-Harrison Treaty of 1905, through which a change takes place and the right of the communities and indigenous peoples to the land is radically violated. Their rights were reduced to 8 mananzas (5.6 hectares) per family, and they were brought under the jurisdiction of

Anglo-Saxon and Franco-Roman Law, based on the concept of private property in land.

The incorporation of the indigenous territories through the creation of the Departamento Zelaya is nothing more than the annexation of the Moskitia into the national territory, whose principle object was to plunder the most fertile indigenous lands and hand them over to the coffee planters allied to the liberal regime.

The concept of national lands and its impact on our peoples, enters into incompatibility with the age-old traditional right of the indigenous communities and peoples who are the owners of the lands they occupy and inherited from their ancestors. On the other hand, the introduction of a new mode of production and exploitation of natural resources (like the cutting of forests and the indiscriminate exploitation of mines), works against ecological equilibrium, and enters into contradiction with our system of production, which is based on subsistence and uses slash and burn methods that permit the land to lie fallow and rest while another plot is cleared.

In contrast, the capitalist exploitation of commercial crops uses the land until it is worn out, which puts nature itself in danger, i.e. the harmonious ecological equilibrium between live beings such as animals, fish, birds and humans. The indiscriminate exploitation of the land and all the natural resources that it supports, erodes the surface of our ecosystem and results in deserts.

The pillage and despoilation of our territories that began in 1905 was maintained throughout the Somoza era due to the concessions the Government made to foreign companies for the exploitation of the mines and quality lumber found on the indigenous peoples' lands. On top of this, the Atlantic Coast never even received a small percentage of the profits that its natural resources generated. The concessions that the Government made to the foreign companies for the exploitation of

mines and lumber are well known, e.g. The Neptune Gold Mines Company, Standard Oil Company, La Luz Mines Ltd. and INFONAL, which belonged to the Somozist State.

2. The Decree of Exception on the Recuperation of our Lost Territories.

The Decree Law proposed by the Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction to the people massed in the Plaza on 19th July, has a profound revolutionary and just content. To the extent that it will benefit the landless campesinos and the indigenous members of the Atlantic Coast, it is of social, political and economic importance.

This Decree suggests ways in which the indigenous peoples will be given special treatment by the Revolutionary Government. The central points will be the recuperation of lost territories, the payment of tax on lumber and mineral extracted, as well as the marine resources that lie within their properties, so that these funds can be utilised for the benefit of their respective districts.

These will be the basis on which the leaders of MISURASATA will enter into talks and negotiations with the representatives of the Revolutionary Government. To reiterate, its main objective is the recuperation of our alienated territories, which through age-old inheritance belonged to our ancestors and have been stolen from us, as we have already indicated. This age-old right of inheritance and possession of our territories is counter to that of property rights on a community basis, which they have always tried to impose upon us. We are not in agreement with this because it is against our interests and beliefs as peoples who possess their own rights. These rights emanate from our history, traditions and culture, that have been systematically violated by dictatorial regimes allied to foreign interests, who have always constituted a threat to our survival and independent development.

3. On the Exploitation of our Natural Resources

The recognition by the Revolutionary Government of the right held by the indigenous peoples to make their own decisions with regard to the manner and use in which they exploit their natural resources, be it in infrastructural works or development projects, is another fundamental point about which negotiations between the two parties will take place, once the percentage has been fixed, a percentage which both the State and private companies will pay in order to exploit minerals, lumber and maritime resources in our territory. In this sense we consider the following points to be priority issues and ones which correspond to the interests of regional development:

- i) The construction of an internal road network that will link the various communities with one another, and would solve the grave transportation problem that in some cases (such as the Karrisal-Raitf-Bokay route) constitutes a real danger for travellers who navigate the currents of this part of the Río Coco, whose course is almost unnavigable.
- ii) An urgent necessity is the construction of health centres that can provide medical attention to the various communities.
- iii) The installation of food storage facilities for basic grains would solve supply problems and reduce their cost. At present the producers have to sell at unfavourable prices, only to have to buy again (and even import) at exorbitant prices.
- iv) The encouragement of crops that are suited to the zone, such as cocoa, in place of cattle-raising and coffee, which would give better returns and cause less damage to cultivated lands.
- v) The formulation and implementation of primary education in native languages. This is an irrevocable right of our peoples and the provision of which is an obligation of the central Government.

vi) The continuation of the national literacy crusade in native languages is another task for which the Government has to provide the necessary funds, with the aim of re-activating this project which has been interrupted.

FSLN AND GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION JGRN:

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES OF THE SANDINIST POPULAR REVOLUTION
WITH REGARD TO THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES OF THE ATLANTIC COAST

The FSLN and the Government provisionally end the discussion about the land claims of MISURASATA and its claims to autonomy with a "historical Declaration of Principles" on their indigenous policy. The preservation of language, cultural manifestations and communal land ownership is guaranteed. On the other hand, the Government insists on the state control of the natural resources.

TO THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE SPECIFICALLY TO OUR MISKITO, SUMU,
CREOLE AND RAMA BROTHERS

TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD

WHEREAS:

It's the enormous responsibility of the Sandinist Popular Revolution to find a just and revolutionary solution to the legitimate claims and grievances of the indigenous communities of the Atlantic Coast.

WHEREAS:

The aspiration of the indigenous masses of America, traditionally exploited, oppressed and subjected to the rigors of a brutal internal colonialist system, are now aspirations contained within the Sandinist Revolution; aspirations which must not be betrayed.

WHEREAS:

Both internally and externally, imperialism and local counter-revolutionaries are now dedicated to spreading confusion, in order to discredit the Government of National Reconstruction and obstruct its advances, in conjunction with the genuine indigenous representatives, to find solutions to difficult and complex problems, inherited from previous administrations.

THE SANDINIST NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT FSLN AND THE
GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION:

Hereby emit the following Declaration of Principles to serve as guidelines in our dealings with the indigenous minorities of the Atlantic Coast:

1. Nicaragua is but one nation. Territorially and politically, it cannot be dismembered, divided or deprived of its sovereignty and independence. Spanish is the official language of the country.
2. All citizens of Nicaragua, regardless of race or religion, shall enjoy equal rights. The Revolution will actively fight and oppose all forms of racial, linguistic and cultural discrimination in the national territory. We support the fight against racism all over the world.
3. The Government of National Reconstruction, convinced of the need to rescue and nurture the different cultural manifestations present in the national territory will provide the Miskito, Creole, Sumu and Rama communities of the Atlantic Coast with the means that are required to develop and enhance their cultural traditions, including the preservation of their languages.
4. The Sandinist Popular Revolution will guarantee and support the participation of the communities of the Atlantic Coast in all social, economic and political matters which affect them and in those of the country as a whole.
5. The Sandinist Popular Revolution will guarantee but also legalise the ownership of lands on which the communities of the Atlantic Coast have traditionally lived, organised either as communes or co-operatives.
6. The natural resources of our territory are the property of the Nicaraguan people represented by the Revolutionary State. It is the only entity empowered to establish a rational and efficient system of utilisation of the said resources. The Revolutionary State recognises the right of the indigenous communities to receive a portion of the benefits to be derived from the exploitation of forestal resources in the region. These benefits must be invested in programmes of community and municipal development in accordance with national plans.

7. Because the Government of National Reconstruction is convinced that an improvement in the living conditions of the communities of the Atlantic Coast can be brought about only through economic development of the region, it will continue to promote all local and national projects that are necessary for this development.

8. In order to ensure the necessary representation in the social, political and economic institutions existing on the Atlantic Coast, the Sandinist Popular Revolution will support all patterns of organisation that are natural to these communities.

Issued in the city of Managua of Free Nicaragua on the twelfth day of the eighth month of 1981, "Year of DEFENCE AND PRODUCTION".

SANDINIST NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT AND
THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION.

FREE COUNTRY OR DEATH !

WILLIAM RAMIREZ (FSLN):

"WE WANT TO BE AN EXAMPLE IN AMERICA AS TO WHAT A REVOLUTION CAN BE FOR THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES!"

Source: Interview by Michael Rediske with William Ramirez, Minister of the Atlantic Coast, in Managua, August 12, 1981.

In an interview given immediately after the announcement of the Government's Declaration of Principles on their indigenous policy, the Minister for the Atlantic Coast explains the future policy in concrete terms. William Ramirez makes it clear that the single village communities and their representatives should now take the place of MISURASATA as the negotiating partner. The Government wants to talk to them too about the demarcation of the communal land.

Question: Why is the policy of the Sandinist Revolution with regard to the indigenous peoples being so strongly criticised abroad?

Answer: Abroad there is a campaign of disrepute against our country. Our enemies are accusing us of exterminating the Miskito here, that is, that there is a reluctance to hand the land over to them, etc., but they don't mention any of the positive things which our Government has done for the Atlantic Coast population. For example, we have carried out a literacy campaign. For the first time in the history of this country more than 12,000 Nicaraguans have been taught to read and write and nothing has been said about this. The Government have made efforts to improve the telephone service, to take television to the Atlantic Coast and to improve transport - that is the road between Siuna and Waslala. Our mistake has been to remain silent. Our Revolution has not indicated what we are doing for those brothers who were previously marginalised from the rest of society by Somoza's regime, and who for the first time are being integrated.

But there is something more than this. We also want to be in front in this sense. We want to establish a precedent in America that our Revolution hands out just treatment, as individuals, as human beings, as Nicaraguans, to those brothers, to those comrades. So that with this Declaration of Principles we are beginning to establish clearly before our Nicaraguan people, before our indigenous brothers and before the world, the official position of the Revolution. In the second place, they are laying down the basis to begin implementing the handover of titles to the communities where they have historically lived. You will remember that what Somoza's regime did, in the first place, was to refuse them the land titles, and then robbed them of that same land. We, then, are returning this right which the indigenous communities possess. That is going to be the object of a direct negotiation between each community and the Revolutionary Government. We are forming a team of approximately 55 people, which comprises anthropologists, lawyers, economists, indigenists, surveyors, engineers, etc. to go from one community to another in order to legalise, in the briefest space of time, the handing over of the titles to these indigenous brothers. Of course, this is the first stage, because the development of the Atlantic Coast is not a situation which we will see in the short-term. The problem of the Atlantic Coast will be resolved when we develop all the immense potential that there is on the Coast. The standard of living of our coastal people will rise according to the measure in which we put in infrastructure, improve the means of communication, improve the health centres, build more hospitals, roads, schools, etc..

Question: Could you give us an example of the difficulties which have arisen there?



Health Centre in Sumubila, Tasba Pri, some hours after birth.
May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).

Answer: One hospital, that of Bluefields, which was initially budgeted at a cost of 33 million, carries a present cost of 66 millions, making an investment in the Atlantic Coast - we are talking of millions of córdobas. It is not the same as operating in areas of the Pacific region. To give you an idea: the cost of transport from the Pacific is 27 times dearer than bringing goods from the USA directly to the Atlantic Coast.

Question: What problems have been encountered specifically on the Atlantic Coast in relation to its ethnic differences?

Answer: It is the first time that we have elaborated a policy aimed at the indigenous communities. This will help to explain why we have committed errors; because we have done so,

and it should be said. But we have also done other things. That is to say, the action of the Sandinist Front Government in the Atlantic Coast has been more positive than negative. However, only the bad things are noted. Now it is time to recognise what we have achieved, because it is important that our people see the situation clearly; that they realise that our Revolution has its own principles - that they are principles which are inherent to all Nicaraguans, and that all Nicaraguans have the same rights. Our problem is not one of colour, not one of race, nor of languages, but it is a problem of underdevelopment, of backwardness, of exploitation. Here there have been exploited and exploiters. Actually being a Miskito, being a Sumu, a Creole or Rama will remain whether they are exploited or not. Before they were exploited because they were peasants, because they were poor, poor as those of Monibo, poor such as all the Nicaraguan peasants. The Miskito wasn't exploited through the fact of being Miskito, but because he was poor. And they were exploited by the rich, blacks or whites, yellow or Sumu, the colour did not matter. There are some particulars which ought to be recognised. Our country consists of only one nationality. However our brothers here have differing cultural expressions, which we must help them to preserve as cultures; to maintain their language, to develop their own ways of organisation, these must be recognised, as effectively they are being recognised by our Revolutionary Government.

Question: Does there also exist opposition to the policy of land awards which you are drawing up?

Answer: To the people who go around saying that they are going to fight for their land, we put this question: If the Government is willing to hand over the land, with what justification do they degrade us? Yes, there is a previous agreement, for this is the formalisation of an agreement which the National Directive already had, to hand over the land. Yes, we have always said it - why is that discrediting campaign

against the Revolution? There are dozens of Miskito undergoing training in Honduras. They say that they are going to fight for their lands. So we ask: OK, we are going to give them their lands, so why are they going to fight?

Question: What determines the amount of land to be handed over? Will it be calculated by family or by community?

Answer: We are going to give it by community, depending on the needs of each community. Because we have to be sure that the incomes obtained by the renting of land or by the sale of wood are going to remain within the community. Because within the indigenous people's own organisational forms, cases have arisen of much opportunism by many of their leaders, who have grabbed the money, and it is not known what was done with it. So the Miskito has always been exploited. There haven't been any health centres, nor clinics, there has been nothing. What is it that we need? To guarantee that the incomes that they obtain will be invested for the development of those same communities.

Question: What will happen to the subsistence economy which they have? How will you take into account the necessity of leaving the land fallow, in determining the quantity of land designated?

Answer: It is necessary to do a geological study, a study of the soil, to be able to determine how long a piece of land takes to prepare for sowing, for example, in the Siúna area, a little further towards the Río Coco, there the peasant can cultivate the soil for three consecutive years. So we have to bear in mind that one has to leave some of the soil lying fallow and in other parts continue to sow. The same applies to the forests, the same with everything that has a part in the development of the community.

Question: The Declaration of Principles which has just been put forward by the Government speaks of the organisation of the indigenous people at a community level. What possibilities

are there for an organisation at the national level such as MISURASATA is or was?

Answer: As they wish to do it. If that is the result of a democratic practice where the communities decide who their leaders are, and how they are going to be organised, we will recognise it in principle. Because we believe that they have that right. We are not giving anything, we are not doing them a favour; we are recognising a right which they possess.

Question: Last year negotiations were spoken of which you were going to set up between MISURASATA and the Government to sort out the land question. These negotiations never began. Will the Agrarian Reform now replace these direct negotiations?

Answer: Yes, because the majority of the leaders of MISURASATA went with Fagoth. So with whom do we now talk? We must speak directly with the communities. Why? Because we had made the mistake of using intermediaries who had their own political interests.

Question: Who were they?

Answer: Fagoth, for example, and those who did not really represent the interests of the community. What interested him more was to serve Somoza's regime, as is in fact being demonstrated. So what are we going to do ourselves? We are going to go directly to the grass roots, to talk with the coastal people, the Miskito people, and not to go looking for intermediaries. In this way we are going to discover what it is that they feel, what they want, and we will give our point of view. That appears to me to be the most sensible thing.

Question: There are other problems which are more directly political. There are still two indigenous men in prison due to the events at Prinzapolka, and the Miskito are demanding their release. Do you think that the problems over the land question can be resolved without having touched on these political problems?

Answer: I don't think so. I have already said that we have made mistakes, and that the answer to the problems of the Atlantic Coast is not a unilateral answer, that is, in one direction only. Instead it has to be an integral solution. However for this, there must be discipline. Because our country is so poor that we cannot deal with all the problems at the same time. However there are some problems which we are indeed able to deal with. So, to return trust to the Miskito communities, let them name their own leaders, let us be brothers to them as we wish them to be brothers to us, let us be brothers together. Because in fact, they do bear a little distrust towards us. That is to say, we want to set an example in America, by making a revolution for the indigenous peoples of our Fatherland.

Question: Do you think that the conditions exist at the moment whereby this democratic process is possible, in that the communities name their representatives before the Government? I have the impression that there still exists too much distrust and fear of war.

Answer: I could not give you an objective opinion, because this depends on them, not on us. We have the political will to resolve the problem. How much time will it take us? We do not know. But we are going to resolve it. We are sufficiently educated to be patient. They taught us that in the Sandinist Front. When they sent us to ambush the police we were there for hours and hours and hours, and we spent years and years and years fighting. We are already trained for that. So, if we have had the patience to overthrow the Somoza regime, how are we not going to have the patience to speak with our brothers?

Question: What is happening now to MISURASATA?

Answer: MISURASATA does not exist here at the present time, because the masses are not organised. We don't have anyone with whom to discuss things. And since this process is of

interest to ourselves and also of interest to our indigenous brothers, indeed to all Nicaraguans, we have to throw ourselves forward, one way or another. And we have seen that the best way is to go and talk directly with the grass roots, and thus to enter into a period of harmony, of normalisation in such a way that this process continues. I can't say whether it will take one year or five. But we are going to do it.

Question: However, there are still some leaders of MISURASATA who still collaborate in the development of the Atlantic Coast. What is their actual position now?

Answer: Actually, I spoke to them about 15 days ago. But since then they have really dedicated themselves to their own personal activities.

Question: They have handed over a map of the lands which they claim for themselves, isn't that so?

Answer: Officially we are not aware of this.

Question: And there is talk of a study.

Answer: They do have a study. That which they gave us was a condensed version, but they have not handed over the study.

TOMAS BERGE (FSLN):

"IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO FIGHT AGAINST BACKWARDNESS"

Source: Por Esto, No. 8. August 20, 1981. Interview by Tatiana Coll.

In an interview with a left-wing Mexican news magazine, the Minister of the Interior and co-founder of the FSLN gives examples of how the indigenous population of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast has been manipulated by superstition, religious sects and rumours directed against the Revolution.

Question: When we speak of the problems generated by the reactionaries and of the support that they found within certain social groups, we think of the Atlantic Coast and of the way in which the reactionary press has utilised, including on an international scale, certain problems that have occurred there - the rejection of the internationalist doctors, the manipulation of ethnic groups, such as the Miskito, for separatist ends, etc.- making those situations appear as though they were representative of the whole country.

Answer: We are going to point out a few aspects, such as, for example, the school teachers and literacy teachers. They were never rejected. Rather, this occurred with the doctors who were rejected by a sector of the population due to ancestral prejudices. Because unfortunately, the Atlantic Coast is an extremely backward sector of our population. It's inhabitants believe in witchcraft, and so there, where there were never doctors beforehand, internationalist doctors arrive, not only Cubans, but also Mexicans, Spanish, and we have sent some Nicaraguan doctors. It must be stressed that there has never been a doctor there. So it's not exactly about a political problem. Sure, the enemy tries to manipulate that situation with a political nuance, and say that the Cubans come to kill the children. The primitive population, very backward, full

of prejudices, feel that their witches are being displaced by the white witches, as they call the doctors.

However, we said, well, if they do not want the doctors we will bring them back. A good proportion of the population, who had already been attended by the doctors, opposed this. The doctors stayed. They are still there.



Tomás Borge, January 1980 (Cordelia Dilg).

The situation of the Atlantic Coast is very complex because it was abandoned for centuries. During one period it was occupied by the English. The different religious sects which exist have a lot of influence on the conduct of the indigenous population. Then the indigenous population start to invent countless myths, and without being absolutely sure who is manipulating them, they begin to put forward a series of religious questions.

For example, they repeat what these sects tell them, that when they reach the age of 30 the Revolution is going to shoot them, and they believe it. They tell them that the doctor who is attending a child is not really attending him, but that really he is giving him poison so that he will die in six months. And indeed, often children arrive in such a state of malnourishment that in spite of medical care, they do die. So they say: it's the doctor who killed him.

Furthermore, there has appeared a whole series of elements who sell junk merchandise whom we have proved are not really merchants but agents who spread rumours among the people.

Moreover, many inhabitants of this zone were fleeing from a repression which didn't exist, but was falsely fabricated; and they went to Honduras. We begin to work, to fight because they will return, because they are our compatriots, our Nicaraguan brothers; they were already returning when the newspaper La Prensa brought out a headline to the effect that all those who were returning were being punished... and they all rushed back to Honduras.

It is very difficult to fight against backwardness, and this is an extremely backward zone. The Revolution is making extraordinary efforts: for the first time in history, and in less than two years, they have made them a road which communicates them with the rest of the country. If you look at a map, you will notice that practically-speaking it is another

country, another geography, other customs. They don't speak Spanish there, but Miskito or English. There were always margined. They were always a kind of colony of the Pacific region. We are decolonising them. So we are taking roads to them, telephones, medical care, literacy, television; for the first time in their lives they have seen a television image; but two years is a very short time in which to overcome the prejudices, the religious fanaticism, the ignorance, the apathy of centuries. They feel as though they have lived with in a separate civilisation. So, the Revolution arrives and they believe that it is attacking their civilisation; they are afraid that we will put an end to their national traditions. Of course, the Revolution has no intention of doing this, rather the contrary: in conserving their language and also incorporating Spanish, certainly; to preserve their songs, their dances, their traditions. It is logical that the Revolution seeks to preserve it as a cultural wealth for the country. But they are fearful that the Revolution attacks their own backward civil life and they adopt a defensive attitude. But it has advanced a lot; and things have changed, have improved; and the problems are not so acute, because we have been very careful and also very generous, because they have murdered our people, and we have pardoned those same assassins, having kept in mind the origin of the whole situation, of the whole problem.

At the present time there are great projects in effect on the Atlantic Coast. Great projects for lumber, for the mines, agricultural production, cattle, hydroelectric energy, and so on; so that all in all this is a transitory problem, although I'm not saying it's an easy one, but every day the problems are going to be less controversial and they are going to go on being resolved.

WILLIAM RAMIREZ (FSLN):

MISURASATA: AN ORGANISATION THAT DISAPPEARS

Source: Barricada, August 30, 1981. Interview by Mario F. Espinoza.

Based on a conversation with the Minister for the Atlantic Coast, William Ramírez, this article from the state news agency ANN interprets the lessons that the Government has learnt and the consequences it has drawn from the conflict with MISURASATA. According to the article, the main mistake was to have accepted this organisation as an interlocutor, since it does not represent the indigenous people and their interests but allows itself to be manipulated by the counter-revolution through Steadman Fagoth.

"From the practical point of view, MISURASATA already does not exist. The majority of their leaders are in Honduras, and from there are trying to return to the status quo that appertained prior to 19 July 1979"

The words of guerilla Comandante William Ramírez sound like a 'requiem' for the organisation that purports to represent the Miskito, Sumu and Rama indigenous communities that inhabit Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, a region of 66,542km² or equivalent to 56.2% of the national territory.

From what has been affirmed by the Minister of the Atlantic Coast, essentially two conclusions can be drawn: i) the connotation that the organisation MISURASATA has lost its reason for existence, and ii) that its function as an intermediary body between the Sandinist Government and the ethnic groups has ended.

The former implies a recognition of the error committed by the Government and the Sandinist Front in dealing with an organisation that did not live up to revolutionary expectations. This is modestly recognised by Comandante Ramírez:

"Our main error was to treat the indigenous groups as if they were equal groups. Experience has made us see that from the ethnic point of view the interests of the Mískito, of the Sumu and of the Rama are different. They are even antagonistic, given that historically the Sumu and Mískito have been enemies.

"Similar antagonisms exist between the Mískito and the Creoles, and the truth is that the Mískito have had a reputation for being aggressive. Remember that it was they who allied with the English to invade the Pacific region, and it was they who enslaved the Sumu, or rather, they sold them into slavery.

"In my opinion, our second error was to have utilised intermediaries in our communication with indigenous peoples. We thought that through dealing with an organisation that would represent all the ethnic groups, we would go along the right path. But we were mistaken. MISURASATA does not correspond to the interests of the indigenous groups, and thus we saw how Steadman Fagoth, who previously worked for the enemy, already logically adopted a negative position vis-à-vis the Revolution.

"Thus the contradiction has arisen whereby, while in the world and especially in Latin America, the indigenous movements struggle against dictatorships and maintain a progressive attitude, Fagoth is leading his followers towards a reactionary position, towards the Right."

During his self-criticism, the Minister of the Atlantic Coast mentioned other mistakes, such as the lack of publicity about progressive works that the Revolution has undertaken in the region. This has produced a double effect: on the one hand a false image that nothing has been done for the indigenous peoples has been created in the international sphere, while on the other hand, a lack of knowledge among the indigenous peoples about the Revolution's work.

He then proceeded to enumerate the achievements that came into his head: the purchase of six boats to improve transport, the 1980 national literacy campaign and the campaign in indigenous languages for the indigenous peoples of the region, the improvements made in telephone and audio-visual communications; and the efforts made to construct the Waslala-Siuna road.

Comandante Ramírez continued: "It is useful to note another error. That is to have begun these tasks without fully understanding the Atlantic zone. We guessed the problems, we perceived them, we knew that we had to raise the nationalist spirit of the region, but we did not have a proper knowledge of the true situation there.

In this way we started to lay down the social political and economic bases of development in the Coast. This led us to undertake positive actions, but also to commit errors when dealing with the population. Up to now, I feel that we have begun to find the right path and proceed in the right direction."

For Comandante Ramírez, the outlined amendments that have been made to past errors in understanding, have given birth today not only to a deep knowledge of the region's reality and its inhabitants, but also of the experiences lived there during the two years of the Revolution's existence.

"Now we are doing what we should have done earlier. We are speaking directly with the grass roots, with the people. MISURASATA has ceased to exist as an intermediary because it never responded to the legitimate interests of the indigenous peoples. Their leaders, who were badly advised by Fagoth, were sabotaging the process and acting for the counter-revolution.

"Today, through action, we are trying to be in the vanguard in our treatment of the indigenous people and in the forwarding of their demands. In this field we wish to be an example for the rest of Latin America and the USA itself as to how these brothers ought to be respected and the form that a truly reclaimed integration should take.

"Reality has also served as a school for the ethnic groups. Thus, for example, with the Declaration of Principles issued by the Sandinist Front and the Government Junta last August 12, which revealed the legitimate right of the Atlantic Coast communities to develop while maintaining respect for their traditions and equal conditions with all other Nicaraguans, many things have been clarified for the indigenous.

"On the one hand the demands made by Fagoth and his followers are already not justified. It has become clear that today they are part of a counter-revolutionary plan, which led by Somoza's ex-National Guard, is trying to install in power that decrepid power which granted them bribes and sinecures.

"On the other hand, the leaders of MISURASATA who have remained in the country do not have a following among the ordinary people. Thus the Sumu have withdrawn from MISURASATA because, they argued, that organisation never represented or worked for their legitimate interests", argued Comandante Ramírez.

What has now happened to the Miskito who, following Fagoth's instructions, are conspiring from Honduras?

Comandante Ramírez estimates that in our northern neighbour there are actually between 1,200 and 1,500 Miskito but not all of them have joined Fagoth's counter-revolutionary plot.

"Some of these Miskito have returned under their own steam, stating that great difficulties exist for leaving Honduras. The very leaders of MISURASATA are pressurising these indigenous people so that they won't return, and are threatening them if they don't enter into the counter-revolutionaries' training camps."

We asked: How was the Declaration of Principles by the FSLN and the JGRN received in the indigenous communities?

"With enthusiasm. They already know of it. The text has already been translated into Miskito and Creole-English. I had to speak directly to the leaders of 32 Sumu communities. We have discussed it and we are in agreement. They are content because it is recognising what they demand. Now they understand that Fagoth tricked them and they have confidence in the positive programmes that the FSLN is undertaking throughout the whole region."

LUIS CARRION (FSLN):

"OUR CHALLENGE IS TO INTEGRATE WITHOUT DESTROYING"

Source: Barricada, September 2, 1981. Interview by Mario F: Espinoza.

The representative of the FSLN for the Atlantic Coast, Comandante Luis Carrión, comments on the Declaration of Principles of August 1981 in an interview with ANN. He goes above all into the cultural consequences for the indigenous minorities and defines the overcoming of their historical marginalisation as the aim of the revolutionary policy. This interview was the subject of a controversial discussion at the second UN Indigenous Conference in September 1981 in Geneva.

"Nicaragua is the only country in the Americas which respects Indian human rights" stated Klatter Feather at the United Nations last August 16. Klatter is a representative of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), which represents the interests of 80 million indigenous people in the American continent. To back up his statement, Klatter cited the Declaration of Principles which was issued last August 12 by Nicaragua's Revolutionary Government, in which the rights of the ethnic groups inhabiting Nicaragua's Atlantic region to participate in all the social, political and economic affairs of this nation, was guaranteed.

A thorough analysis of the significance of the Declaration of Principles for the indigenous communities of the Atlantic Coast was made for ANN by the member of the National Committee of the Sandinist Front and Vice-Minister of the Interior, Comandante of the Revolution, Luis Carrión, who reaffirming what Klatter had said, indicated that the document in question was aimed, not simply to the people of Nicaragua but to all the peoples of the world.

"In this document an attempt is made to define the Government's general policy in its treatment of the problem of the indigenous minorities in the Atlantic Coast, a subject which is very complex and difficult, one that contains deep historical roots. Due to this, it is not possible to conduct oneself in a captious or spontaneous fashion, but in a coherent and integrated manner based on principles. From what we know, up to now no country in Latin America has issued a public declaration of this nature. It represents a commitment that the Sandinist Government makes to the world to find a just solution to the demands of the indigenous minorities."

For Comandante Carrión, the eight points in the Declaration reflect an attempt to realise the legitimate demands of the indigenous peoples, while simultaneously strengthening the principle of territorial and political integrity of the nation. It rejects any cessionist or separatist aim that might arise, framing the whole problem of indigenous peoples within the wider concept of national unity.

"In the first place it is established in the document that the Sandinist Revolution has no room for racial, religious or cultural discrimination in any form, and that we oppose these things not only in Nicaragua but in any part of the world", pointed out Comandante Carrión with vehemence.

It was also indicated that we will support the recovery of the indigenous people's cultural traditions, recognising their right to preserve their language and customs, notwithstanding that Spanish is the only official language of Nicaragua.

Also there is a recognition of the right which they have to participate in all aspects of life in the country, in accordance with those means of organisation which they know and prefer to practice.

"For example, we consider that we should not impose Municipal Juntas upon them, as a form of participation, given that they have community councils. Thus we should recognise this form and incorporate it in the juridicial and political superstructure of the new state, without imposing upon them organisational structures.

"We do not recognise as valid the desire to constitute a separate nation, as is the wish of some pseudo-leaders of the communities, who claim that we hand over a piece of the country totalling 45,000 km².

"We recognise the right of every community to possess land, but with respect to the region's natural resources, we maintain that only the state really has the capacity to exploit them rationally and efficiently. On the question of lumber resources we believe that the communities have a legitimate right to receive part of the profits, given that the forestry resources are situated on community lands. In the raising of living conditions, health, education and housing, etc. it establishes that this ought to occur as a result of the region's economic development. We sustain this because there are those who wish to maintain the primitive forms of exploitation as if they made up part of the idiosyncrasy of the indigenous peoples. And we have seen documents which practically eulogise backwardness and under-development at the same time demands are set out for hospitals, schools etc., we set out plans that the possibility of getting these benefits can only be given on the basis of the economic development of the region which will be manifest in long, medium and short term projects."

For Carrión, the Declaration of Principles signifies a landmark in the struggle of the indigenous peoples for their demands. It brings to mind the discriminatory treatment that

they receive in other countries. He referred to the United States, where the indigenous peoples were physically destroyed, robbed of their resources and reduced to living in so-called "reservations".

"These reservations, I would say, are zoological given that there the indigenous peoples have remained as folkloric objects, which really constitutes a deeper discrimination.

"This is the great challenge that we raise and try to resolve by the Declaration: to integrate without destroying, to integrate with respect, to integrate preserving the positive and unique contributions of these minorities."

For Comandante Carrión, the Declaration has already become a reference point for revolutionary tasks. He explained how the document establishes the special features that the Agrarian Reform is to have in the region, the cultural policy implemented by the Ministry of Education among the ethnic groups, and finally the constant revision of all general and ministerial plans in order to achieve the development of the Atlantic Coast.

Why is it important to make the Declaration in these very critical moments?

"It is necessary because there are counter-revolutionary elements, indigenous as well as non-indigenous people, and imperialism itself, who are carrying out an immense campaign to discredit the Revolutionary Government, to confuse the indigenous groups and the international community.

"This Declaration is our reply to the lies and misinformation. With it we hit back at those who propose a separatist thesis. Here I refer to Steadman Fagoth and his group, who propagate a cessionist policy that is anti-national and constitutes treason against the Fatherland. On the other hand, the Declaration is the product of months of work into the socio-economic reality and the close contact which we had

with this reality. As a result of this, we saw the need not just to limit our links on the level of the MISURASATA leadership, which in any case is much weakened by the treason of Fagoth, but to put ourselves in contact with the people themselves. We have consulted and conversed a lot with the indigenous base.

"What remains clear is that this Declaration of Principles does not concede all that our brothers of the Coast are asking for, because some of these things are impossible at the moment, while others will always be impossible. For example there were claims for all the natural resources of the subsoil, the continental shelf, and including airspace which would be for the benefit of the ethnic groups, and clearly this is impossible to concede.

"Another claim, which was put forward by Fagoth, proposed to declare Miskito as the second official language of Nicaragua. This is also impossible because the Miskito language is very limited and does not allow for the intellectual and cultural development of people, and within this, there is still the matter under debate as to whether it be treated as a language or a dialect.

"So then, in our Declaration of Principles we gather together all that which can be justly handed over to the indigenous groups and proceed to remedy the historical marginalisation to which they were submitted and to integrate them in a manner cognizant of the development of our revolutionary process", Comandante Carrión concluded.

BROOKLYN RIVERA (MISURASATA):

PROBLEMS OF THE INDIANS WITH THE SANDINIST REVOLUTION

This letter of September 1981 from the MISURASATA leadership in exile in Honduras is addressed "to the indigenous peoples of the whole world, to the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), to the Regional Council of Indigenous Peoples (CORPI) and to the international organisations for the support of indigenous peoples". The former co-ordinator of MISURASATA draws a picture here of the history of the Miskito struggle for self-determination and autonomy and, in the final paragraphs, makes a sharp attack on the indigenous policy of the FSLN.

Indigenous Brothers:

The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua - ancient "Moskitia Reservation" and the "Departamento Zelaya" from the year 1894 - is a vast territorial area covering almost half the country (59,094 km²), and is inhabited by the ethnic descendents of the autochthonous tribes: Miskito, Sumu and Rama; as well as by the immigrant groups: Creoles (Afro-Americans) and Mestizos (Ladinos). The population of the region, which reaches 275,000 inhabitants, is distributed in the following manner: Miskito 55%, Creoles 22.5%, Mestizos 15% and Sumu 5%. The historical development of this region is totally different from the rest of the regions which comprise Nicaragua, and to the present day its peoples conform to a cultural, socio-economic and ideological reality in ways and modes of living which make them stand out from the rest of the country.

Despite the fact that in 1502 Colombus arrived at the Atlantic Coast in the zone of Cape Gracias a Dios, thus discovering the coastal area, the Spaniards could not subsequently subdue and colonise the region, as they did in the Pacific zone of the country. This was due to the natives, led by the Miskito (the greater part of the population), who used their indefatigable fighting spirit, their detailed knowledge and wide control of the zone, as well as their love for liberty

and their territory, to convert the zone into a stronghold of resistance and fierce struggle against the enslaving and colonialist pretentions of Spain at that time. Nevertheless, between 1612 and 1630 a new era in the region's history began, with the establishment of cordial commercial relations between English pirates and a sector of the Miskito population. This enabled a regular exchange of strategically important goods between the two groups. After 1655 with the capture of Jamaica by the English, this commercial alliance with the Miskito developed into a political alliance. This new type of



In Tasba Pri, May 1982 (Cordelia Dilg)

relationship brought a transformation in indigenous socio-cultural and political structures in the region. A continuous inter-breeding began between the European pirates, a sector of the Mískito population and the black slaves introduced by the English. Former subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing and agriculture were replaced by commercial activities. Moreover, in 1687 the tribal chief, Jeremy I was crowned in Jamaica as the first king of the Mískito, thus establishing an indigenous monarchy that was to last for more than two centuries with the reign of fifteen kings under the protectorship of England.

In 1860, England, under pressure from the North Americans who gave support to Nicaragua based on self-interest, renounced their protectorate of Moskitia which then became governed under the nominal jurisdiction of Nicaragua as a reservation. Thus the freedom of self-government was established for the Mískito and all the other residents within the reservation.

In 1894, under the Liberal Government of J.S. Zelaya, Bluefields, the capital of the reservation, came under military occupation. The authority of the Mískito was destroyed and this illegal act was presented at a national level as the "Reincorporation of Moskitia". A convention was celebrated on December 4 of the same year by the community chiefs brought by soldiers to Bluefields. The entertainment continued there over a period of several days, with great quantities of liquor, and they forced the indigenous chiefs to sign the misnamed "Charter of Adherence" of Moskitia to Nicaragua. The region was baptised, almost as a mockery to the Mískito, as the "Departamento Zelaya" in honour of the President.

From this time onwards, none of the Liberal-Conservative governments which governed Nicaragua for three-quarters of a century concerned themselves with the well-being of the inhabitants of this region of the country. On the contrary, they subjected the indigenous peoples to a situation of being

forgotten, of marginalisation and socially inhuman exploitation. These oligarchic and racist governments were only concerned with the irrational exploitation of the natural resources of the region. This was conducted through the multinational mining, fishing, banana and lumber companies which had begun to operate in the region at the same time as the "Reincorporation" took place.

During the 45 years of Somozist dictatorship in Nicaragua the situation of oppression, internal colonialism, exploitation and ethnocide of our indigenous peoples was severely worsened, spreading misery, ignorance and pain over the whole region. In the same way, the exploitation and extraction of the region's wealth was increased tremendously. On the other hand, the Somoza Government did not allow any organisational work by the indigenous population outside Somozist political influence. Any attempt at independent work of a socio-ethnic nature in the region was slandered with accusations of separatism and racism to justify the repression and murder of their leaders.

With the triumph of the Sandinist Revolution, these forgotten and exploited indigenous peoples put their hope and trust in the revolutionary process, the beginning of which would open a better future for our indigenous Nicaraguan brothers. However, during the first attempts to strongly organise the indigenous peoples to achieve their direct and egalitarian participation with the other sectors of the country in the revolutionary process, promoting and defending them as native peoples and Nicaraguan citizens, we indigenous leaders sadly experienced past reality. The cadres of the FSLN in the region, without knowing the social, cultural and political reality of the zone, but only the reactionary and opportunist factions (therefore Somozist), accused our indigenous brothers, as in the past, of separatism and racism. Some of the leaders were arrested and others, such as Lister Athars, were assassinated by the Sandinist soldiers.

But even with the obstruction and threats of the Sandinist authorities, which did not permit the indigenous peoples to organise their own non-governmental movement, our communities organised MISURASATA: Miskitu Sumu Rama Sandanista Asla Tananka, that is the Alliance of Miskito, Sumu and Rama with the Sandinists. Within the first four months of the Revolution MISURASATA was founded in an assembly of more than 700 community delegates from the whole Atlantic region in November 1979. Also present was the current Co-ordinator of the Government Junta and member of the National Committee of the FSLN, Comandante Daniel Ortega. In this assembly Comandante Ortega, after several brazen attempts to destroy the existing indigenous organisation (ALPROMISU), such as not permitting the few indigenous academics to speak and trying to separate the Sumu brothers from ALPROMISU, proposed to the assembly the inclusion of the term "Sandinist" in the change of name of the organisation, endeavouring to officialise the indigenous movement. The brother delegates from the communities accepted this term, considering that within the revolutionary process their aspirations for self-determination, self-government, respect for their lands and cultural identity, the right to be educated in the native languages and taking advantage of their territorial wealth which had been negated for centuries, should all be taken into consideration.

However, with the passage of time our indigenous brothers were, little by little, waking up to a sad reality and becoming disappointed in their hopes which they had placed in the revolutionary process. More than two years after the so-called "Sandinist Revolution" in Nicaragua, it could be objectively affirmed that on the Atlantic Coast of the country there has not been a revolution but racist aggression by the Sandinists. It definitely could not be called a revolution of social justice, rather a process of hatred, destabilisation and social repression. During the whole of this period our communities have lived through the

greatest contempt, violence, humiliation and hunger in their history, having had their way of life attacked, their organisation, traditions and their human rights all threatened in a destructive fashion. Despite the Sandinists having proclaimed their recognition of, and support for, MISURASATA, in practice they always intended destruction, forcibly introducing their own organisations into the communities, such as CDS, ATC, JS 19, AMNLAE etc.. These the communities always rejected, considering them to be foreign to their own indigenous reality and interests. Seeing that the people at the grass roots level did not respond to their totalitarian pretensions, but rather were creating their own youth and women's organisations, they put pressure on MISURASATA as mother organisation to force its bases to stop forming parallel organisations, so that all the members of the MISURASATA Youth JM would integrate into the ranks of the Sandinist Youth JS 19, and for the indigenous sisters to integrate with AMNLAE. A worse affrontary went as far as to prohibit the indigenous people joining organisations belonging to MISURASATA, that is, they demanded that the people renounce their ethnic identity. For example, if an indigenous youth entered the ranks of the army, he was indoctrinated to hate the indigenous organisation, and if he retained his sympathy for MISURASATA he was simply thrown into prison or expelled from the army.

The Sandinist Government never had good intentions towards MISURASATA, and therefore never permitted it to occupy a position corresponding to an indigenous movement in the Revolution, but always marginalised it from all aspects of national life. It classified MISURASATA as an organisation with no more than a social and transitory character, comparing it to their CDS or ATC at a regional level. They thus devalued its indigenous character and struggle, as well as its significance for the people. It is true that MISURASATA occupied a seat on the State Council, but it is also true that any organisation without any base whatsoever occupied

other seats, and that the Sandinist's organisations had up to nine places in this Council. We can objectively affirm that the Sandinists, due to their totalitarian ideology, their philosophy of hatred and revenge, their dogmatism in rejecting the indigenous problem (the ethnic question), and their excessive ambition for absolute power, have developed with their revolution one set of politics for the whole country. But the central problem focuses on the existing antagonism between the dogmatic ideology of the Sandinists (Marxism-Leninism) and the indigenous ideology of communal life. Besides, the Sandinists refuse to recognise the ethnic question, placing the indigenous people in with the proletariat as a mere social class.

In February of the present year the FSLN unleashed all their fury against the indigenous people, trying to destroy their organisation MISURASATA. Towards this end they arrested the leaders and cadres of the organisation, and also many of the brigadists of the literacy campaign. In their ferocious attempt to capture the leaders of the organisation and the literacy brigadists, four indigenous people were basely murdered and dozens were wounded by the military in our communities of Prinzawala and Alamikamba. Churches were violated and houses searched all over the Atlantic Coast. As they could not find any justification for such outrages towards the indigenous population they once more brought to public light the same old accusations: separatists, racists and counter-revolutionaries about MISURASATA. But this time they kept up with their true image of hatred, lies and repression towards the indigenous people, while our brothers, with valour and dignity confronted the Marxist power of the Sandinists. In peaceful resistance for the liberty of their leaders, the communities concentrated themselves in the towns of the region, and for more than twenty days they overcame the pride and caprice of the Sandinists. In the same way, to thwart their dirty pretensions to wreck the indigenous

movement, they put the FSLN in an unhappy and potentially shameful situation, thus obtaining the freedom of the leaders and cadres of the organisation.

However, the FSLN, stirred up by their desire for revenge and their dogmatic vanity not to yield before any adversary, used the situation of the leader Steadman Fagoth to conceal their true aims, which in a later meeting of the leadership of MISURASATA were revealed in a categorical manner by Comandante Jaime Wheelock: "The problem is not Fagoth but the Mískito people. That of Fagoth is of a transitory nature, and we, the vanguard, are going to give a political answer to our people, but we are extremely concerned about the Mískito." Then Wheelock continued in a threatening tone: "You see, the Mískito people are our people. So if you want to work with the Mískito people you will be obliged to come to an agreement with our positions, orientations and work programmes; because otherwise we will consider you as separatists and racists." This expression of Wheelock embraced the real and entire nature of our problems, whereas the FSLN, using their propagandist lies, presented to the world a distorted image of the problem, appearing to be the victims of counter-revolutionary MISURASATA membership.

Before Fagoth's parole the FSLN carried out the military eviction of the indigenous people concentrated in the towns of Waspán and Puerto Cabezas in a violent and repressive manner. The indigenous people returned to their communities humiliated but full of courage to continue their struggle for their dignity and rights. Yet the FSLN did not quench their thirst for revenge and hatred with the violent evictions. Through their military security they began a tenacious persecution of the heads of the demonstrations, forcing them to abandon Nicaraguan soil for the northern frontier in March 1981, to live in the territory of Honduras. From this date onwards the majority of the leaders of the organisation and

hundreds of brothers from the communities were forced to follow them, because their physical security was threatened and as the situation in the Atlantic region is very insecure. Now we are about three hundred thousand indigenous people on Honduran soil. We should reveal the brazen lie of the FSLN who affirmed that the indigenous membership of MISURASATA in Honduras were taken by means of of deceit by the leader Fagoth in order to organise an armed counter-revolution against the Sandinist Government. In reality all those brothers had already voluntarily abandoned Nicaragua when Fagoth was still in prison in the hands of the Sandinists; he was the last to arrive within the concentration of brothers in Honduras.

Apart from their rhetoric claiming their respect for the culture, traditions and life-styles of the indigenous communities, the FSLN have always cunningly, and in a gradual manner, endeavoured to destroy these essential values of our indigenous people by means of some programmes of an anti-ethnic character, such as: the project "4 Languages" which, disguised as social assistance to the communities, introduced hispanisation to the indigenous children of the zone of the Río Coco rapids. Here they took advantage of the small amount of contact between the communities situated in this zone with their organisation MISURASATA, which was due to the difficulty in reaching and communicating with them, quite apart from the strict military control of the zone which was intended to promote the ethnic alienation of our indigenous people.

It is true that the FSLN allowed the literacy campaign in indigenous languages, and approved the project of Law of the Education in Native Languages, but this is fundamentally due to the initiative and work of MISURASATA to which the FSLN gave reluctant support after much insistence on the part of the communities. Therefore, the fact that the first part of the literacy campaign was concluded, is purely thanks to the sacrifice and courage of the indigenous brigadists,

whom the FSLN, in "recognition" of their completed labour, put in prison for several days; this was on seeing that these young people rejected their affiliation to the Sandinist Youth JS 19. They have also put obstacles to the implementation of the said project Law of the Education in Native Languages.

From the beginning of their triumph the FSLN have developed a policy of marginalisation and discrimination of those people most aware and prepared in the region. Although many sons of this zone are capable of occupying some kind of responsible post, they did not allow them to take up any managerial positions within the state institutions, preferring to bring in people from other regions, to whom substantial salaries were paid. In many cases concerning the simple post of secretary, they did not give the opportunity to an indigenous native of the region, but to people who supported them unconditionally, sowing confusion and hatred towards the indigenous people.

On August 5, 1980 an agreement between the Nicaraguan Government Junta (JGRN) and MISURASATA took place. This related to the project of Demarcation of the Indigenous Lands, and in it MISURASATA promised to present a legal map of the indigenous territory within three months. This could be prorogated while the project lasted and in its final agreement the JGRN and MISURASATA would both respect the so-called "lands in conflict" - (indigenous lands that have been usurped by national governments). But great was the communities' surprise when in less than two months after the agreement the inter-institutional decree of the Bosawas' Forest Reserve, headed by IRENA, appeared published in Barricada, official organ of the FSLN. By means of this decree the Sandinist Government took forceable possession of more than nine thousand km² of the lands of the indigenous Sumu, thus violating the agreement with MISURASATA, and arbitrarily usurping the main jungle area of the indigenous lands. Confronted by

MISURASATA's protest and formal denunciation the government authorities maintained an indefinite silence, and up to this date there has been no formal reply.

With the presence of the majority of the organisation's cadres in Honduras, together with leader Steadman Fagoth - who fled from the country because of the Sandinist's demand for him to go and study in a Socialist country (Russia or Bulgaria) - the very few leaders and cadres of the organisation who still remained in the country, headed by our coordinator Brooklyn Rivera, undertook a series of attempts towards a peaceable solution to the problem created by the FSLN stemming from the previous February. Thus advancing a civic alternative to the crisis, MISURASATA demonstrated its convictions and good intentions towards the Revolution. But after almost four months of intense labour in search of peaceful and lasting solutions, these brothers exhausted their strength without having found that civic way out, because the FSLN is not truly disposed to offer that alternative up till now. We would say that the FSLN, at least for the time being, lack the understanding for a peaceable solution to the problem. On the contrary, they are preparing to give a military solution.

Whilst the leaders and cadres of MISURASATA worked with honesty and loyalty through the stages of that particularly desired solution to the crisis, the leaders of the FSLN in the region prepared their military aggressive solution, by means of excessive concentration and mobilisation of soldiers and weapons. They have practically created a state of siege in the region, with a psychological atmosphere of open war.

The FSLN have not concerned themselves over giving answers to the minimal claims put forward by the communities to find a solution to the crisis. These were, for example: the liberation of the two brigadists of the literacy campaign involved in the events at Prinzapolka, who are still being

illegally held in prison; the transfer of some members of the FSLN in the zone who have harmed the people. Instead, they have finally blocked all the day-to-day ways of running the communities. They are openly aiming at the destruction of the indigenous movement through their attempts to separate the Sumu from MISURASATA, corrupting the leaders of the organisation, threatening the cadres into working for them as informers, and negating all discussion or negotiation with the leaders, ignoring their authority and representivity and taking advantage of the present situation in the indigenous bases.

Using some Sumu supporters of the FSLN, they attempted the formation of a Sumu organisation under the policies and guidance of the FSLN and separate from MISURASATA. The Sumu people have always rejected this aim, in spite of the many promises and offers on the part of the Sandinists. In their attempt to divide the indigenous peoples, the FSLN offer salaries to these Sumu in order that they dedicate themselves solely to disorienting and confusing the Sumu people. In the same manner they are using some Miskito in their work of the disorientation and division of MISURASATA, a manoeuvre which has been totally rejected by the indigenous peoples.

In their attempt to subordinate the leaders of the organisation, they have offered posts in the state institutions in order that these leaders abandon their commitment and responsibility to the indigenous peoples, leaving the movement headless and without the ability to function. In the beginning this aim was initiated with fair persuasion, but seeing that this did not produce results they used intimidation and physical threats to the leaders. The State Security DGSE maintained a strict control with threats on some of the cadres of the organisation, so that they would work as spies for them, by taking them from their houses at midnight at gun point. Despite such a hostile and dangerous situation these leaders

and cadres remained firm in the country, working loyally for peace and the well-being of their indigenous brothers.

However, the most important and decisive question for the indigenous communities was: THEIR LANDS. After 1894 when President Zelaya shared out great areas of Moskitia amongst his closest military adherents, the lands of the indigenous peoples were consistently usurped by all Nicaraguan governments. In 1905, with the treaty between Great Britain and Nicaragua (Harrison-Altamirano Treaty), the "awarding" of lands to the indigenous peoples with so-called real titles was established. Few communities received the said titles and the Government declared those areas which were not claimed by the communities as "National Lands". With the agreement of August 5, the Government Junta recognised the land titles in the hands of the communities and promised to give back to them all the usurped land. MISURASATA made itself responsible for drawing up a map of the indigenous territory so that it could be made legal by the JGRN.

Given the problems of last February, and the internal difficulties of the organisation, the presentation of the map and the historical legal study to the JGRN could not be carried out for the fixed date; instead, a mutual agreement was made to leave it for another date when circumstances permitted. On reaching the second anniversary of the Revolution the FSLN emitted the Agrarian Reform Law which establishes in its Article 30: The State will take charge of the lands on the Atlantic Coast in order to grant plots to the Miskito, Sumu and Rama communities so that they can work it and take advantage of the existing resources to provide for their social needs and the development of the country. In the face of this unexpected law regarding the communities, the leaders of MISURASATA hurriedly presented to the JGRN the following propositions:

1. Recognition of indigenous territory as laid down in the map drawn up by MISURASATA (without parcellation).

2. The right to the use and enjoyment of the territory's natural resources.
3. The autonomy of the communities within their territory.

After one week of studying these proposals the Government rejected them, alleging that they implied independence for the Atlantic Coast, and did not correspond to the FSLN's conception of the Agrarian Reform. They offered to grant the lands to the communities in plots and with titles under the Agrarian Reform. It was also said that the negotiations were going to take place directly with the communities and not with MISURASATA. Each ethnic group would separately receive, on a community basis, their plots of land.

Under the circumstances the leadership and cadres of the organisation considered that:

1. The FSLN violated its agreement of August 5, 1980 with MISURASATA in which it promised to undertake the negotiation on indigenous lands with the organisation.
2. The FSLN, with its attitude to parcelling out the indigenous territory, is fomenting the division of the indigenous peoples from MISURASATA, as well as negating their right to the use of their natural resources.
3. The FSLN refuses to recognise the authority and representative nature of the organisation and thus the organisation itself.

For these reasons it was decided to denounce these dirty and injurious arbitrary attitudes towards the communities, so that they do not enter into any negotiation over their territory with the FSLN.

These leaders and cadres were finally obliged to leave the country for the following reasons:

1. The FSLN practically shut out every means of finding a peaceful solution to the problem.
2. There are no conditions nor guarantees for our work and its results.

3. Pressures and physical threats exist to their security.
4. The FSLN has put an end to all discussion and negotiation with MISURASATA in order to bring about its destruction.
5. The FSLN considers the indigenous peoples as their main enemy and wages open war against them.
6. To obey the mandate of the communities to change the arena for the struggle.

These leaders and cadres headed by our co-ordinator are at the present time in Honduras supporting the organisation's other brothers. The struggle continues under new circumstances, and needs the active solidarity of all indigenous peoples and organisations in the world.

Our struggle is just and reasonable, given that we develop it from an indigenous and revolutionary perspective.

FOR INDIGENOUS TERRITORY AND AUTONOMY
FOR INDIGENOUS DIGNITY AND LIBERTY
FOR INDIGENOUS UNITY AND RIGHTS
MISURASATA

WILLIAM RAMIREZ (FSLN):

THE IMPERIALIST THREAT AND THE INDIGENOUS PROBLEM IN NICARAGUA

This now internationally well-known speech of the Minister for the Atlantic Coast, William Ramírez, (see IWGIA Newsletter No.30 April 1982 pp.10-28), was the Nicaraguan contribution at the third UN Seminar on Racial Segregation from 14th to 22nd December 1981 in Managua. Ramírez first gives a survey of the history of the inter-ethnic conflict of the Atlantic Coast and then sharply criticises the imperialistic policy which misuses the Miskito for its own interests. "We don't want war! We have already waged a war in order to achieve peace. And we will defend this peace at all costs."

The racial and ethnic origin of Nicaraguan nationality

The Nicaraguan people are a mestizo people, both from the racial and ethnic/cultural point of view. Throughout the years, the Nicaraguan nationality has coalesced with the significant contribution of three population types: the Indigenous, European and African populations. The Nicaraguan people emerged from the mixture of these three groups.

The history of the indigenous population is not well known. The shortage of archeological and linguistic research does not permit us to go back farther than the European conquest. At the time of the European conquest, the aboriginal population of Nicaragua was comprised of two major linguistic groups; those of Nahuatl origin located in the Pacific and Central region, and those of Macro-Chibcha origin distributed throughout the Atlantic Coast.

The groups of Mesoamerican origin (Nahuatl) arrived in various migration between the 13th and 15th centuries. Three principal migrations can be distinguished: the Chorotegas, the Subtiava and the Nahuatlán. These groups were principally agricultural workers. They had a social division of labour that distinguished artisans from merchants and included the slavery of personal or patriarchal servants.



Tasba Pri: in the new settlement Wasinona, March 1982
(Cordelia Dilg).

The groups of Macro-Chibcha origin migrated from South America. The principal groups were the Sumu and Rama.¹ These groups had a semi-nomadic culture, based on fishing, hunting and migrant agriculture. The division of labour was more incipient than the groups of Mesoamerican origin and

1. The ethnic group Miskito is a product of the union of African slaves with the "Sumu" from the "Bawihka" group in a relatively late period (XVII century). (Conzemius Eduard, 1932, Ethnographical Survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua. Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology. Bulletin 106: 17. Washington.)

was based upon age, sex and combat skill. The social structure also recognised the existence of slavery.²

The European population that came to Nicaragua in the 16th century came primarily from Spain and England. The Spanish population settled in the Pacific and the interior regions. The English population, smaller in number, settled on the Atlantic Coast and along the banks of the rivers.

Although they had different cultures, both European powers had much in common. They both arrived under the impulse of the beginning of the capital accumulation process on a world level at the time of the birth of the capitalist system and the destruction of the feudal regime in Europe. Because of this, in both cases, they were interested in the plundering of the colonial riches and their transfer to Europe. This destroyed the possibilities of a capitalist development in the colonies in the same form that was underway in Europe or in other colonies such as the United States, Australia or South Africa. Europeans of other nations such as Prussians, French, Dutch etc. also arrived in Nicaragua. In the last century, people of Asiatic origin also arrived.

The third origin of the Nicaraguan people was African. The economic objective of the colonial powers of Spain and England was directed towards the rapid extraction of natural resources. To facilitate this plunder of resources, large quantities of labour were needed. For this purpose the colonisers enslaved not only the people of Mesoamerican origin in the Pacific, and the Sumu and Rama groups in the Atlantic, but they also imported great numbers of slaves of African origin.

2. This information comes mostly from Johnson, F, "The Post Conquest Ethnology of Central America: An Introduction". In South American Indians, p. 195. USA. Also: Stone, D., 1966, "Synthesis of Lower Central American Ethno History" in Handbook of Middle American Indians Vol. IV : 209. USA.

The Nicaraguan people have emerged from the mixture of these three different racial populations: Indigenous, European and African. The mixed nature of her population is a fact of which Nicaragua is proud, and will defend as a cornerstone her peoples' identity.

Today, practically all of the Nicaraguan population is mixed. However, various ethnic groups can be separated out on the basis of linguistic and cultural criteria as follows:

1) The Indigenous peoples who speak Miskito, Sumu or Rama and the Garifuna who speak Carib and are concentrated in the Departamento Zelaya and a portion of Jinotega. There are also significant numbers of these peoples in the city of Managua. Three per cent of the Nicaraguan population is indigenous peoples. The majority of these are Miskito.

2) The Creole population is of African origin, speaks English Creole, and is concentrated in the Southern portion of Zelaya. There are also concentrations of these people in areas of the Pacific side, especially in Puerto Sandino and Managua. It is calculated that the Creole population corresponds to approximately one per cent of the national population.

3) The Mestizo population which is Spanish speaking occupies major portions of the territory and constitutes approximately ninety six per cent of the national total.

The Nicaraguan population, from the ethnic point of view, is composed of more than five different groups. The successful combination of these groups is the basic objective around which the struggle against racism and all forms of ethnic and racial oppression can be raised.³

However, the fact that the population of Nicaragua is the result of the interaction among different ethnic groups and

3. Indigenous and Creole population data used here was elaborated by CIDCA based on cartographic information of INEC and their own investigations in 1981.

that the Revolutionary Government fights to allow these groups to express their creativity and potential does not mean that the relationship between the different groups is or has been totally cordial and egalitarian. Much to the contrary, the history of centuries of oppression and exploitation has created a structure of classes and an ideological regime of racial discrimination that has aided imperialism in the domination of the native forces of production, as a dominant class, while exalting the supposed virtues of one ethnic group to the detriment of the rest.

The challenge to the Nicaraguan Revolution is to combat the existing forms of racial and ethnic oppression and discrimination in their outward manifestations as well as in their most profound causes.

On the other hand, the existence in Nicaragua of a racist ideology and of forms of racial discrimination which the Revolution has taken as one of its priorities to combat, forms a part of a world ideology that has its base in the socio-economic structure of world capitalism. Ethnic and racial oppression have played a crucial role in the process of primitive accumulation of capital on the world level justifying the exploitation and extermination of millions of Blacks, Indigenous peoples and Mestizos. Nicaragua is no exception in this regard. A brief historical analysis will permit an explanation of the basis of the inter-ethnic contradictions in Nicaragua and serve as a framework for the construction of a revolutionary programme which will struggle for economic, political and cultural equality for all Nicaraguans.

This will not be an easy struggle, however. We must fight the contradictions imposed by centuries of oppression, and in addition, we are currently harassed by North American imperialism which utilises the indigenous problem as an ideological weapon to destabilise the revolutionary process.

Historic characteristics of inter-ethnic relations in Nicaragua.

The European conquest of America was the historical event which marked the beginning of racial and ethnic oppression. Salient economic motives underlay the Conquest: an incipient manufacturing industry required great quantities of raw materials at low costs; and precious metals from the New World were needed to sustain the primitive accumulation of capital which already had begun in Europe.

Beginning with the Conquest, the Europeans exerted a decisive influence over the destiny of America. Labour requirements for the extraction of wealth were tremendous. Conquistadores met these needs by imposing slavery on the indigenous population, denying them status as persons and creating a profound division among the members of colonial society.

This economic oppression of one people by another, one racial group by another, extended into the political realm. Indigenous peoples were completely deprived of control over their own lives, and of the freedom necessary to realise the continued development of their cultures.

In Nicaragua the contradictions between metropolis and periphery were particularly complex because two colonial powers competed to attain territorial hegemony. The Spanish colonised the Pacific Coast and central areas of what is now Nicaragua, but confronted a direct challenge from the British, who exerted economic and commercial control from their possessions in the Caribbean.

On the Pacific side, Conquistadores enslaved the native inhabitants and sent them to work in South American mines. Within a short time the indigenous population was reduced drastically. Although the information from chroniclers is difficult to confirm, one account from Oviedo, reports that

in the first decades of the Conquest alone, more than 400,000 native peoples were exported from Nicaragua.⁴

The caste structure of the colonial period gave impulse to a deeply ingrained racist ideology which penetrated every sector of the population. Despite their indigenous descendants, Mestizos assimilated the racist precepts and used them as a means to elevate their own socio-economic status. Eventually, Mestizos achieved political control over the colonies as well. With the depopulation of indigenous peoples, the Spanish began to import African slaves; this exploitation of another group with distinctive racial phenotype further strengthened the identification of racial type with class position.

The colonisation of the Atlantic Coast followed a different pattern. Few British were interested in settling there, choosing instead the vast territories to the north where climatic conditions were much more favourable. As a result, the British developed a system of indirect rule, whereby colonial mandates were carried out by local intermediaries. The British granted political and military support to one tribe or ethnic group, which in turn exerted control over the rest of the indigenous population and assured the defence of the territory. The corruption of a few indigenous leaders served to subjugate the bulk of the indigenous population.

In Nicaragua, the British chose the Miskito, providing them with firearms and establishing a local kingdom. This allowed the Miskito to dominate and enslave many other Central American ethnic groups including the Sumu, the Rama, the Paya, the Lencas and Talamancas. The British turned the Miskito leaders into oppressors and slaveowners. Later, when the

4. Radell, David. 1976, "The Indian Slave Trade and population of Nicaragua during the Sixteenth Century" in Denevan: The Native population of the Americas in 1492, p. 69 Madison. USA.

indigenous population became insufficient for the labour requirements of plantations and sawmills, the British imported slaves, adding another layer to the social stratification.

The system of economic exploitation gave rise to a political apparatus in which a few Miskito families ruled the region, under the close supervision of the British. The remaining ethnic groups had little opportunity for continued cultural expression. The British also used the Miskito as allies in their continuous wars against the Spanish. Although the wars benefited the Miskito little, the indigenous peoples served as an irregular army in defence of the interests of the British Empire.

For almost three centuries, Spanish dominated the Nicaraguan economy on the Pacific side, while British and North American interests prevailed on the Atlantic.

Nicaragua's independence, and the subsequent withdrawal of the British from Moskitia, did little to change the class structures that had given rise to the accompanying systematic racial and ethnic discrimination. On the Pacific side, a small unmixed elite of Spanish origin and Mestizos replaced the Spanish Crown representatives in positions of authority, and these new oppressors destroyed nearly all the indigenous communities that had survived through the 19th century. Mestizo governments used legal means to coerce indigenous peoples to sell their communal lands, and to accept the norms of private property.

These laws actually served the interests of the oligarchy permitting the concentration of lands in their hands and integration into the world capitalistic market. When the Atlantic Coast was incorporated into Nicaragua at the end of the 19th century, indigenous and Creole peoples who lived there became victims of the same racial hatred that had plagued native peoples of the Pacific.

A new foreign invasion, which occurred in 1910 led to the deepening of racial discrimination and the rapid destruction of ethnic and cultural expression. North American powers took control of the Nicaraguan economy and even seized the government for 20 years leaving behind a corrupt political structure which was directly subservient to imperialism.

At the same time, North American transnational corporations penetrated the Atlantic Coast creating an imperialist enclave economy based on the extraction of natural resources. These companies employed indigenous and Creole peoples as wage labourers and imposed a system of apartheid within the confines of the banana, mining and lumber companies.

The Somoza Government acted in complete accordance with the companies, choosing to defend the interests of imperialism rather than those of the Coastal peoples. Actually it was only with the rise of Sandino that the Coastal peoples began to participate with Mestizos in the liberation struggle fighting in the Army for the Defence of National Sovereignty. It was Sandino's dream to create large co-operatives along the Río Coco, where most Miskito live.

The FSLN acted as the vanguard in the war of National Liberation which overthrew the Somoza dictatorship and laid the groundwork for fundamental social change. This event provides the first opportunity in Nicaragua's history to destroy the class structures which underlie all racial discrimination. The Revolution gave rise to a strong anti-imperialist consciousness among its participants, and installed in them a confidence that it is possible for a people to determine their own destiny.

Different social and economic conditions throughout Nicaragua naturally produced varying degrees of participation in the liberation struggle. In contrast with the Pacific, there were no widespread revolutionary activities on the Atlantic Coast. When the FSLN took power they found a very distinct political consciousness among Atlantic Coast inhabitants.

The Government of National Reconstruction began to operate, therefore, with the heritage of 400 years of colonialism, neo-colonialism and an unequal development between the coasts, accentuated by the previous 70 years of imperialist penetration. Part of this heritage is a set of prejudices which sees blonde hair, blue eyes and fair skin as superior physical characteristics. Even a glance at Nicaraguan media confirms the prevalence of these stereotypes. This is what imperialism taught and continues to teach to our people. This is what Somozism taught us: to denigrate all of the Nicaraguan people, especially our indigenous and Creole brothers. This racist ideology served to reinforce the social stratification which had developed over the centuries. Still there are those who think that those who have Black or Indian traits are to be found in the lowest classes of society.

The Nicaraguan oligarchy was mainly of White origins, as were the groups in power during the Somoza dictatorship. The legacy of the past produced not only racial prejudice among the Nicaraguan people, but ethnocentric attitudes as well. The colonial past separated the Atlantic and Pacific coasts allowing ethnic identities to consolidate independently. On the Pacific side a "Ladino" identity emerged. Various ethnic identities crystalised on the Atlantic Coast where Anglo-Caribbean orientation merged with strong ties to an indigenous past.

The historic isolation of Atlantic from Pacific ethnic groups led to a mutual lack of cultural understanding between members of the two. This together with other factors, gave rise to the ethnocentric attitudes which exist today among both population groups.

Guided by the principles of popular democracy, the Sandinist Revolution demonstrated its support for indigenous self-determination as a means to combat the racism and ethnocentrism of the past. Within a few months of the triumph the

Government had recognised the organisation MISURASATA, which means Miskito, Sumu, Rama and Sandinists working together.

From the beginning, MISURASATA had a representative in the National Council of State, and had complete freedom to organise with status as one of the mass organisations in Nicaragua. For the first time an indigenous organisation addressed the problems of the Coastal people. In addition, the Revolution provided new hopes that the urgent economic and social needs of the region could be met. The Government remained receptive to MISURASATA in the first year, and the organisation grew rapidly.

However, its development was contradictory. On the one hand there was collaboration. The best example of this was the literacy campaign in native languages which gave the opportunity to more than 12,000 indigenous and Creole peoples to learn to read and write in their mother tongue. However, at the same time, the campaign was used by indigenous leaders to consolidate their organisation and to influence members of the community who were not previously supporters of the organisation. With this development emerged increasing attitudes of antagonism toward the Government which can be explained by the following factors:

1. A relatively backward political consciousness of the Coastal population owing to the fact that this zone of the country had not participated in the revolutionary conflict.
2. A disastrous rate of unemployment resulting from the flight of North American capital and the subsequent closing of many companies. What's more, the large scale of these companies, the fact that they were left in a state of virtual bankruptcy; and current financial pressures from the U.S. made reactivation of the local economy exceedingly difficult.
3. A strong tradition of ethnocentrism on the part of both Atlantic and Pacific side inhabitants has created a permanent distrust between the two.

Over the first year, taking advantage of the literacy campaign, MISURASATA grew in number of members, in demands and in power. It soon came to a point where their demands contradicted the Government's national development strategy. For example in January 1981, the MISURASATA plan of action included demands for exclusive rights to 45,000 km² of the coast, about 38% of the total national territory. At the same time, MISURASATA leaders demanded political autonomy for this region. These plans neglect the interests of thousands of Mestizos and Creole people who are not members of MISURASATA. In addition, the demands impede the centralised management of natural resources which is necessary to assure that their exploitation benefits the whole nation. Finally, MISURASATA's position left the organisation open to imperialist manipulation, which could have resulted in the division of national territory. MISURASATA's demands, therefore, directly threatened the Sandinist Revolution and placed the whole Central American revolutionary process in jeopardy. These fears were born out subsequently by the actions of MISURASATA leaders, who became open counter-revolutionaries, enjoying the support of ex-National Guards in Honduras.

In February, 1981, MISURASATA leaders were arrested by the Government and given warning about the counter-revolutionary nature of the organisation.

All were released shortly thereafter except Steadman Fagoth, the organisation's leader, who faced additional charges of being an informer for the Somoza Government. Fagoth was given conditional freedom in May, at which point he fled to Honduras to join the ex-National Guard thereby showing his true political colours. Since then he has been inciting the Miskito population to rebellion, urging them to come to Honduras to join the imminent invasion of Nicaragua.

These actions of MISURASATA's leaders created uncertainty among the rest of the organisation's cadres. At first the

others issued a declaration condemning Fagoth and declaring their support for the Revolution. Nevertheless, in September of this year (1981), the same leaders issued a new document which slanders the Nicaraguan Government, exonerates Fagoth, and encourages the Miskito population to join in the counter-revolutionary struggle.

Given these circumstances, the Government found it necessary to withdraw official recognition of MISURASATA. The organisation's demands had become a threat to national sovereignty and its leaders had become distanced from the interests of their constituency.

Despite these events the Government's commitment to the rights of indigenous peoples remains strong. This was confirmed in the Declaration of Principles issued in August of this year (1981). This position is also apparent in the current government policy to develop community leaders who will form the basis of new forms of political organisation. The policy of the Revolution with respect to the Indigenous Peoples.

The recent Revolution in Nicaragua has created, for the first time in the country's history, necessary conditions for a successful struggle against racism and ethnocentrism. The Government is committed to the development of policy on various levels - economic, political, cultural and ideological - which will advance the battle against racist ideologies and against the concrete manifestations of racism.

As we explained above, manifestations of racism in Nicaragua were created and perpetuated by English and North American imperialist occupations, and by the oligarchical government which ruled until the triumph of the Revolution. By eliminating social classes, the Revolutionary Government will also eliminate the fundamental cause of racism and ethnocentrism. Nevertheless, racist ideology has an independent

existence as well, which must be attacked on the ideological level.

One of the principal means to combat racial discrimination, therefore, is economic development. If every Nicaraguan has access to a decent living standard, the material basis for racism will be destroyed.

In working toward this goal, the Government has formulated a policy of anti-imperialism, and of independent economic development free from the imposition of foreign interests. This policy is clearly exemplified by such government measures as the nationalisation of the mines and of foreign commerce, and the elimination of concessions to imperialist companies which plundered our natural resources. The Government is also working to raise the population's living standards, by implementing Agrarian Reform, extending credit to small-scale producers, nationalising the banking system, and orienting the economy in general toward the satisfaction of people's needs, in contrast with the former exploitative patterns imposed by imperialism.

In addition, the Government is working to develop the country's productive forces. This policy has the goal of promoting an homogeneous development throughout the country, and consequently, ending the marked historical differences between the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, and guaranteeing the increased worker productivity and income.

In the political realm the Popular Revolution's policy also is clearly defined. An ideological legacy of our colonial and neo-colonial past contains the prejudiced view that oppressed groups are also incapable of controlling their own lives, and of managing their own communities. The Revolution upholds a firm principle to the contrary: Nicaragua's policies must be formulated for the people, by the people. This principle stands in direct opposition to racism and ethnocentrism, for it affirms the rights of the victims of these

ideologies to participate in our nation's decision making, and to control their lives on the community level. The Revolutionary Government makes clear, therefore, the rights of all ethnic groups to organise themselves to defend their own interests. By means of participating in the revolutionary process, the members of every ethnic group can control the destinies of their communities as well as participate in national and international politics.

Organisation along ethnic lines will require government authorities to speak indigenous languages to facilitate communication on the local level. Finally, the Government will guarantee the defence of all the national territory.

We emphasised above that the oppressive socio-economic structures of the past have limited the cultural expression of different ethnic groups. Racism has been the principal barrier to this expression. The Revolutionary Government is committed to providing every ethnic group an opportunity to develop its artistic and cultural expression. This in turn enriches the national culture as a whole. The Government, therefore, supports cultural and artistic creation in all areas and facilitates the technological assistance necessary for these arts to realise their full potentials.

The Government is also committed to encouraging historical research which emphasises the contributions of different ethnic groups to the heritage of all Nicaraguan citizens. The literacy campaign in native languages is the first great achievement in this realm.

Finally the Revolutionary Government will combat the daily expressions of racism and ethnocentrism. Special attention must be given to certain groups of Nicaraguans who have assimilated racist precepts espousing them unconsciously. Also we must work to make people more aware of how imperialism attempted to prolong its hegemony by using a racist ideology to divide the Nicaraguan people.

Today the situation in Nicaragua becomes more difficult each day. The forces of North American imperialism want to repeat the history of British colonialism. The English manipulated Miskito leaders, convincing them to attack the Spanish and to enslave their own fellow indigenous peoples.

Today, forces of North American imperialism are manipulating the Miskito leaders who are in Honduras, inciting them to carry out aggressions against the Nicaraguans, using Fagoth and his followers together with the remaining National Guards of Somoza to achieve this end.

Imperialism has promoted separation among the Miskito. One group of indigenous people is now undergoing military training in Honduras, and carrying out propaganda campaigns in the communities along the Río Coco.

Miskito people in Nicaragua are terrified about the future. Imperialist forces believe that it will be easy to take advantage of the problems created by Fagoth and his friends to turn our Atlantic Coast into a bloodbath, to pit brothers against brothers, Miskito against Miskito, indigenous peoples against indigenous peoples.

The triumph of the Revolution for the first time gave indigenous peoples the chance to achieve their just demands. This will occur not in the context of racist confrontation but rather through the co-participation of all Nicaraguan people in the revolutionary process. The masses of indigenous people should have been guided by their leaders down the road to National Unity, respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and so forth. The leaders, who were Somozist from the beginning, became traitors to their people's cause. Instead of finding solutions to problems from within the Revolution, the leaders have sown distrust and encouraged confrontation.

The Sumu, the Creoles and the Rama are with the Revolution and form part of our national unity, and the Revolution respects their particular characteristics.

The leaders of these sectors respond to the interests of their people. This is not the case for certain Miskito leaders such as Fagoth. This latter group forms part of the local and international counter-revolution and does not respond to the legitimate interest of the Miskito people.

More important than any racial or ethnic consideration, the Sandinist Revolution has the profound obligation to defend what cost our people so dearly. More than 50,000 dead and 100,000 wounded, including hundreds of people mutilated by the war cannot be forgotten. It is the primary commitment of the Revolution to keep political power in the hands of the people, and to continue the process of social transformation that we have begun.

Territorial unity is an absolute principle, subject to no discussion of any kind.

It has been the dream of imperialist forces to separate the Atlantic Coast from the rest of Nicaragua. We will never permit this to happen. Our indigenous peoples are Nicaraguan citizens, and they have the same rights as the rest of us.

The threats of imperialism do not scare us. We do not seek war. We fought one war already to achieve a lasting peace. We will defend this peace, whatever the price of that defence may be. We make this commitment in the name of our martyrs, our heroes, our people, and all the people of Central and South America. We make this commitment in the name of all oppressed peoples of the World. We will achieve our goals!

LUIS CARRION (FSLN):

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ATLANTIC COAST

In this speech made at the conference of Latin American intellectuals on March 7, 1982 in Managua, the representative of the National Leadership of the FSLN for the Atlantic Coast calls into question the indigenous policy of the Sandinist Front and the alliance with MISURASATA in general terms. Carrión now defines the Sandinist indigenous policy as the continuation of the anti-imperialistic struggle. The ideological influence brought to bear above all by the US American enclave economy and the mission of the Moravian Church created a critical climate on the Atlantic Coast. The continuation of this is the indigenous organisation MISURASATA, which, under the direction of imperialism, is working against the Sandinist Revolution first through separatist claims and then through an armed struggle. This assessment is determined by the resettlement of 8,500 Miskito from 42 village communities from the Río Coco to Tasba Pri and the flight of at least 12,000 to Mocorón in Honduras.

Good evening Compañeros:

All of you are well aware of the massive defamatory campaign launched by imperialism with the aim of presenting the Revolutionary Government of Nicaragua as the perpetrator of genocide against the Miskito people and violating human rights - a campaign organised fundamentally to blemish the honour of our Popular Sandinist Revolution, which is the pride and honour of all the peoples in Latin America.

This campaign is carried on with methods that remind us of the famous Goebbels, who maintained that a lie oft-repeated ends up converted into truth; that the bigger the lie and the greater the repetition, the more likely it will be thought of as true. You all already know some examples of the North Americans' application of this maxim, such as the famous photograph in Figero. But in truth, the North American State Department is a slightly exaggerated disciple of the Nazi General Staff. Their lies are so great, that they fly against logic and the rationality of honest people in the world.

Nevertheless, these campaigns have a confusing effect on the unprepared recipients. For this reason we are attempting in this conversation to expose this dirty manoeuvre at its roots. We will expose the falsity of this campaign, denouncing the true motives that it hides - aggression and terrorist destabilisation against our country.

We confront the problem of an ethnic minority, which due to a colonial heritage and the manoeuvres of imperialism itself has remained marginalised from the rest of the nation in social, economic and cultural terms. Now the imperialists are trying to utilise this situation vis-à-vis the ethnic minority, a situation which they themselves have created, not to foment a racial problem, but to provoke a major clash with the Revolution. They are attempting to utilise the Miskito people



Tasba Pri: Construction of prefabricated houses, May 1982
(Cordelia Dilg)

as a wedge to open up a fissure in the ship of the Revolution sufficiently wide so that through it all the septic and nauseous water of the past can enter and so drown the Revolution. Let's speak of the peoples who inherited this part of Nicaragua and those who inhabit it today. Let's talk about the face of Nicaragua that looks towards the Caribbean Sea.

The Caribbean signifies many things. It was the point of entry used by the Spanish colonialists. The Caribbean was a sea populated by adventurers, of conquests and of slaves struggling for their liberty. The Caribbean has seen some of the most ferocious dictatorships in the Americas, but it is also in the Caribbean that the first revolutions in our America have occurred - the Cuban Revolution, the Revolution of Grenada and the Sandinist Revolution.

In terms of the political-administrative division of the country, the Atlantic Coast corresponds to the Departamento Zelaya. It is located in the most eastward part of Nicaragua and has a surface area of 59,000 km². In other words, it is the largest department in Nicaragua. There are tropical rainforests crossed by the largest and most powerful rivers in Nicaragua. Its soil is alluvial, but little suited for permanently cultivating crops. When the rivers break their banks they leave large areas of land full of slime and mud, meaning that the region is generally muddy. Nevertheless, great natural resources are to be found in this department. Notwithstanding the substantial lumber-fellings carried out by foreign companies, the largest forestry reserves of the country are to be found in Zelaya. Also, in the Zelaya region the most important gold and silver mines are located, while in other parts of the territory there are certain indications of the existence of commercially viable quantities of iron ore, copper, calcite and other strategic minerals. Its rivers represent Nicaragua's most promising potential source for the development of hydroelectric energy.

The Departamento Zelaya has two discernable zones known as North Zelaya and South Zelaya. Historically, Zelaya was cut off from the Pacific region, without any means of communication, while within the department, the northern part has been cut off from the southern area. With the Revolution's triumph, for the first time telephone and television links have been established with South Zelaya. Also, the construction of the Waslala-Siuna road has begun, and will be completed a few days hence, thus establishing for the first time ever the possibility of permanent communication with Northern Zelaya. This act alone signifies a real Revolution in such an abandoned region. The capital of Zelaya is the city of Bluefields, the largest urban centre. This is located in the southern zone and houses a population of approximately 30,000 inhabitants.

Prior to the colonial era this region was inhabited by 18 different ethnic groups, the majority of whom do not exist today. This was due to the fact that some merged with other groups, others were exterminated or changed with time. At present, the following groups survive. A group called the Sumu, who are the result of a fusion of three of these ancient groups. The Miskito, who were not a member of the original 18 ethnic groups, but are the result of the fusion of indigenous natives, black slaves and some Europeans. The third group are the Creoles, English-speaking blacks who inhabit the southern part of the region. Lastly there are two groups who are already practically extinct, the Rama and the Garinagu.

The Departamento Zelaya is populated by 276,000 inhabitants, of which 172,000 are Mestizos (Ladinos). That's to say, 62% of the population is Mestizo. Some 70,970 (25%) are Miskito, 26,933 (9.74%) are Creoles, 4,202 (1.64%) are Sumu, barely 967 (0.35%) are Garinagu and 530 are Rama. In other words, the majority of the Atlantic Coast population is not indigenous, but Mestizo. All together the indigenous

groups represent 3.86% of the national population.¹ From the linguistic aspect, three main languages are to be found in Zelaya: Spanish, Mískito and English in the southern part. In addition small groups preserve Sumu, the Rama language and Garínagu which are practically non-existent.

The Mískito

We can see that the Mískito are the main ethnic group among the indigenous population. They originated through the inter-breeding of Bawika Indians with pirates and run-away slaves, a process that took place during the second half of the 17th and the first half of the 18th century. Several interpretations as to the origin of the name "Mískito" exist. One of them attributes it to 'the muskets' that the English supplied to the Mískito as part of their attempts to utilise them for their own colonial ends. Before this the Mískito lived in very dispersed groups, under practically nomadic conditions. It is with the penetration of the foreign companies and the Moravian Church in the middle of the 19th century that the Mískito communities went into decline. The interests pursued by both the companies and the Church coincided in the need to concentrate this dispersed population. The one to gain access to a more stable work-force, the other to make evangelisation easier.

With respect to their political organisation, even though an Elder's Council has nominally existed within each community, the role played by this Council has been progressively

1. Amnesty International comments on these figures of an official survey by CIDCA, contrasting Mískito indian sources of 120,000 to 170,000 as follows: "Different criteria for distinguishing members of the indigenous groups from the majority Mestizo population of the country (for example, whether both racial and cultural factors were taken into account or whether language was a determining factor) might explain the considerable difference between government estimates of the total indigenous population and those made by Mískito leaders themselves." Amnesty International, December 1982: Nicaragua Background Briefing. Persistence of Public Order Law detentions and Trials. p.7 AMR 43/10/82 Typ., London.

diminished. Now it has very little energy and very little practical importance. Of much greater relevance has been the role played by the Moravian clergy. They hold a key position in the communities, enjoy widespread respect among the local population, and act as religious and political leaders.

The Mískito Economy

The ancestors of the Mískito sustained a semi-nomadic economy based on hunting, fishing, as well as a small-scale and primitive agriculture. The penetration of the English colonialists and the foreign companies destroyed the natural equilibrium between man and his natural environment.

The Mískito were converted into minor partners in their exchange relations with the English, establishing commercial ties with them. However, this economic activity could not endure for long. It did not last very long due to the exhaustion of resources as a consequence of their exploitation in an irrational fashion. With this, the Mískito entered into armies formed by the English to fight against Spanish settlements in the Pacific region. They also accompanied English pirate sorties throughout the Caribbean and fought alongside them in Mexico, Guatemala and the Caribbean Islands.

Towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries the penetration of North American capital in the region intensified. Enclave firms incorporated the Mískito as waged labour. However, these companies were not stable. Rather, they enjoyed periods of boom, then periods of depression due to the exhaustion of resources, fluctuations in prices on the international market, plagues on the plantations or the poor quality of the soils. The Mískito, therefore, were employed as wage labourers in times of expansion, while during those of depression they were thrown out into unemployment and misery, being obliged once again to revert to a subsistence economy solely dependent on the

land. They returned to their communities, which under these circumstances became a source of continuity. In this context the land, as well as being a source of production and of material goods, is a central element in the Mískito culture and value system. It is a form of social security in the face of the various kinds of attack to which they have been subjected. The land is a stabilising element in which rest the traditions and everyday life of the Mískito. Excessive exploitation, along with recurrent unemployment, reinforced the community structures of the Mískito. Identity ties with their communities were also strengthened through their periodic returns from cultivating the land, to visit relatives and resume marital relations, to reinforce commonly-held ethnic values, to get cured by the Sukia (traditional healer), or simply to die.

In other words, the community is the centre of the Mískito's world. The members abandon it to partake in hunting expeditions, to farm migratory crops, to make long journeys or to seek employment. But they always return to the community.

Religion

Religion and the Moravian Church play a predominant role in the natives' search for identity, a product of the anguish produced by exploitation and physical upheaval. The Moravians appeared in the 1840s. They masked themselves with the region's ethnic groups and developed as an indigenous Church, offering a solution to their search for identity. They took their most important legends and integrated them with the Mískito's sacred history in such a way that the indigenous people found their past in the Bible. The Moravian religion thus came to play a cohesive ideological role among the Mískito, and now the Moravian Church is the organisational structure through which they contact each other and see within themselves, a structure that they previously did not possess.

This ideological work was later reinforced by a series of social and religious institutions that developed in the region with the appearance of the North Americans and the approval of the Somoza dictatorship.

These are, broadly speaking, some of the main characteristics of the Mískito.

Historical background

Let us take a brief look at the historical background to the present problem we face in the Atlantic Coast. This has its roots in the Spanish Conquest and the colonisation of Nicaragua that occurred throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. This colonisation took place in the Pacific region of Nicaragua and not at the Atlantic Coast, a fact that is fundamentally due to the greater number of indigenous settlements in the Pacific region and the higher cultural level of this population. As a consequence, the Pacific Coast provided the conquerors with cultivable lands along with exploitable labour.

Logically, the Spaniards made attempts to extend their colonial domination to the Atlantic Coast. From 1512 they organised expeditions to the Atlantic Coast, but without success. Two basic reasons explain the failure of these expeditions:

1. The topographic and climatic conditions of the region - an inhospitable jungle zone that formed an impenetrable barrier to the Spanish at that time.
2. The resistance offered by the aboriginal indigenous groups of the region.

In the meantime, in the Pacific zone the colony continued to be consolidated, taking advantage of the fertile lands and the abundance of labour power.

Nicaragua was the first country in Central America to be conquered by the Spaniards, with the resultant destruction of aboriginal society, the destruction of their culture and

the slave trade that they were initially subjected to. But the indigenous social relations that the Spaniards utilised in order to establish their domination simultaneously facilitated a process of inter-breeding, not only racially, but also culturally. In the Pacific region the mestizo culture of Nicaragua continued to develop. But while the Spaniards subjected the indigenous population of the Pacific, in the Atlantic Coast the most decisive obstacle to the Spaniard's colonial project in the region was in progress, and was one that would thwart their plans. Basically, this refers to the competition between England and Spain for control of the benefits to be gained from the exploitation of the inhabitants and the natural resources of the New World. The commercial monopoly instigated by Spain provoked an immediate response in the piracy of the English in the Caribbean, as well as that of the Dutch and French. At the same time that buccaneering activities developed on the Atlantic Coast, the first commercial adventures of the English commenced. From a specifically commercial standpoint, the English were interested in products enjoying great demand in Europe, such as sarsaparilla, tortoise-shell, and the precious lumber that existed in abundance on the Atlantic Coast. They could acquire these through barter with the indigenous inhabitants of the Atlantic region. In return they offered alcohol, cloth, and later, arms.

During the course of these commercial and buccaneering activities, an inter-breeding occurred between the primitive aborigines, the pirates and fugitive Black slaves. The outcome was the formation of the ethnic group which is known by the name of Miskito.

Finally, the English became aware of the importance of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, not just for the exploitation of its natural and human resources, but also for geo-political reasons. It was a key with which to dominate the commercial route between the Atlantic and the Pacific, given the

possibilities of communication via the Río San Juan, which unites the Lago de Nicaragua (Cocibolca) with the Atlantic. In order to consolidate their dominion over the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, the English established an alliance with the Mískito. They utilised the Mískito as an intermediary force to enslave the other indigenous tribes in order to get them to work in the lumber trade organised by the English. Moreover, the Mískito were used as troops by the English to harass Spanish settlements in the Pacific region, or to accompany them on their pirate raids. Manipulated in this manner and armed by the English the Mískito were converted into an important tool for their colonial and geo-political strategy in the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. Through them, the English succeeded in slaving other aboriginal peoples, such as the Sumu, the Rama, the Paya, the Jicaque and the Talamanca. In addition, the English employed the Mískito to quell rebellions by the Black slaves in their other Caribbean possessions. For example, they were used to put down the famous rebellion of the Cimarrones in Jamaica in 1773.

With respect to the use of the Mískito against their Spanish adversary, it suffices to mention among other examples the attack on Nueva Segovia in 1645, against Rivas in 1707, on Chontales in 1710, that of Loviwiska in 1726 and Boaco in 1749. The utilisation of the Mískito as an instrument for furthering British interests appears clearly in that during the course of their incursions into the interior of the country, they did not solely attack the Spanish population. The indigenous peoples of the Pacific were also exterminated by them. Strictly speaking, the English managed to culturally penetrate the Mískito to such an extent that for them, to be a "Spaniard" was to be an enemy, and the enemy has always been in the Pacific region. In other words, "Spaniard" and "enemy" come from the Pacific and do not speak English. This mentality inculcated by the English survives until today.

In this manner the English were preparing the terrain, that with the passage of time, would later be used by North American imperialism, which also speaks English and directly penetrated the country from the Caribbean. Finally, in order to consolidate their strategy of Miskito cultural and racial separation, in the mid-17th century the English created a monarchy, whose first king was a chief named "Old Man" by the English. Significantly, he received his royal title of monarch from the Governor of Jamaica in the name of the King of England, Charles II, in whose court the successor to the recently created Miskito dynasty was educated.

In this fashion, the economic, political and juridicial forms of colonial domination through "indirect rule" were structured and built by England in Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. At the lowest level aboriginal labour power was to be found alongside slave labour power. On the next level were the Miskito, who were converted into a repressive instrument against the aforementioned sectors. In this they were encouraged by the crumbs that the English left them to collect through taxes on cocoa, rubber, etc. levied on the other indigenous groups. At the top of the pile were the English, exploiting the rest and consolidating via the apparition of an indigenous monarchy, the furtherance of their economic and geo-political objectives. This monarchy increased the power of the Miskito with respect to the other ethnic groups and created a myth of political self-determination that has survived up to this day.

The plans of the English received a new boost in 1848 when the fever caused by the discovery of gold on the West Coast of the USA heightened Nicaragua's strategic position. The need for a canal to link the two oceans, and so improve communications between the East and West Coast of the USA, unavoidably exacerbated the rivalry between the USA and England for the domination of Nicaragua. This stimulated the English to militarily occupy San Juan del Norte in 1848.

San Juan del Norte was the port sited at the mouth of the Río San Juan, which was the point of access to the Lago de Nicaragua. This was the route taken by North Americans travelling from east to west and vice-versa, who crossed the Rivas isthmus and disembarked in San Juan del Sur. The consequence of this military occupation of San Juan del Norte was a conflict between England and the United States, which was resolved by a treaty signed behind Nicaragua's back. The Clayton-Sulwer Treaty signed on April 19, 1850, negotiated the division of Nicaragua's territory between the two powers.

Thus, in agreement with the USA, England was able to maintain the Moskitia as a protectorate, while the US gained commercial concessions for North American capital in the Atlantic Coast region. By 1890 US investors already controlled 40 - 45% of the commerce of the Atlantic Coast, and the English were practically ousted.

The development of the structural transformations that the American presence was producing had still not effected one juridical and political obstacle, namely, the English control over the Atlantic Coast. However, the weakening of English domination in the Atlantic Coast permitted President José Santos Zelaya to achieve the reincorporation of the Atlantic Coast into Nicaragua in 1894. This reincorporation encountered the opposition of US businessmen and merchants who had greatly benefitted from the protectorate status that the Atlantic Coast had had under the brand new Miskito kings.

In order to organise this opposition, a merchant's league was formed whose principal participant was the commercial house of Brown, Harvis Allen. This enterprise owned businesses in Bluefields, Río Escondido and Ciudad Rama. With the aid of Jamaican policemen, American capital thus organised the reinstatement of the Miskito king and established a Governing Council of the Atlantic Coast. Among the members of this Council figured the manager and accountant of the

Brown, Harvis Allen commercial house. Zelaya's Government then decided to militarily occupy the Atlantic Coast to establish the Nicaraguan State's control over this region of the country. That occurred in 1894. The Government of Zelaya attempted to construct a railway to Monkey Point on the Atlantic Coast in a real effort to socially and economically integrate this immense region. However, these efforts never came to fruition, as Zelaya's Government became undesirable in North American eyes due to its nationalist stance and its refusal to succumb to the conditions that Wall Street bankers wanted to impose upon it. Imperialism assisted in the overthrow of Zelaya's regime in 1909, and later sent its navy to re-establish in power the old ultra-conservative oligarchy that had already been by-passed by the march of history. It was an accountant, and employee of an US mining company in Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, who was chosen by the Yankees to fill the role of President of Nicaragua. Adolfo Díaz never became more than a jaded clown, but became famous for reaching the highest levels of servility, handing over the country and becoming the greatest traitor in our history.

With Nicaragua's reincorporation of the Atlantic Coast, however, a real economic, political and cultural integration with the rest of the country failed to materialise. On the contrary, under the conservative governments installed in power by the USA, the Atlantic Coast's marginalisation and abandonment increased. The Atlantic Coast became more dependent on foreign companies, now North American owned. These established an enclave economy primarily dedicated to the extraction of the zone's major natural resources. Also, the large majority of the indigenous and Creole population was salaried and submitted to the North America cultural influence. A system of apartheid was founded within the lumber, banana and mining enclaves. For example, it was only with the nationalisation of the mines after the triumph of the Revolution that population living in the mining settlements

could for the first time enter into a number of areas that had been exclusively reserved for North American technicians.

The enclave economy creates relations that directly link production with the imperialist metropolis, isolating it from the national economy. Therefore, this situation provided the Mískito involved in the enclave economy one more basis for their isolation - or rather, it consolidated this isolation which was the result of centuries of colonial manipulation. Under these circumstances they were falling into ever greater levels of exploitation and misery.

The North American companies, in accordance with their own interests, took responsibility for public works and services, while local authorities were totally subordinated to their requirements. To a large degree, education provision depended on the various Protestant Churches, especially that of the Moravian Church. Its activities date from 1849 and the Moravian's work was made easier by the fact that they assumed educative as well as religious functions. The Moravian clergy form an important element in the Mískito communities. They have established new kinds of social relations, new forms of settlements and transcribed the language, thus consolidating Mískito as a language. In other words, Mískito did not have an alphabet or its own written form until this was elaborated by the Moravian clergy. On the ideological front, religion prepared the way for the Mískito to accept the new forms of exploitation without much resistance.

It is interesting to note that from being the dominant group, privileged in comparison to the other ethnic groups of the Atlantic Coast, the Mískito passed almost to the bottom of the social ladder when the North American enclave companies came to dominate the region. Nevertheless, in the face of this rapid fall in status, the Mískito did not offer substantial resistance. Here a decisive ideological role was played by the Moravian Church.

The governments that followed in Nicaragua after the expulsion of the North American intervention by the heroic resistance of the Army Defending National Sovereignty headed by General Augusto César Sandino, were Somozist dictatorships. They also contained the policy of neglect and lack of interest towards the Atlantic Coast. This facilitated the exploitation of the region's natural resources by North American companies. As a result of this colonial and neo-colonial history, the Revolution has inherited in the Miskito of the Atlantic Coast a minority population that is suspicious, feels profound historical frustration and has assimilated racism as a positive virtue. It is also an ethnic population that lives in great economic backwardness and which has been subjected to a process of cultural imperialism.

It is on the basis of this situation, which has been deformed by long years of colonial domination, that North American imperialism is trying to mount one of its many plans against the Sandinist Popular Revolution.

Immediate background

This will be more clearly seen when we examine the more recent background to the problem in the region. In July 1974, Mary Hamlyn, a North American who came to the Atlantic Coast as a representative of the Peace Corps, founded in San Juan an organisation called "ALPROMISU". This signifies "Alliance for the Progress of the Miskito and Sumu". Aided by the Moravians, this organisation began by supporting the defence and promotion of Miskito and Sumu ethnicity. In practice, its actual activities were of a welfare and semi-religious nature. The demands it made were basically the following:

- The right of the communities to administer their own lands.
- The right to a formal education that would take into account their own values.
- The right to cultivate the land in accordance with indigenous communal traditions.

- The right to settle disputes according to their own laws.

These demands were advanced at various meetings of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP). ALPROMISU never made demands that went further than these. Still less did it plan a confrontation with Somoza's dictatorship. The Somozist dictatorship refused to recognise ALPROMISU and hindered its activities. Logically, it could not recognise or accede to the demands of the indigenous peoples as they would effect the multinationals that the dictatorship protected, as well as Somoza's own interests in this region. But ALPROMISU in its five years of existence never undertook a belligerent plan to obtain its legitimate demands. Even less did it attempt to make contact with the Sandinist Front during this period, or ally itself in any way to the revolutionary struggle that all the people waged against Somoza's dictatorship.

Even so, no less than 8 days after the revolutionary triumph of 27 July 1979, the leaders of this organisation handed to the Government Junta for National Reconstruction a letter in which they made some proposals in the name of the Miskito and Sumu. We were surprised that they demanded of the Revolutionary Government, only 8 days after the victory, representation in all organs of the State - the judiciary, the legislature, the State Council, the organisation that governs the activity of the Atlantic Coast, the organisation and administration of the municipalities of Puerto Cabezas, Waspán, Siuna and Bonanza (the most important mining centres in the country, which have a strategic value for the whole nation), the exploitation of the lands that were stolen from them by the Somozists, and lastly, the organisation of the Miskito and Sumu workers in accord with their own values and interests.

The striking point here is the great improvement in the quality of the demands forwarded by this organisation to the Revolution compared with those made to Somozism.

After the people's triumph, from the first moment the Revolution manifested its political willingness to end the isolation and marginalisation of our country's Atlantic region, as well as its decision to respect and redeem, for the first time in history, the cultural values of the indigenous peoples. It was during the Fifth Congress of ALPROMISU that this organisation transformed itself into MISURASATA, which stands for "Miskito, Sumu, Rama united with the Sandinists". On this occasion MISURASATA defined itself as "an organisation that defends and consolidates the Sandinist Revolution in our medium". That is to say, among the Miskito. Almost all the leadership of MISURASATA came from ALPROMISU, and Steadman Fagoth quickly became their most important leader. Soon after the Revolution's triumph, Fagoth presented himself in Puerto Cabezas titling himself Comandante and claimed to be a plenipotentiary of the National Committee for North Zelaya.

The Revolution

The Revolution decided to confront the enormous task of transforming old inherited systems of exploitation and oppression. Even though the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast had not been attacked by genocidal bombs as had their brothers in Monimbó in the Pacific region, imperialism and the dictatorship had reduced to tatters their life style and cultural traditions.

The Revolution converted MISURASATA into the natural representative organ of the indigenous communities. Through this it hoped to establish the communication necessary to enable the Revolutionary Government to discover the needs, idiosyncracies and values of these ethnic minorities. As we will see later, this became a snare for the Revolution. The Revolutionary Government in the midst of extremely poor resources, a situation due to Somozist pillage, the destruction of the nation, of the greater part of its infrastructure due to the war of National Liberation, in spite of the immense

debt inherited and with the urgent need to concentrate the greatest part of its efforts on the rehabilitation of the country's productive capacity, nevertheless took the decision to devote important resources to the Atlantic Coast with the object of attaining real human rights for the population of that region.

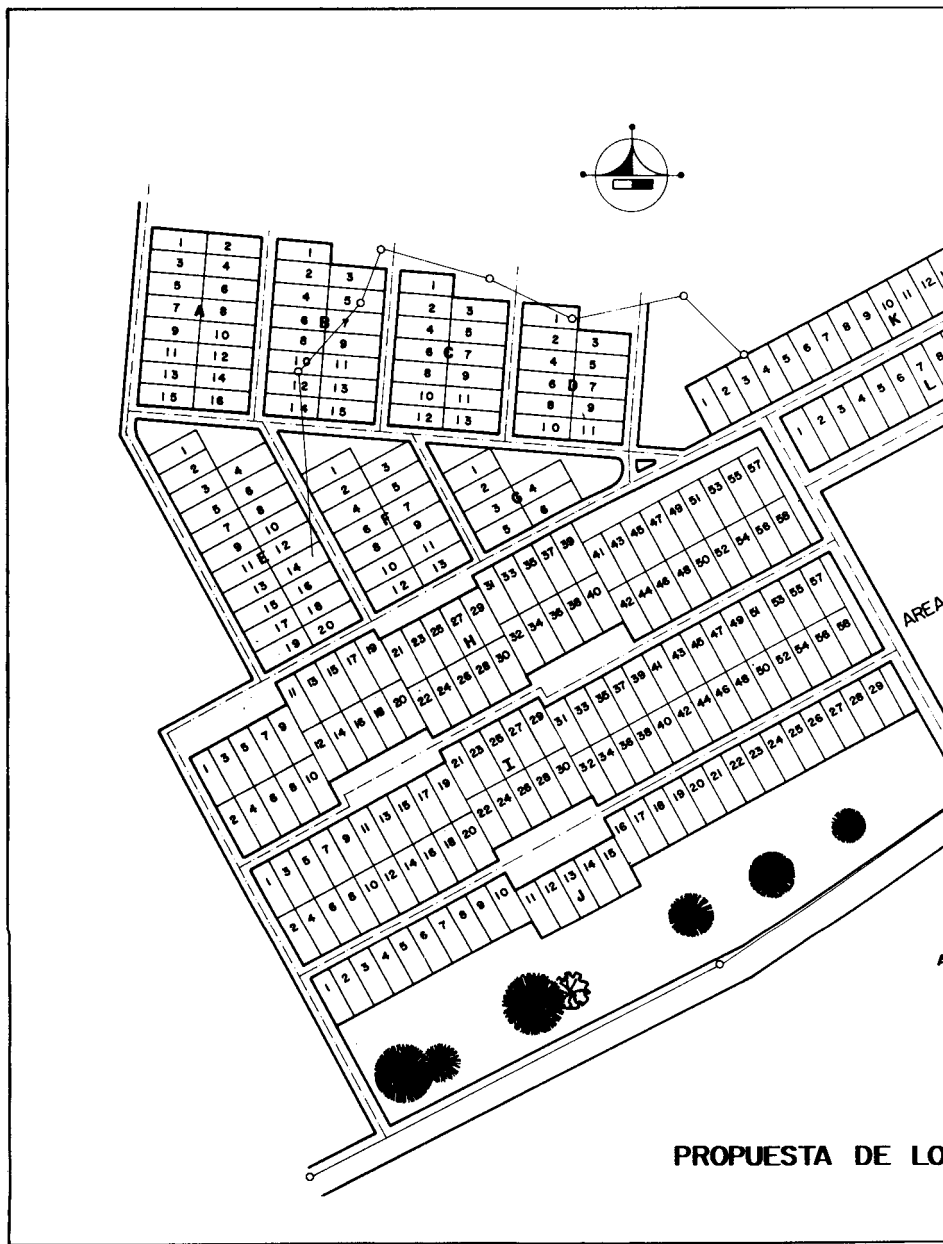
In the field of education, immediately after the triumph up to 885 teachers were sent, which signifies an increase of 84% when compared with those that existed prior to the Revolution. The number of schools rose by 109%. A literacy campaign in Miskito, Sumu and English was initiated and carried out. Through an effort unparalleled in Latin America, 12,500 indigenous people were taught to read and a basis was established for the continuation of educative work among the adults. For its part, the Ministry of Culture made steps to obtain the economic aid necessary for the installation of a project for an indigenous university, the only one of its kind in the Continent and which would have its site at Monimbó and in the Atlantic Coast. In the area of health, the efforts of the Revolutionary Government are also of great magnitude. Before the triumph of the Revolution 128 medical personnel existed. After the Revolution's triumph this figure rose by 348%. Just in the Revolution's early days 574 medical and para-medical personnel were sent. 114 medical posts were constructed, compared to the 43 that existed before 1978. On the political front the Government assigned MISURASATA one representative in the State Council. The mines were nationalised, and on February 29, 1980 through a decree issued by the Governing Junta of National Reconciliation, the right of all mineworkers (the majority of whom are Miskito) to be protected by social security was recognised. This expanded the rights and benefit to the miners and their families and made available pensions and cover for occupational risks - rights that had been historically denied by the multinational companies and Somoza's regime. Through great efforts some companies

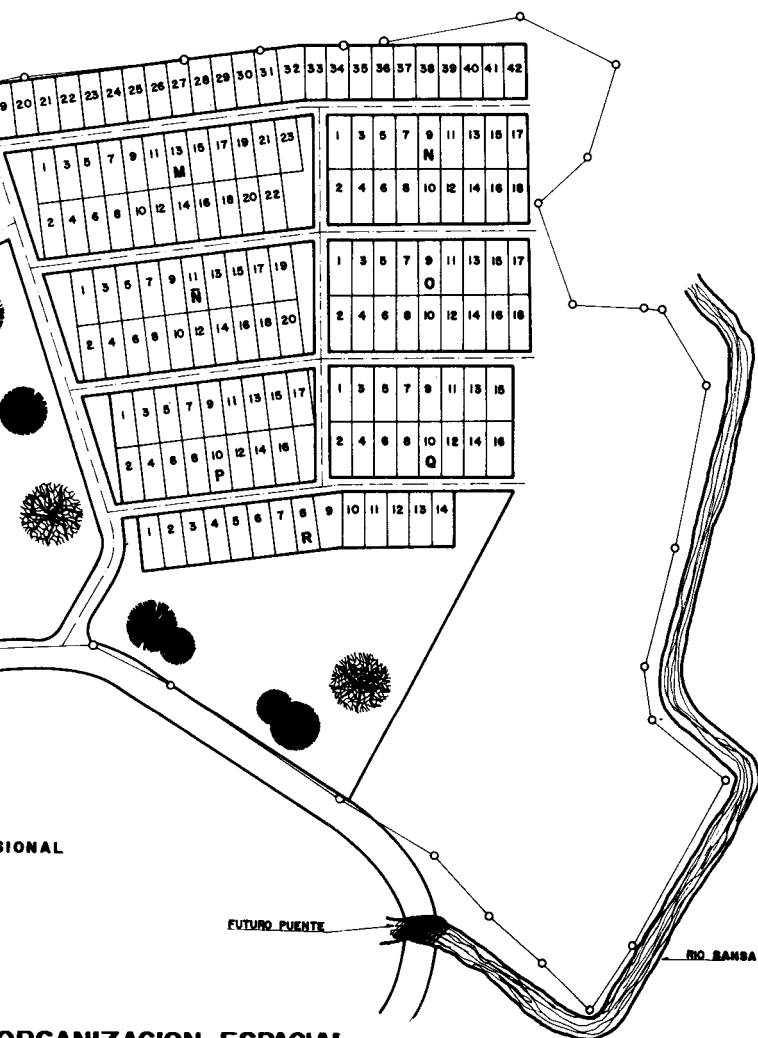
that had been abandoned by their owners after the Revolution's triumph were reopened. The National Development Bank during the period 1980-81 provided credit for agricultural production to the value of 36 million córdobas (\$3.6 million). This figure is 13 times greater than the credit made available to Miskito peasants over the period 1978-79, a year prior to the Revolution's triumph. Important plans for forestry development were implemented. On the question of the provision of basic foodstuffs to the population, great effort was made to reach the most isolated communities, who traditionally had not had access to basic consumption goods. The number of food stores was increased by 30. In North Zelaya 122 new popular stores were opened. The prices of basic foodstuffs such as salt, sugar, rice etc. was reduced, in some cases by as much as 100%.

MISURASATA's Plan

However, what has occurred on the other side? Today we understand that the actions of MISURASATA after the triumph of the Revolution was the product of a coldly calculated and designed policy by Yankee imperialism. While the Revolution acted with absolute honesty and with a great willingness to solve the historic problems of the indigenous population in the briefest possible time, while the Revolution obtained significant achievements in the fields of education, health, foodstuff provision, communications, etc., MISURASATA developed and led a policy to capitalise on these benefits, presenting them as their own achievements that had been attained against the will of the Government. Moreover, the literacy campaign in native languages in which the indigenous people themselves were the monitors was used by the brigadists and to a large extent those who were appointed to organise the campaign, as a medium for counter-revolutionary propaganda. Therefore, while on the one hand the achievements of the Revolution were presented to the population as concessions that had been squeezed out of the Government by MISURASATA, on the

Proposition for Parcellation and Special Organisation in
Tasba Pri. Source: JGRN:1982.





other hand they began to radically alter the content and profundity of the demands that the Miskito had initially and historically made.

To give one example, let us compare two proposals made by MISURASATA on the land question, one in 1980, the other in 1981. In 1980 MISURASATA's programme proposed the following: "Our Revolutionary Government must recognise and guarantee each indigenous community ownership of its territory. Titles should be duly registered into collective ownership that is continuous, and inalienable and is geographically large enough to ensure the growth of the communities". This demand conforms with the tradition and history of the community. But in 1981 they put forward a totally different demand, saying that the "age-old right of inheritance and possession of our territories is counter to that of property rights on a community basis, which they have always tried to impose upon us. We are not in agreement with this because it is against our interests and beliefs as peoples who possess their own rights". Within one year already they are not in agreement with the handing over of the lands to the indigenous communities. Instead they claim a portion of 45,000 km² of national territory, which is nearly all the Departamento Zelaya, thus passing from a legitimate proposal to a separatist proposal. For the benefit of those who have any doubts about the separatist content of this demand they add the following: "The right of indigenous peoples to land includes the right to the surface and subsoil, to inland waters and the coast." That is a total and absolute sovereign right over a portion of the nation's territory. Moreover, this territory would be inherited by Miskito, Sumu, Rama and Creoles, but Mestizos, or "Spaniards" as they are called, would be excluded. In other words, more than 170,000 poor campesinos would have to be expelled from this territory, who have been settled there for many decades. There is no doubt that apart from being separatist, this project promoted by MISURASATA's leadership is profoundly racist,

We see here a resurgence of the values and conceptions that throughout centuries were inculcated in these communities by colonialism. They reappear as a consequence of the conscious actions and plans to attain this end.

All this contains a paradox. Throughout decades the Somoza regime maintained the indigenous population in the utmost misery, but the leaders of ALPROMISU limited themselves - almost shamefacedly - to raising no more than a few timid demands.

Come the Revolution, and despite the fact that in one year more is done and greater benefits are attained for the region than throughout all the years of the Somoza dictatorship, a belligerent separatist plan appears. Imperialism's attempt to challenge the Revolution, acting through the leadership of MISURASATA, can clearly be seen. This is even clearer if we take into account the fact that MISURASATA began to receive finance from AID, that its leaders established contacts with right wing political parties, that North American finance existed for a radio station to function in the region and for the social institutions of the Churches. So, we see from one side proposals that increase their radical content, and from the other, a greater economic penetration by North American government institutions, as well as an intensification of ideological penetration by the Churches and the preparation of a conflict with the Revolution. This occurs because these proposals and others that accompany them, are not just presented to the Revolutionary Government, but are agitated for as a concrete programme within the communities. They then began to put into practice some of the propositions of that programme. At the beginning of last year some communities started to impede the free transit of government officials. They began to establish taxes and collect taxes in order to undertake certain activities, including those that benefitted the same communities. In other words, the separatist project began to materialise under our very

noses. MISURASATA undertook all this taking advantage of the confidence and good faith of the Revolutionary Government, which really had confidence in them and wished to establish an authentic revolutionary project in the region.

This situation rapidly became more complicated and separatism soon began to appear not just as an idea, but as a concrete plan, as a real fact of life. Given their level of economic and cultural development, the peoples of this region do not have any real possibility of a separate existence. Historically they have been subsidised by the Pacific. In other words, by the area of the country that possesses a greater development of productive forces. Traditionally additional food assistance, special education programmes etc. have gone there, which cannot be sustained by the Atlantic region's own economic activity. The only people who could benefit from this separatist project are the North American imperialists. Faced with this situation the Revolutionary Government decided to detain Steadman Fagoth, who was discovered to be an agent of Somoza's Security Office OSN. This was proved with files found in the archives of the Security Office as well as his own statements. Other leaders were arrested but quickly released. There was a protest by the Miskito population over the detention of Steadman Fagoth. The Revolutionary Government, overestimating the errors committed by the revolution, while underestimating imperialism's intentions and counter-revolutionary action, decided to parole Steadman Fagoth. It did this in order to make a further effort to resolve the problem through discussion, through peaceful means, through reaching an agreement. However, an ingenious act soon occurred and recently Steadman Fagoth has declared to the Miami Herald that from January 1981 the leadership of MISURASATA has decided to declare total war on the Sandinist Revolution and the FSLN. They made this declaration of war during the closing ceremony of the literacy crusade in native languages.

Logically, Steadman Fagoth took advantage of his conditional discharge to escape to Honduras and take with him important groups of the Mískito population. Then the imperialist plan began to unfold with total clarity.

The counter-revolutionaries received immediate support from the Honduran army. Steadman Fagoth travels with complete freedom in Honduran territory, he visits the USA, he has ample finance, and the counter-revolutionary radio station 15 de Setiembre controlled by the Somozists and the ex-National Guard began to give every support to the activities of these counter-revolutionaries. The organs of international propaganda, the multinationals manipulated by imperialism began to exaggerate the problem. Those that left for Honduras were organised in camps and began to prepare themselves militarily.

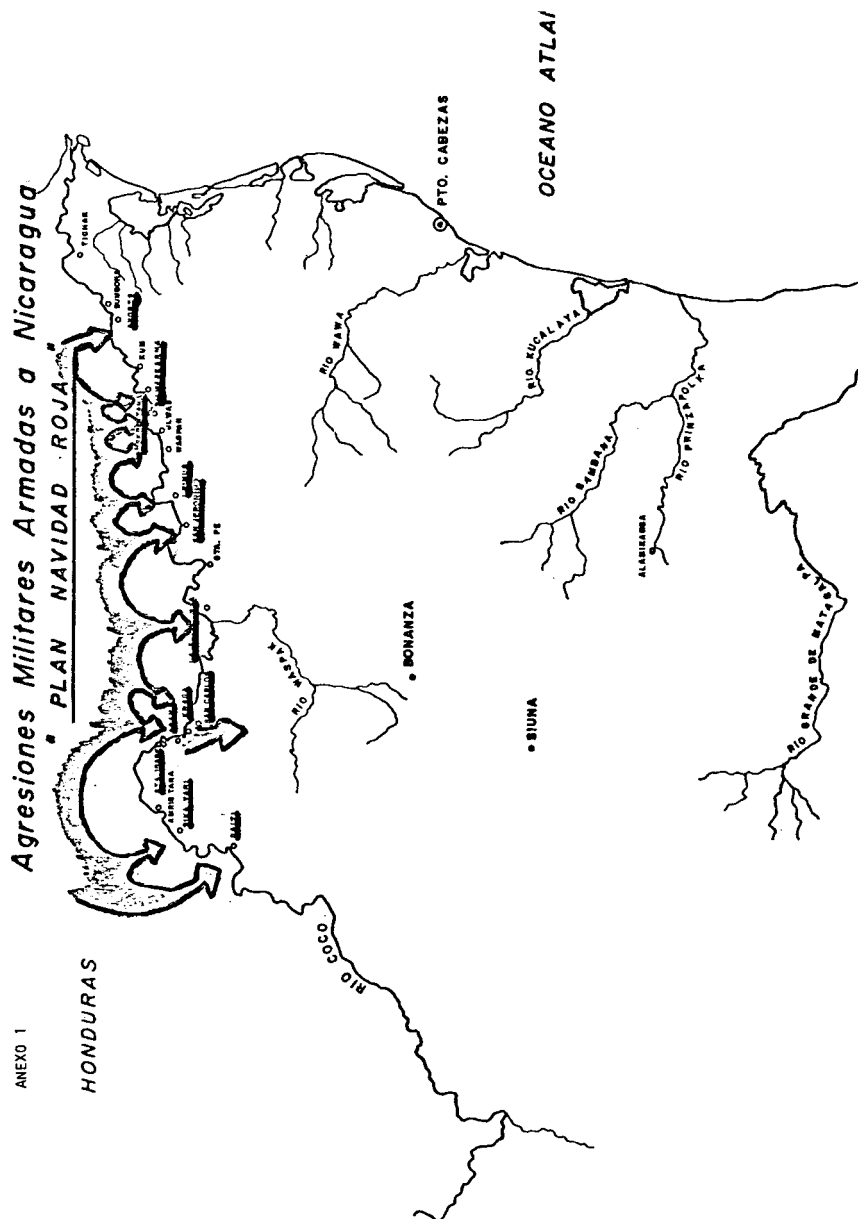
Meanwhile, inside the country MISURASATA passed into clandestinity and began to prepare an armed uprising. This organisational effort by MISURASATA was complemented by ideological and propagandist actions emanating from an important sector of the Church - in the first place the Moravian Church, and secondly the Catholic Church. These converted themselves into the political party of the counter-revolutionaries, inciting the population via their religious influence (which is extremely powerful in this region as we have already explained), to adopt counter-revolutionary positions. This plan was to culminate in an event planned for December of last year, which they named "Operation Red Christmas". This plan had as its objective a general uprising of the Mískito population in North Zelaya following a military take-over of the settlements along the Río Coco by the counter-revolutionary bands.

The general uprising would permit the intervention of foreign forces, of international organisations who would support and give recognition to the insurrectionist forces,

and in this fashion finalise the separatist plan. (Here the communities that were the object of armed incursions by the counter-revolutionary bands are marked on a map and underlined. Arrows mark the points that were to be the object of attack under the plan "Red Christmas".) -see map p. 261.

Among the assassinations committed by these bands, it is sufficient to mention that of Ministry of the Interior official Granico Eden Tom, a Creole who was carried off to Honduras. Once he was there he was tortured to death. During the month of December 1981, military activities notably increased, leaving on this occasion a total of 34 deaths among members of the Sandinist Armed Forces and the inhabitants of the communities of Auris Tara, Araug, San Carlos, Asang and Krasa. Prominent among these criminal counter-revolutionary acts were the violations of Dr. Mirna Cunningham (who is in charge of health in the region) and the nurse Regina Lewis. They were kidnapped and suffered multiple rape before being returned to Nicaraguan territory. It is important to stress that these compañeras are of Miskito origin, and that various of those killed by the counter-revolutionary actions were also Miskito. This illustrates that it is not simply a struggle over ethnic demands, but a fight that is led by people who have a clear counter-revolutionary political orientation. Why was Dr. Cunningham the victim of their aggression? Simply because she supports the Revolution. The same applies to the other Miskito who work with the Revolution. They are constantly threatened via Radio 15 de Setiembre, they are harrassed in their homes, receive anonymous letters etc.. Apart from this, we have captured a letter which gives guidelines to a member of a community to identify those who collaborate with the Sandinists, because they are going to kill them. Throughout January, more attacks, ambushes and the blowing up of bridges took place, as well as assassinations of members of the armed forces and the inhabitants of those communities adjacent to the Río Coco, such as Raití,

Military Aggression against Nicaragua "Plan Red Christmas".



Truskayeri, Siksayeri and others. Violations of Nicaraguan air space were made by Honduran planes and helicopters, which flew over the communities of Leimus, San Carlos, Bilwaskarma and Asang. Honduran troops were mobilised on the other side of the border. These attacks have practically cut the Río Coco route, which is the only means of communication that these communities possess. There is no communication by land, nor by air; only by water. The constant ambushes, nearly all executed from the Honduran side, reached a stage where they paralysed movement on the river and impeded supplies to the communities. Under these circumstances, the counter-revolutionary bands entered the communities to try and take their inhabitants back with them to Honduras, offering them the goods which had been prevented from arriving due to the actions of the very same counter-revolutionary bands.

Another important point to note, is the religious character that the counter-revolutionaries have given to their actions. For example, the rape of Dr. Cunningham occurred while a group was singing religious songs. Some of the groups who have been receiving military training undertake it to the accompaniment of religious songs. The principal leaders carrying out the counter-revolutionary armed actions have been pastors of the Moravian Church. In other words, here we see how the Moravian Church is playing a clear leadership role in all the counter-revolutionary activity. That is, not just as an apparatus for issuing and disseminating propaganda, but also as an organiser for armed actions. It takes advantage of the ideological control it exercises over the population to make this population confront the Revolution. This plan repeats once again the history of the Mískito: that of being utilised by the colonial powers and in this case imperialism, against their own brothers, against their people and against the only realistic possibility they have to satisfy their legitimate aspiration and demands. North American involvement in this plan has lately been clearly demonstrated. They even went to

the extreme of taking Steadman Fagoth to the State Department to make a public statement, so to stoke up the campaign against the Sandinist Revolution.

The evacuation

Under these circumstances, the Revolutionary Government decided to evacuate the population along the banks of the Río Coco. The first motive for this was one of defence - it was not possible to provide protection for this population which was dispersed over more than 200 kilometres in small communities, in small groups. There were not enough soldiers to station them in all these localities. The second motive was the very survival of these communities, who were already beginning to become the victims of hunger and illness due to the impossibility of supplying them with food and medicine. The third motive was to try and provide the inhabitants with the better conditions they deserved, rather than those which they had had on the banks of the Río Coco.

The evacuation took place. This evacuation was a complex, difficult operation, and one of great importance. First, because there are no means of transport. There is no possibility of transport. The population had to leave on foot to a point where we had managed to construct a road with the express purpose of cutting the distance that the inhabitants had to cover by foot. This road reached as far as a community called Santa Fé. However, the pregnant women, the sick, the aged and the children were brought out by plane and helicopter. It took hundreds of hours of flying time. For the Sandinist Air Force alone the evacuation signified an expenditure of 700,000 Córdobas (\$70,000), a very large sum given our limited economic resources. However, it was spent with resolution by the Revolutionary Government in order to make the already difficult process of evacuation less problematic. For this reason, there was not even one loss through illness or accident during this long evacuation. As a result of the transfer not even one child died on us, nor any previously sick person. Prior to

the evacuation efforts of persuasion were made. The community leaders, the pastors and the health aides patiently explained to the population the need to leave the zone, as was the way in which it would be conducted. To a large extent the communities understood the need for resettlement, despite the fact that via Radio 15 de Setiembre the Moravian pastor Silvio Díaz called on the Mískito to cross the river, threatening them with terrible predictions of the future if they agreed to the evacuation, the evacuation occurred voluntarily on the part of the Mískito communities thanks to the work in persuasion undertaken. They offered no resistance and this allowed the rapid and safe transfer of the population. Some groups who wished to move via the river were kidnapped and carried off to Honduras, children and sick women included. The counter-revolutionaries themselves later stated on Radio 15 de Setiembre that the motive for this was to create refugee camps in Honduras in order to justify the aid of international organizations and thus supply the military camps.

Medical posts were established and manned by pediatricians and an obstetrician. During the evacuation each child had the right to one litre of milk per day. Via the radio that operated from La Tronquera the population sent messages to their families, relaying messages about the regrouping points, as well as calling on those that were on the Honduras side to cross over into Nicaragua, rebuffing the accusations of the Somozists.

Really, many anecdotes could be told about this episode in the history of the Mískito, anecdotes filled with emotion, sadness, but also of hope. This action by the Revolution frustrated the criminal and separatist plan of imperialism. This has provoked its rage and led to an intensification in the international campaign against the Revolution.

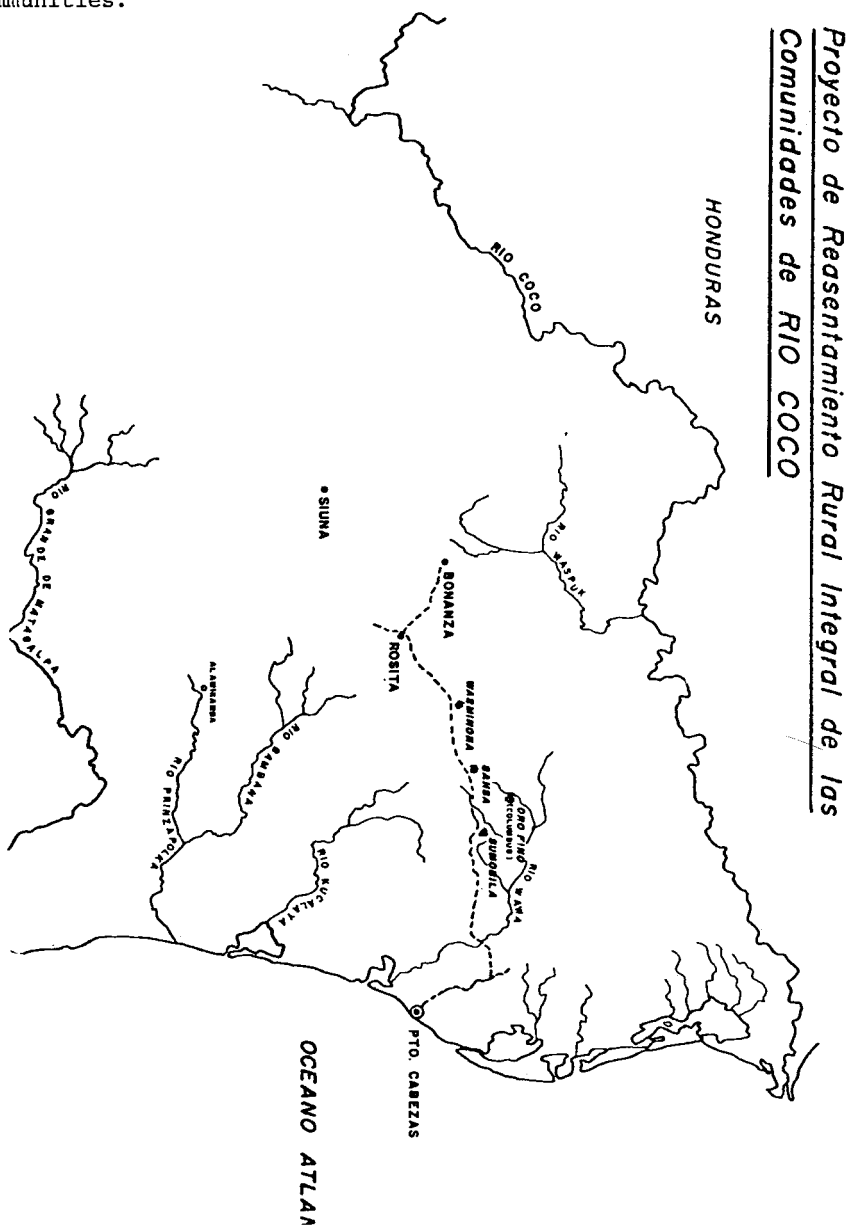
The new settlements

To conclude, I want to describe the conditions and prospects of the place where the Mískito population were resettled,

compared to the conditions in which they previously lived. On the banks of the Río Coco they were obliged to pursue a subsistence agriculture. The inhabitants were obliged to produce with little possibility of accumulating a surplus due to the scarcity of cultivable lands. Indeed, this forced them to cultivate some land in Honduran territory. Another feature was the inaccessible nature of the locality. The only means of access was the river. Frequent flooding is another factor to note when describing their conditions, for during the winter the river rose and inundated the population. Practically every 2 or 3 years they became victims and traditionally large collections and aid were organised to send to the population of the Río Coco. These communities were "historical victims".

Due to the aforementioned factors it was logical that high incidences of tuberculosis, infant malnutrition and all kinds of illnesses developed in the population, in addition to the cultural misery and neglect that existed. With the resettlement, we wish not only to protect the communities, but also to resolve this long-standing problem. In order to execute this plan, zones were chosen on the basis of their similarity to those of the river with respect to flora and fauna. (See map p.266.) The new settlements are located in a geographical zone that the Mískito consider as their natural habitat. The architectural plan of the hamlets will try to reproduce the same basic social relations and communal structure. The zones have adequate communications and it is feasible, in the short term, to install electric and water services. Transport already exists and at this moment health services are available, services which have never previously been known in their communities. They are going to be handed their lands. They are going to get titles to their property, to two plots. One a small plot on which to construct their houses, sufficiently large so that they can maintain their pigs, chickens and domestic animals. The other will be a

Rural Integrated Resettlement Project of the Río Coco communities.



large plot for their cultivation, which they can organise in a co-operative or communal form according to their traditional customs. This land will be titled and they will be given ownership over it. The project covers 53,543 hectares of land. Facilities have been prepared for the construction of churches, schools and community centres. At this moment they are in a transitory situation, living in temporary shacks. But the parcellation of plots has already commenced, and the first 300 prefabricated dwellings are ready to be transported from the Pacific region where the Government has them prepared.

Really, these new settlements signify for the Mískito population a qualitative change in their living conditions, and this qualitative change in their living conditions we intend to realise without the destruction of their traditions, values or social organisation. The Revolutionary Government published a Declaration of Principles last year, in which they outlined their position with respect to the ethnic minorities. This established respect for their culture, their language, right to land and respect for their laws as basic rights. It also recognised their right to receive benefits from the exploitation of the lumber found in that zone, as well as the encouragement and promotion of traditions that have already been almost forgotten, even by the indigenous peoples themselves.

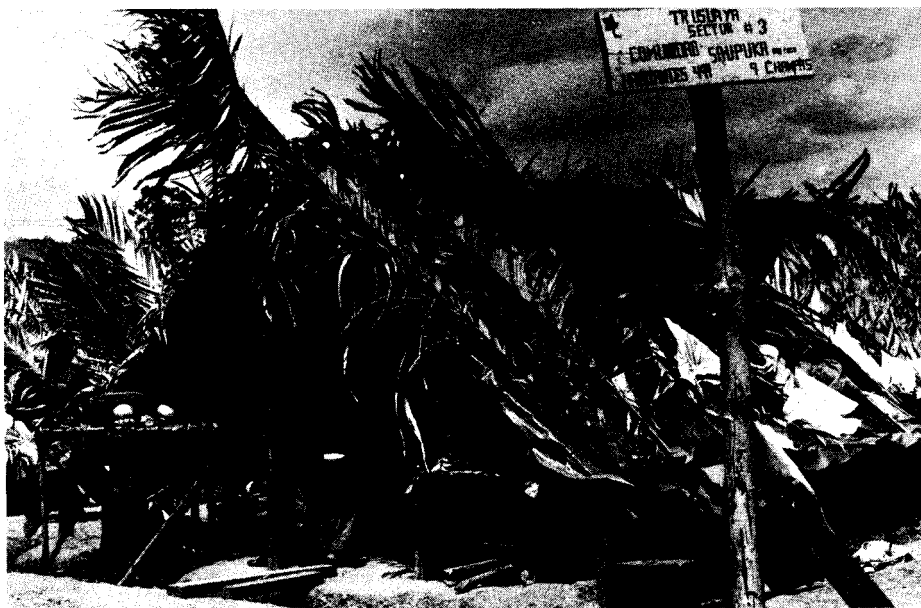
We are going to respect all these rights. We are going to resolve this problem in a fashion that will provide an example for Latin America.

Conclusion

But we are clear, as we should all be clear, that we are making this effort in the face of extraordinary seige and harrassment on the part of imperialism. It has not always been possible to implement our principles in the way we would have wished. It has not always been possible to give the Mískito all the autonomy that theoretically we would have

wished to give them. This is because the struggle of the Miskito minority for their demands is subordinate to another greater struggle: the efforts of imperialism to destroy the Sandinist Revolution and the duty and right of the Revolution to defend revolutionary power and the conquests of the Nicaraguan people as a whole. What is really happening on the Atlantic Coast is one episode more in the long-standing clash of our people with Yankee imperialism, which this time utilises the Miskito through their counter-revolutionary leaders, but in other places uses the Somozist counter-revolutionary bands, utilises the ideological apparatus in the interior of the country such as La Prensa, utilises the reactionary parties, utilises all the arsenal of political and terroristic weapons that imperialism has at its disposal to destroy us.

This is the truth about the situation on the Atlantic Coast.



Tasba Pri: in the new settlement Truslaya, March 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).

GABRIEL BELL, MINERVA WILSON, MARCELO ZUNIGA AND GALIO GURDIAN (CIDCA):

"THERE WAS NOT TOO MUCH RESISTENCE DURING THE RELOCATION"

Source: Interview with Mordecai Specktor,

1

Question: Would you review recent events in Nicaragua leading up to the resettlement of Río Coco villages?

Gabriel Bell: On November 15, 1981, there were violent confrontations along the Río Coco; people were dragged across the river into Honduras. People were so afraid that they went into the mountains at night to hide.

On the 21st December, they attacked the community of San Carlos, from which I am from. The attack came from counter-revolutionaries across the river in Honduras. Looking back on 1981, we see it as a very sad year for the people of the Río Coco.

They began snatching people from the community. People were using both sides of the river for planting beans and rice on November 15 when the attacks began. I was travelling along the river in November and December, preparing for the planting of the beans, and it was at that time that many of the villages came under attack by the counter-revolutionaries. So, the planting season had to be postponed for a time, so the people could defend themselves.

Question: Who composed the attacking forces coming from Honduras?

Gabriel Bell: It was a combination of Miskito and ex-Somozist National Guardsmen.

When the Sandinist soldiers came to confront the counter-revolutionaries it was very difficult, because they had imposed themselves, infiltrated among the people, so it was

1. Gabriel Bell works at the Nicaraguan Ministry for Agrarian Reform INRA, Minerva Wilson and Marcelo Zúñiga at the governmental Investigation Centre for the Atlantic Coast CIDCA - they are Miskito Indians. Galio Gurdíán is social anthropologist and director of CIDCA.

difficult for the Government to separate the counter-revolutionaries from the people living in the community. It was difficult in the beginning to find out who were the people instigating this trouble.

The counter-revolutionaries were in San Carlos for a few hours, then they crossed back to their camps. The Government was forced to relocate the people from the area of the river because they couldn't do anything there. They were in a position where they had to move the people into a different region.

Marcelo Zúñiga: The river is used as a means of transportation. People travel via the river to gather or cultivate their crops. Miskito live on both sides of the river, but most villages are on the Nicaraguan side.

We believe that the Reagan administration planned to disrupt the situation by assisting ex-Somozists. The major aspect of the problem came on the river when launches were intercepting the people who were going to pick the crops, going to look at the cultivation.

Most of the problems came about along the river. The attacks were more on the civilians who were travelling on the river, carrying supplies and food, even to the point that the Red Cross, flying their own flag, was not allowed to use the river; they were disrupted as well.

Within the atrocities there were about 60 killed on the Nicaraguan side, both Miskito and members of the military.

Gabriel Bell: The major attacks came on the 28th of December, 1981, when a boat carrying supplies and food, 5,000 pounds of supplies, was attacked. This was the first attack on a shipment of food that was passing from San Carlos to various communities.

When the counter-revolutionaries attacked the boat, many of the people, the captain and the crew, escaped, and they ran

into the hills in Honduras. People from the nearby community, La Juntera, feared that their safety might be endangered by the counter-revolutionaries accusing them of hiding the people from the boat, so they in their turn fled to avoid repercussions.

On the 8th of January, 1982, the ministers from the Assembly of God, these representatives were sent to bring the people back out again, for truly they were not responsible for the acts which had taken place. But the people turned them down.

The Church officials having failed went to talk to them again to see if they would return. So, a delegation of six of the leaders of the people who had fled came back and met with the officials of the Moravian Church to discuss the possibility of being able to come back. They discussed returning on the following day to their villages in Nicaraguga.

About 38 men, women and children returned on the following day. The people were taken to the community of Leimus, where they waited for more people to come from across the river. Other people came from several communities, and everyone was taken seven kilometres inland to avoid border confrontations.

After the people had walked seven kilometres inland they were met by 23 trucks, which took them to the settlement of Wasminona.

A lot of the old people and women began to cry because they had no idea where they were going. The soldiers began telling them that they would be taken to a community where they would be safe from the attacks and danger along the border.

Having arrived in the middle of the night at Wasminona, the people were lodged in temporary tents, and the following day the men and soldiers began erecting solid structures for

the people to stay in. There were more than 1,500 people.

On the 15th of January these people arrived and a few days later people from the northern region of San Carlos, and from San Alberto, Santa Fé, San Jerónimo and Bulcipe, they also arrived on the 15th to begin settlement there.

The people who could not walk the distance, the old men, old women, pregnant women and children were flown by helicopter to sites where they would stay. The other people who were able to walk the distance, walked into an area where the trucks were waiting for them, to transport them further.

Question: Was there resistance to the relocation?

Gabriel Bell: The people of San Carlos, Pascan and Krasi were aware of the danger when they were moved, but people in other villages were not aware of the atrocities taking place elsewhere - they did not want to move. They did not know the danger that existed, but they, along with others, were moved as well, for their safety.

Question: Did they exert strong resistance to being moved?

Gabriel Bell: There was not too much resistance, because a lot of people explained to them why it was necessary to evacuate.

Question: Their houses were then burned, along with their crops, and their livestock slaughtered?

Gabriel Bell: After the people had moved out, the counter-revolutionaries came in and occupied the houses. They were met by Sandinist soldiers going in to ensure that the villages were clear. The soldiers were met by gunfire, in which case they were forced to burn some of these areas, to weed out the counter-revolutionaries.

I was with the people during the relocation, because I was one of those explaining to them why it was necessary to do these things. There were not many soldiers able to speak

their language, so I was part of the group explaining the resettlement plans to the communities.

Question: Then you were going with the soldiers to different villages?

Gabriel Bell: That's right.

Question: Were people allowed to take along their own personal possessions?

Gabriel Bell: People were allowed to take a few items, but they couldn't take too many things, because it was a long trip. They took clothing and some of their personal items, but they couldn't take too much because the trip took a long time. The trip lasted eight days - it was almost impossible to take many things by foot.

Some of the older people and some young people were very sad that they had to leave their villages; some others were happy.

The reason that many of the animals had to be killed is that the counter-revolutionaries were coming across the border and taking crops and animals over to their side, so they could replenish themselves. So, the soldiers were in a position where they had to kill the animals, so the counter-revolutionaries could not take them back with them.

Question: Are you now living in a resettlement area?

Gabriel Bell: Initially I was at the community of Wasminona, but because the land can only hold so many people in certain communities, there were other communities established, such as Sahsa, where I am living now.

Marcelo Zúñiga: Initially there were six communities, one being provisional. Now there are five communities remaining, and I have been to the various communities. My work is in the development of these communities, so it is necessary for me to travel among these communities, live among them. I am not staying in one place; I stay where I am working.

Question: A North American working in Nicaragua told me recently that conditions in the resettlements are difficult...

Marcelo Zúniga: I want it to be known that my parents are living in one of the communities.

The difficulties in the development were not really in the development, but in the understanding. A lot of people had a difficult time understanding what was going on. The difficulties in the development, or the adjustment were not as strong as people seem to think. A major problem was the understanding.

Question: Will the people return to their villages along the Río Coco?

Marcelo Zúniga: The resettlements are called Tasba Pri, which means "free land". The arrangements that were made with the people and the Government were that these new free communities would be the future communities.

Question: Are there sentiments among the people to return?

Marcelo Zúniga: Initially there were a lot of problems, but the resettlements were made as permanent settlements, offering housing, medical assistance, schools, so it was geared more to a permanent settlement. The situation for the future cannot be really clearly seen, because the counter-revolutionaries are still across the water, and can attack anytime over the river. So in a sense, the settlements that are inland have been permanently established.

Minerva Wilson: We also have to look at the cost and the effort and time that was put into these resettlements. A lot has gone into it, an undetermined amount of money has gone into these new settlements, and it would be foolish to say that this money was spent for nothing, that eventually everybody will go back to the Río Coco.

At the same time, this move was made to improve the conditions regarding schools, regarding health, as Marcelo

has mentioned earlier regarding a lot of other difficulties that the people had before. Instead of revitalising these areas in their old region, the efforts were concentrated into the resettlements.

Living in one of the communities I have heard how people talk of their desire to go home and start again, but these discussions are open and people will give their opinions and feelings. Even the young people when they ask their elders: "Why is it that we are here?", a lot of the old people explain that the settlements have been made better, and this is where the new communities will grow from.

Gabriel Bell: Initially a lot of the people felt very sad because they had to abandon their homelands, however, in the move inland they realised a lot of services that had not been made available to them in the past. There was free medical care, cookware was provided, and clothing for the children. And their biggest fear was that the counter-revolutionaries were telling them that the Sandinist soldiers were taking them away to kill them.

When they got there and saw the medical service, the housing that wasn't available before, they began to realise that the adjustment was made for the better. Presently, there are 57 youngsters in Managua who have enrolled in the High School. So, in a sense, a lot of people have realised that it wasn't as bad or as dangerous as they were told, but perhaps the situation was for the better.

Question: There is a story circulating about 60 Miskito burned alive in a church. This supposed atrocity is blamed on Sandinist soldiers.

Gabriel Bell; That could be disputed, because nobody saw it. There had been talk passed from different areas, and especially talk from across the river in Honduras from people who were constantly trying to move into these communities, trying to infiltrate the various communities. They were saying that

these 60 had been killed by the Sandinists, when in effect a lot of them died during the transition. No one can really visually or orally document this, except what they heard being passed from mouth to mouth - it cannot be documented.

Sixty is the number of people who died between the 15th of November into the beginning of this year. But someone had taken that number and made it into a killing inside a church.

Marcelo Zúniga: These sixty people had died during armed resistance by the counter-revolutionaries. Old men were kidnapped by the counter-revolutionaries, families were separated, counter-revolutionaries were infiltrating certain groups. The people who were killed in the fights at that time, their number was added to what became sixty, people who died during the transition. The precise news that sixty people had been killed at a church is false.

Question: Do people state where the alleged massacre took place?

Minerva Wilson: It's just another lie put into a very sensitive issue. A lot of people took to that because it hit their heart, but it's another lie.

Marcelo Zúniga: It's true that houses were burned, and some located at a distance from the border that were not associated with the removals. None of these were burned while people were inside. That's the issue as it stands.

Question: After the Sandinist victory, an Indian organisation called MISURASATA was formed. Subsequently, a conflict emerged between the Sandinist Government and MISURASATA leaders. What happened between these groups?

Marcelo Zúniga: It is true that the Government had accepted and facilitated the means for MISURASATA to be the representative for the people on the Atlantic Coast. At the beginning of 1981, the activities that MISURASATA was carrying out consolidated opposition to the Sandinist Government, they created attitudes against the Sandinists.

MISURASATA was capitalising on inherent problems, conditions that the Sandinists inherited, especially unemployment. They focused on these problems, using them to create divisions. As we know there were already historical problems with people from the Pacific Coast, ethnocentric problems against the Spanish.

Rather than listen to the government authorities, the people would listen to MISURASATA leaders, because they knew that they had been given a certain authority by the Government. The people had more respect for MISURASATA.

Because of the make-up and nature of those who conducted the activities of MISURASATA, that is, being of right wing beliefs, not only adhering to right wing causes, but one of the members was directly with the right wing - then it started taking an attitude that was very belligerent toward the Government. This one person was professional - I wouldn't say that Norman Campbell was principally the problem, but the organisation started going more toward the right wing.

This is why, more and more, I began to see that they were capitalising on problems, more and more taking the MDN party line. Now we can see historically what has happened, as it took a position on the right with the MDN. We see that the leaders of the MDN party are now outside Nicaragua and openly struggling, attacking Nicaragua. The majority of Miskito campesinos cannot understand all the problems with the conduct of their organisation.

Question: Gabriel, what was your position with MISURASATA, or the predecessor organisation ALPROMISU?

Gabriel Bell: My participation as far as ALPROMISU was like a fanatic. I belong to an agricultural organisation, the ATC, and that organisation did not accept being under the leadership of two groups. I did not participate as a leader in MISURASATA.

The significance of MISURASATA was that you had Miskito, Sumu and Rama Indians united. This was the original concept. I was in another branch, working in the leadership of the agricultural workers, working directly with the men, organising, I was not with MISURASATA, but was with the Miskito as a leader.

Also, this was during the Somoza years that I was working in this way. During the Somoza era, we had a club of agricultural workers, and I was president of that agricultural worker's club. Since the Revolution, the people have elected me as president of that club - now it is a part of the ATC. The leaders of MISURASATA were saying that ATC was controlled by the Sandinists.

My work in the Atlantic Coast area is with the Miskito people, for the progress of the people, that is what I am doing through this organising.

I talked with Steadman Fagoth at one time in Managua. I confronted him and said, look, why don't you look at the Miskito economy as a crisis for the well-being of the Miskito. Since MISURASATA had not approached it that way, my organisation started approaching the National Development Bank of Nicaragua to get the necessary funds to start that kind of development.

These maximum leaders, communal leaders of MISURASATA, they are all basically egotists - they want to give the word by themselves. Even though they saw that things were progressing, were happening through the ATC, the leadership of the ATC people, through changes I had helped make in the organisation, they began to focus on me specifically, calling me an "oreja" (ear), an agent for the Sandinists.

Until recently this was the case, and they avenged themselves on my brother, who was kidnapped. We don't know his whereabouts.

Question: When did this happen?

Gabriel Bell: In the month of December, 1981, San Carlos, Río Coco. In fact, I am working along with my people, struggling with my people, and they do recognise me as a leader because I am right there.

Question: Some people suggest that MISURASATA was dismantled by the Sandinists because it posed a challenge to their hegemony over the Atlantic Coast. Such analyses point out that ALPROMISU was a parallel organisation to the FSLN, a potent organisation on the Atlantic Coast.

Marcelo Zúñiga: In a 1979 assembly it was decided to change the name of ALPROMISU to MISURASATA. ALPROMISU was parallel in terms of time, it was happening on the Atlantic Coast at the same time, but Somoza never wanted to recognise that. At the time of the triumph things changed - in 1979 they started attacking the Sandinist Government. The organisation was used to attack the Government, using the conditions it inherited.

Galio Gurdíán: Armstrong Wiggins (a leader in MISURASATA, now residing in the U.S.) uses the word parallel as if ALPROMISU was actually struggling, fighting against Somoza. The nature of ALPROMISU was entirely different from what the FSLN was, so it is misleading to use the term parallel. It is parallel in the sense that they were co-existing at the same time, but not in any other sense.

Question: And that MISURASATA was disbanded because it was a threat to Sandinist rule on the Atlantic Coast?

Marcelo Zúñiga: That is Armstrong Wiggins' point of view, but it is not the whole organisation's point of view. The base didn't feel that, didn't have that point of view.

Since the leadership of MISURASATA didn't have much faith in themselves. They had no security or confidence in themselves and focused on the Sandinists. When they saw that their objectives weren't being met, when they couldn't

deliver as an organisation, then they started using the Sandinists as a scapegoat. The Sandinists were watching MISURASATA closely, but they were watching to learn about our culture and traditions of the Atlantic Coast region - it was a British colony. We're Mískito, not Hispanicised.

Question: There seemed to be a dispute over sovereignty. The Sandinists claim national sovereignty over all of Nicaragua, and the MISURASATA leaders were making claims to their land on the Atlantic Coast. The point I am getting at, what I would like you to talk about, is that people could look at the resettlements and say that this creates a de facto colonial situation. The Mískito have been removed from their villages on the Río Coco to these settlements, and their land is now available to the National Government to do with as they please.

Marcelo Zúniga: I don't think so in the sense that the Government says that they will respect the traditions and the culture of the communities. On the other hand, the reasons for the resettlement were not to take away the land, as we explained before, the measure was taken for military reasons in most of the communities, and in others because of the problem of flooding. It was very hard to provide assistance that was needed there. At the same time, the resettlements are 50,000 hectares (125,000 acres), which is much more land than the communities had in the river.

It is contradictory, in that the land has been delivered to the people for their benefit. They are planting now and they will use the production of the land for their benefit. Even though the people don't have the big river, like the Río Coco, in that area, those are good lands, they are the best lands in the area.

Question: Is it a system of collectivised agriculture in the resettlement communities? How does it differ from the system that existed along the Río Coco?

Marcelo Zúniga: In the land tenure system it was communal in the sense that communities had their land. In the communal land each individual had his own plot, with the labour force of the extended family working that place for the surplus, or the production would belong to him. So you have these different combinations.

Question: Is there a change then in the relationship to the land in the new settlements?

Minerva Wilson: We still have many problems in that sense even though the people have received a plot where their house is going to be. But in relation to land where the people are going to plant, that hasn't been solved yet. The communities haven't received a title for the 50,000 hectares, even though the Government has promised that and demonstrated their goodwill - they have to push for that.

Galio Gurdián: In the land tenure system of the new settlements we try to reproduce the basic relations of production that were in the river. That means holding the land collectively and trying to use these forms of pre-cooperatives.

There is going to be a change probably in the sense that the division of surplus is going to be within the co-operatives, not with individuals. We think that is a step forward in terms of organising better the ways of production. And in terms of the land tenure system, we talked before we came to the United States to the minister, and the formal title hasn't been given, that's true, but the land belongs to the communities.

For the initial question, paradoxically, the resettlement from the border to the inland, instead of making those lands national lands, has deepened the foothold of the Miskito people in that territory. Now you have the second largest settlement in the area, the new settlements, you have a big population. You see, the Miskito people were up in the north, and they're moving back to where they were before,

and that makes the territory even more Mískito land, instead of the other way around.

Question: What is your job?

Galio Gurdián: I'm in charge of the social aspects of the resettlements, the socio-economic aspects.

Question: In this issue of Akwesasne Notes, there is a discussion of an INNICA study in November 1980, which addressed the integration of the Río Coco villagers into the mainstream of the Nicaraguan economy. The authors of this article assert that in the name of Socialism an apparatus resembling the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs is moving to create reservations, a government-dependent lifestyle for Indian people. Also, after viewing the videotape about the resettlements last night, some people commented that they resembled reservation housing. I'd like your response to this.

Marcelo Zúniga: I lived in a small community downriver, Tuskru-Sirpi. Those communities were flooded and had to be moved to a different area.

Galio Gurdián: I can give you some historical information on that study. It's true that it was made in November of 1980 for the downriver communities, about fifteen communities. Every year these people are flooded by the river - the people knew the purpose of the study. The MISURASATA leaders knew the purpose of the study. The study was undertaken in an attempt to solve a chronic problem.

Question: In this Akwesasne Notes article (Late Spring 1982), "Revolutionary Contradictions: Miskitos and Sandinistas in Nicaragua" by John Mohawk and Shelton Davis, there is a discussion of the Bosawas forest reserve. They state that the Indians and the MISURASATA leaders accused the Sandinist Government of using the Bosawas project (a forest reserve) as a means of rationalising the local resources.

Gabriel Gurdián: That's entirely their interpretation. They interpret very freely many of the things we have done. We sent a letter to the people in Cultural Survival, explaining what was meant by the Bosawas reservation.

In our country there is a growing tendency for the peasants from the Pacific to go into the mountains, and with this system of slash and burn they destroy the forest. It is not only the indigenous problem in the area - you have to take into account the whole complex problem of the agricultural frontier growing toward the area of the Indian people.

So that is what is meant by this decree. It's not like making the reservation national lands - it's to prevent the people from the border departments, who plant rice and beans, who cut and burn down the forests, to prevent them from doing that.

For example, I was telling Marcelo before, I was working for the Agricultural Reform Agency, and we were trying to set up popular stores where the people would buy basic foods. MISURASATA leaders were telling the community, this was in Alamicamba, that we were setting up that store in order to... at the end of the year we would have a big receipt saying that you owe the Government, say, 10,000 Córdobas, and you have to give us back your land. And that was the kind of wicked relationship that MISURASATA, almost from the beginning, was trying to build.

And it was the same thing with the Bosawas reservation. If you take out of context the things, the problems that were there, sure, you can say anything. Like, MISURASATA never mentioned, for example, the Agrarian Reform Agency had to deal with peasants from the Pacific who were encroaching in a Sumu community - take them away, and fight with them almost; people who are now in counter-revolutionary bands, because we took them out of the indigenous people's land. And there were people who fought for that, Spanish campesinos with the

Sumu Indians, and there were these kind of fights inside, and we were trying to prevent that. MISURASATA didn't want to resolve that problem, because they wanted these contradictions to grow up.

Question: At the time of the Prinzapolka incident, February 1981, when fighting broke out between Sandinists and MISURASATA supporters, where were you, and what did you think of the conflict that was emerging?

Minerva Wilson: I was in Nicaragua. At that time you could see the plan they had coming out, a plan that was developed since the literacy campaign in native languages.

In some way Prinzapolka happened because there was a provocation. Beside the four Miskito people who died there, also four people from the army died. It is necessary to give a balanced account of what happened.

Marcelo Zúñiga: Here, in this case, there were two contradictory attitudes. On the one hand, the army that didn't understand the people, and on the other hand, the people who didn't want to obey the authorities. Also involved was the work of MISURASATA, the confrontation policies.



Tasba Pri: In the new settlement Wasminona, March 1982 (Cordelia Dilg).

ROBIN SCHNEIDER:

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE NICARAGUAN ATLANTIC COAST

The emphasis in this survey of literature has been laid on ethnographical texts as well as on texts of development policy and current policy concerning ethnic regionalism and Nicaragua's national efforts to achieve integration. The titles which are published in this book are marked with an asterisk.

- Adams, R.N., 1979: An interview with the leaders of MISURASATA, Austin (Texas), Typed manuscript.
- Adams, R.N., 1981: The dynamics of Social Diversity: Notes from Nicaragua for a Sociology of Survival. American Ethnologist Vol.VIII No.1. pp.1-20.
- Adams, R.N., 1981: The Sandinistas and the Indians, the "Problem" of the Indians in Nicaragua. Caribbean Review, Vol.X, No.1, pp 23-25, 55-56.
- Americas Watch, 1982: Report on Human Rights in Nicaragua, New York, May (Conflicts with Miskito Indians pp.51-87).
- Amnesty International, 1982: AI appeals to Nicaragua. Akwesasne Notes, Vol. XIV No.3, p20.
- Anonymous, 1980: Kultureller Kolonialismus, Brief aus Bluefields vom 3. Januar. In Tangermann, 1980 Ein Vulkan... pp.88-92.
- Anonymous, 1980: Am Ende einer 5monatigen Reise, Brief aus Managua vom 10. März. In Tangermann, 1980 Ein Vulkan... pp.88-92.
- Anonymous, 1980: Sandinists face regional problems. Latin American Regional Report Mexico and Central America (LARM), No.8, 19 September, pp.6-7.
- Anonymous 1980: Security jitters as Bluefields sees red. LARM, No.9, 24 October 2-3.
- Anonymous, 1980: Atlantic Coast disturbances ring alarm bells in Managua. Latin American Weekly Report (LAWR) 17 October, p.7.
- Anonymous, 1980: Nicaragua. Cultural Survival Newsletter, No.4 pp.8-9.
- Anonymous, 1981: Opposition press steps up campaign to embarrass government. LARM No.10, 6 March, pp.6-7.
- Anonymous, 1981: Nicaragua, Das Problem der Atlantikküste, Miskitos und Creoles zwischen Kolonialismus und Revolution. Lateinamerika Nachrichten Vol. VIII No.92, pp.40-51.

- Anonymous, 1981: Return to the promised land. LARM, No.6, 10 July, p.4.
- Anonymous, 1981: Atlantic Coast to get new port. LARM No. 8 18 September, pp.3-4.
- Anonymous, 1982: Nicaragua. Cultural Survival Quarterly Vol.VI No.1.
- Anonymous, 1982: Nicaragua: A perspective. Akwasasne Notes Vol.XIV, No.1, pp.17-18.
- Anonymous, 1982: Nicaragua, the Indian Situation Worsens. Akwasasne Notes, Vol. XIV, No.1.
- Anonymous ("The Washington Post"), 1982: 10,000 Miskito Indians. International Herald Tribune, 12 February.
- Anonymous, 1982: L'exode des Miskitos. Le Monde 14-15 February.
- Anonymous, ("The New York Times") 1982: The Indian: Rediscovered. International Herald Tribune, February.
- Anonymous, 1982: Gigantesco esfuerzo de la Revolución, El programa de Desarrollo Integral "Tasba Pri". Patria Libre, Vol.III, No.20. March, pp49-51.
- Anonymous, 1982: Amenazan con invasión contrarevolucionaria a Nicaragua, Qué hara el gobierno de Honduras? Patria Libre Vol.III, No.20, March, pp.52-55.
- Anonymous 1982: Nicaragua's Resettlement Project. IHCA, No.10 15, March.
- Anonymous, 1982: Los misquitos y el ensayo de su integración. Inforpress Centroamericana, 18, March.
- Anonymous, 1982: Nicaragua. LARM 19, March, pp.3-4.
- Anonymous, 1982: Die Umsiedlung der Miskitos, Vertreter christlicher Institutionen verschafften sich einen Eindruck in den neuen Dörfern. Deutsche Volkszeitung, No.15, 8 April.
- Anonymous, 1982: Hintergründiges, Zum Konflikt zwischen Sandinistas und Miskitos. Radikal, Zeitung für unbeschwerte Stunden, Vol.VII, No.103, April, p.23.
- Anonymous, 1982: Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast: a History of Isolation and Dependence. Mesoamerica Vol.I No.5 May, pp.8-9.
- Anonymous, 1982: Has Nicaragua Committed Atrocities Against the Miskitos? COHA's Washington Report on the Hemisphere, Vol.II No.13, pp.4-5.
- Anonymous, 1982: Costa Atlántica: Achillesferse der Revolution. Nicaragua Aktuell, No.19, pp.3-7, 26.
- APIA (Agencia Periodistica de Información Alternativa), 1982: Rebellion an der Atlantikküste. Lateinamerika Anders. No. 19, pp.27-34.
- Banco Central de Nicaragua, 1980: la Costa Atlántica. Bibliografías Cortas, No.18.

- Barre, M.-C., 1982: Le drame des Indiens Miskito au Nicaragua et son exploitation politique. Le Monde Diplomatique, Vol.XXIX,No.337, April,p.3.
- Bataillon,G.,1982: Le Nicaragua et les Indiens Miskito. Esprit, July/August,pp.145-153.
- Beck,H., 1981: Brüder in vielen Völkern, 250 Jahre Mission der Brüdergemeinde, Erlangen.
- Black,G.& J.Butler, 1982: Target Nicaragua. NACLA,Report on the Americas, Vol.XVI, No.1,pp.2-45.
- Boletín Nicaragüense de Bibliografía y Documentación, 1978: No.26.
- Borge,T., 1981:"Ellos Perdieron el Poder y no se Resignan. Eso es", El Comandante de la Revolución Nicaragüense Explica los problemas que Enfrentan con la Burguesia Para Lograr una Sociedad Democrática, von Tatiana Coll. Por Esto! No.8, 20 August, pp.40-44. *
- Bourgeois, Ph., 1980:Die Miskitos und die Revolution, Die Probleme der indianischen Minderheiten Nicaraguas. In Tangermann, 1980 Ein Vulkan..., pp.70-78.
- Bourgeois, Ph., 1980: Bemerkungen zur Anerkennung des Gemein-schaftslandes in der Mosquitia. In Tangermann, 1980 Ein Vulkan..., p.75.
- Bourgeois,Ph. & G.Grünberg, 1980: Zur Lage an der Atlantik-Küste. In Tangermann, 1980 Ein Vulkan..., pp.84-85.
- Bourgeois,Ph. & G.Grünberg, 1980: La Mosquitia y la Revolución: Informe de una investigación rural en la costa Atlántica Norte(1980). Managua.
- Bourgeois,Ph.,1981: Class, Ethnicity and the State among the Miskitu Amerindians of Northeastern Nicaragua, Latin American Perspectives, Vol.VIII,No.29(2),pp.22-39.
- Calderón,M., 1981: Interview with "Comandante Rufo", How Sand-inistas are dealing with the problems of the Atlantic Coast. Intercontinental Press, 26 June,pp.684-686.*
- Calloni, St., 1982: Miskitos: manipulación contrarevolution-aria. Uno más uno, 14 February.
- Campbell. N., 1981: Campbell revela Plan 81 de MISURASATA. La Prensa, 3 March. *
- Carrión, L., 1981: Las minorías étnicas y el reto revolucion-ario, Cmdte. Carrión habla de la Costa. Barricada, 6 May. *
- Carrión, L., 1981: Solución a largo plazo, pero hay cosas urgentes. Barricada, 7 May. *
- Carrión, L., 1981: La Costa en la Unidad Nacional, Entrevista con el Cmdte. Luis Carrión, von Mario F. Espinoza. Barricada, 2 September. *

- Carrión, L., 1982: Conferencia sobre la Costa Atlántica dictada por el Comandante de la Revolución Luis Carrión Cruz a los Intelectuales por la Soberanía y la Paz. Auditorio Ministerio del Exterior, Managua 7 March. *
- Cattle, D.J., 1976: Dietry Diversity and Nutritional Security in a Coastal Miskito Indian Village, Estern Nicaragua. In Helms & Loveland eds. 1976: Frontier Adaptations... pp.117-130.
- CEPAD, (Comité Evangelico pro Ayuda al Desarrollo) 1981: Pastores de la Costa analizan realidad nacional. Noticias Evangélicas, Boletín del CEPAD, Managua, 30 October, pp.5-8.
- CIERA (Centro de Investigación y Estudios de la Reforma Agraria) 1981: La Mosquitia en la Revolución. Managua.
- Concha, M., 1982: Nicaragua, Calumnias de la contrarevolución. Uno más uno, 8 February.
- Conzemius, E., 1927/8: Los Indios Payas de Honduras. Journal de la Societé des Américanistes de Paris. VolXIX,XX, pp.253-360.
- Conzemius, E., 1927: Die Rama-Indianer von Nicaragua. Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, Vol.LXVI, pp.291-362.
- Conzemius, E., 1932: Ethnological Survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua. Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Vol. CVI, Washington.
- Conzemius, E., 1938: Les Tribus Indiennes de la Côte de Mosquitos. Anthropol, Vol.XXIII, pp.910-943.
- Conzemius, V., 1973: Eduard Conzemius (1892-1931) Indiana Vol.I pp.127-128.
- Davidson, W.V., 1976: Black Carib (Carifuna) Habitats in Central America. In Helms & Loveland eds. 1976: Frontier Adaptations... pp.85-94.
- Dennis, Ph.A., 1981: The Costenos and the Revolution in Nicaragua. Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs. Vol.XXIII, No.3, pp.271-296.
- DPN (Dirección de Planificación Nacional) 1976: La Costa Atlántica, Geografía y política situación económica y social. Managua.
- Espinoza, M., 1981: MISURASATA, organización que desaparece. Barricada, 30 August. *
- Fagoth, S., 1980: Unidad y fraternidad de MISURASATA y FSLN. El Nuevo Diario, 19 October. *
- Fagoth, S., 1980: Die Produktion heben - für wen?, Gespräch mit Steadman Fagoth. In Tangermann 1980: Ein Vulkan... pp.79-80.

- Fagoth, S., 1982(1981): Interview mit Steadman Fagoth Müller. Lateinamerika Anders, No.19, pp.30-32.
- FAO, 1969: Estudio de los recursos agrícolas y forestales del noreste de Nicaragua. Informe final, Vol.II, El desarrollo agrícola, Roma.
- FAS(Fuerzas Armadas Sandinistas) 1981: Debelado plan contra-revolucionario en la Costa Atlántica, Seguridad del Estado es Seguridad del Pueblo. Patria Libre. No.11 February, pp.53-56. *
- Floyd, T., 1967: The Anglo-Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia. Albuquerque (New Mexico).
- Förderkreis für Bildungsprojekte in Nicaragua (Eds.) 1982: Projekt Indio-Universität, Universidad Indígena, Nicaragua, Das Nicaragua der Freien Menschen braucht unsere Hilfe, Dokumentation, Tübingen.
- FSLN, 1979: Costa Atlántica: Indígenas, Cultura y Revolución. Poder Sandinista, No.7, 6 December. *
- FSLN, 1981: Separatismo agrede Soberanía Nacional. Barricada 24 February. *
- FSLN, 1981: Los separatistas no son la Costa Atlántica. Barricada, 28 Februaruy. *
- FSLN, JGRN, 1981: Histórica declaración de principios, FSLN y JGRN pronuncian sobre indígenas costeos. Barricada, 13 August. *
- Gabriel, L., 1982: Mit den eigenen Waffen. In Deutsches All-gemeines Sonntagsblatt, 28 February.
- Gabriel, L., 1982: Reagans Schlachthof, Gespräch über die Lage in Zentralamerika mit Michael Siegert. Forum Vol.XXIX No.337/338, February, pp.26-32.
- Gander, C., 1982: Miskito Villages. Akwasasne Notes, Vol.XIV, No.3, pp.20-22.
- Gonzalez, V.M., 1981: Bibliografía sobre Nicaragua. Cuicuilco Mexico, D.F., Vol.II, No.3, pp.55-59.
- Greenburg, J.H., 1960: The General Classification of Central and South American Indian Languages. In Wallace A ed. 1960: Men and Cultures Philadelphia.
- Harris, J., 1982: Aid rushed to displaced Indians, Victims of rightest terror to get schools, housing, health care. Intercontinental Press, Vol.XX, No.10, 22 March, pp.220-1.
- Hamilton, J.T. & K.G. Hamilton, 1967: History of the Moravian Church, Bethlehem (Pennsylvania).
- Hedges, C., 1982: Miskitos Nicaragüenses traslados en medio de actividad contrarevolucionario. Noticias Aliadas, Lima, Vol.XIX, No.11, 18 March, pp. 1-2, 5.

- Helbig, K., 1956: Die Mosquitia von Honduras. Übersee Rundschau Vol.VIII, No.7, pp.17-20.
- Helbig, K., 1959: Waldverwüstung in Zentralamerika. Kosmos, Vol.LV, No.5, pp.189-195.
- Helbig, K.M., 1959: Die Landschaften von Nordost-Honduras, Auf Grund einer geographischen Studienreise im Jahre 1953. Gotha.
- Helms, M.W., 1968: Matrilocality and the Maintenance of Ethnic Identity: The Miskito of Eastern Nicaragua and Honduras. In: Verhandlungen des XXXVII Internationalen Amerikanisten-Kongresses, Vol.II. Stuttgart, München.
- Helms, M.W. 1970: Matrilocality, Social Solidarity and Culture Contact: Three Case Studies. Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, Vol.XXVI, pp.197-212.
- Helms, M.W., 1971: Asang: Adaptations to Culture Contact in a Miskito Community, Gainesville (Florida).
- Helms, M.W., 1975: Middle America Eaglewood Cliffs (New Jersey).
- Helms, M.W. & F.O.Loveland (Eds.) 1976: Frontier Adaptations in Lower Central America. Philadelphia.
- Hijar, A., 1982: Nicaragua: La cuestión nacional. Por Esto! No.35, 25 February.
- Holm, J., 1978: The Creole-English of Nicaragua's Miskito Coast: its Sociolinguistic History and a Comparative Study of its Lexicon and Syntax. Ph.D. University of London.
- Holmes, J. & F.Holmes, 1980: Die Indianer präsentieren ihre Forderungen, Neun Monate nach dem Sieg der Sandinistas. In: Tangermann, 1980: Ein Vulkan..., pp.90-93.
- Houwald, G. & J.Jenkins, 1975: Distribución y vivienda sumu en Nicaragua. Encuentro. No.7 UCA, Managua, pp.365-377.
- INFONAC, 1979: Informe sobre las Industrias y Actividades Forestales del Noreste de Nicaragua. Managua (Manuscript).
- INNICA, IRENA, MISURASATA, 1981: Importante acuerdo para normar cortes de madera. Barricada, 14 February. *
- Instituto Histórico Centroamericano, 1981: The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. Central American Update October, pp.1-8.
- Jamail, M., 1980: Nicaragua, Atlantic Coast Unrest. NACLA, Report on the Americas, Vol.XIV, No.4 pp.41-42.
- James, R., 1982: Nicaragua, Mutual Mistrust. Ontario Indian May, pp.22-25, 46.
- JGRN, 1980: Ley sobre educación en lenguas en la Costa Atlántica. La Gaceta, Vol.LXXXIV, No.279, 3 December, pp.2745-2746. *
- JGRN, 1981: Enérgico mentís. Barricada, 28 February. *

- JGRN, 1981: Ley de Reforma Agraria (Disposición especial, Artículo 30), Managua, July *
- JGRN, 1982: Respuesta a la Conferencia Episcopal, Managua.
- JGRN, 1982: Tasba Pri, Free Land, Tierra Libre, Managua.
- Jenkins, J., 1975: Antecedentes históricas de la explotación de recursos naturales en la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua. In: Banco Central de Nicaragua (Eds.), 1975: Programa Forestal, Reporte y Análisis de Resultados (versión preliminar), Managua, pp.11-69, 153-171. (ms.).
- Jenkins, J., 1980: La Mosquitia Nicaragüense: articulación de una formación precapitalista, su historia: Parte 1. Estudios Sociales Centroamericanos, Vol.IX, No.25, pp.9-53.
- Jenkins, J. & W. Pérez (Eds.) 1981: I. Seminario Nacional sobre Recursos Naturales y del Ambiente "Ivan Montenegro Baez". Managua. 23-26 April 1980, IRENA, Managua.
- Johnson, R. & C. Tavarez, 1980: Nicaragua, Qué pasó en Bluefields? FSLN enfrenta los problemas de la Costa Atlántica. Perspectiva Mundial, Vol.IV, No.20, 17 November, pp.11-13.
- Jones, D.R.W., 1970: The Caribbean Coast of Central America: A Case of Multiple Fragmentation. Professional Geographer, Vol.XXII, pp.260-266.
- Karnes, T.L., 1977: La Standard Fruit y la Steamship Company en Nicaragua (los primeros años). Universidad de Costa Rica (Eds.), 1977: Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos, Vol.III, pp.175-215. San José.
- Karnes, T.L., 1978: Tropical Enterprise, The Standard Fruit and Steamship Company in Latin America. Baton Rouge, London.
- Kirchoff, J., 1948: The Caribbean Lowland Tribes: The Mosquito, Sumo, Paya, Jicaque. In J.H. Steward (Ed.), 1948: Handbook of South American Indians, Vol.IV, pp.219-229.
- Kleivan, H., 1982: Terrorisme, økonomi og indianere, USA i Nicaragua. Politikens Kronik, 25 February.
- Lasswell, R., 1982: Die ganz andere Geschichte der Atlantikküste. In C. & K. Tebbe (Eds.), 1982: Nicaragua, Vors uns die Mühen der Ebene, Wuppertal, pp.131-132.
- Lehmann, W. 1910: Ergebnisse einer Forschungsreise in Mittelamerika und Mexiko, 1907-1910, Zeitschrift für Ethnologie Vol.XLII, No.5.
- Lehmann, W. 1920: Zentral-Amerika. Teil I: Die Sprachen Zentral-Amerikas, Vol.I, Berlin.
- Loveland, C., 1973: Rural-Urban Dynamics: The Miskito Coast of Nicaragua. Urban Anthropology, Vol.II, No.2, pp.182-193.
- Loveland, F.O., 1975: Dialectical aspects of Natural Symbols: Order and Disorder in Rama Indian Cosmology. Ph.D. Duke University (manuscript).

- Loveland, F.O., 1976: Tapirs and Manatees: Cosmological Categories and Social Processes among Rama Indians of Eastern Nicaragua. In: Helms and Loveland eds. 1976: Frontier Adaptations..., pp.67-170.
- Loveland, F.O., 1976: The Cosmography of Subsistence Activities and Culture-Contact of the Rama Indians of Eastern Nicaragua. In Ph.Young & J.Howe(Eds.), 1976: Ritual and Symbol in Native Central America. Anthropological Papers No.9, University of Oregon, pp.92-103.
- Loveland, F.O., & J., (nd) Snakebite Cure among Rama Indians of Nicaragua. In: Haley & Grolling (Eds.) Medical Anthropology, pp.81-102.
- Lovera, S., 1982: La evacuación de miskitos, "medida dolorosa pero necesaria": Ministro William Ramírez. Uno más uno, 27 February.
- McConnell, J., 1982: Counterrevolution in Nicaragua: The US-Connection. Counter Spy, May/June, pp.11-23.
- Martin, C., 1982: Les Indiens Miskitos: nouvelle arme americaine contre le Nicaragua. Liberation, 23 February.
- Means, R., 1982: An interview with Russell Means. Akwesasne Notes Vol.XIV, No.3, pp.22-23.
- MISURASATA, 1979: Construiremos juntos una sociedad más justa, Manifiesto de la V Asamblea. Barricada, 27 November. *
- MISURASATA, 1980: Lineamientos Generales de MISURASATA, Managua. *
- MISURASATA, 1980: Piden comprensión los hermanos de la Costa. El Nuevo Diario, 15 October. *
- MISURASATA, 1980: Lineas generales de acción de MISURASATA en 1981. (Manuscript). *
- MISURASATA, 1981: La tenencia de la tierra de las comunidades indígenas y criollas de la Costa Atlántica. Managua. (Ms.)
- MISURASATA, 1981: Aktuelle Forderungen von MISURASATA an die revolutionäre Regierung Managua, 25 May. Pogrom, Vol.XII, No.86, 1981/82, p.28.
- MISURASATA, 1981: Aufruf der Indiannerbewegung von Nicaragua. Pogrom, Vol.XII, No.86, 1981/82, p.29.
- MISURASATA, 1981: Propuesto de la tenencia de la tierra de las comunidades indígenas y criollas de la Costa Atlántica. Managua 28 July (Ms.). *
- Mohawk, J.&S.H.Davies, 1982: Revolutionary Contradictions: Miskitos and Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Akwesasne Notes, Vol.XIV, No.1, pp.7-10.
- Müller, K.A., 1932: Among Creoles, Miskitos and Sumos. Bethlehem (Pennsylvania).

- Münzel, M., 1976: Die zirkum-karibischen Indianer: Zwischen Archaicum und Hochkultur. In W.Lindig & M.Münzel, 1976: Die Indianer, Kulturen und Geschichte der Indianer Nord-Mittel- und Südamerikas. München. pp.303-334.
- Münzel, M., 1978: Europäisierung gegen Europa, Das Paradox des indianschen Widerstands. In M.Münzel (Ed.) 1978: Die indiansche Verweigerung, Lateinamerikas Ureinwohner zwischen Ausrottung und Selbstbestimmung. Reinbek bei Hamburg. pp. 180-196, 232.
- Murphy, F. & A. Weiiberg, 1982: Reagan's big lie vs. Sandinistas, What the facts show about treatment of Miskito Indians. Intercontinental Press, Vol. XX, No. 8, 8 March, pp. 172-174.
- Nietschmann, B., 1969: The Distribution of Miskito, Sumu and Rama Indians, Eastern Nicaragua. Bulletin of the International Committee on Urgent Anthropological and Ethnological Research. Vol. XL, pp. 91-102.
- Nietschmann, B., 1970: Hunting and Fishing Productivity of the Miskito Indians, Eastern Nicaragua. 39 Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, Actas y memorias. Vol. IV, Lima. pp. 91-99.
- Nietschmann, B., 1971: Mere Subsistence or merely Subsisting? The Study of Indigenous Food Production Systems. Revista Geografica, No. 14, pp. 83-99, Rio de Janeiro.
- Nietschmann, B., 1973: Between Land and Water, The Subsistence Ecology of the Miskito Indians, Eastern Nicaragua. New York. London.
- Nietschmann, B., 1979: Caribbean Edge. Indianapolis, New York.
- Nietschmann, B., 1979: Ecological Change, Inflation and Migration in the Far Western Caribbean. The Geographical Review, Vol. LXIX, No. 1, pp. 1-24.
- Nietschmann, B., 1980: When the Turtle Collapses, the World Ends. Caribbean Review, Vol. IX, No. 2, pp. 14-21.
- Nietschmann, B., 1981: The Cultural Context of Sea Turtle Subsistence Hunting in the Caribbean and the Problems Caused by Commercial Exploitation. Proceedings of Smithsonian Institution, K.B. Jorndal (Ed.) World Conference on Sea Turtle Conservation. Washington.
- Nietschmann, B. & J. Nietschmann, 1974: Cambio y continuidad de los indígenas Rama de Nicaragua. América Indígena, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4.
- Nietschmann, B. (Ed.), 1977: Historia Natural y Económica de las Tortugas en el Caribe de América Central. Managua.
- Nuhn, H. & O. Smailus, 1975: Die ethnolinguistische Gliederung Zentralamerikas. In H. Nuhn (et al.) 1975: Beiträge zur geographischen Regionalforschung in Lateinamerika, Vol. I Zentralamerika, Karten zur Bevölkerungs- und Wirtschaftsentwicklung, Hamburg, Karte V, pp. 41-69.

- Núñez, C., 1979: Verdadera reincorporación de la Costa Atlántica hará FSLN, Comandante Núñez traza objetivos de la Revolución sobre esa importante región patria. Barricada, 2 August. *
- Ortega, D., 1981: Preparan medidos para el Atlántico, La "Contra" apunta hacia la Costa. Barricada, 20 July. *
- Ortega-Herg, M., 1982: El conflicto étnico - nación en Nicaragua, Un acercamiento teórico a la problemática de las minorías étnicas de la Costa Atlántica. In ANICS (Eds.) (Asociación Nicaragüense de Científicos Sociales) 1982: Estado y clases sociales en Nicaragua, 2. Congreso Nicaragüense de Ciencias Sociales "Carlos Manuel Galves", Managua. pp. 169-191.
- Parsons, J.J., 1955: The Miskito Pine Savanna of Nicaragua and Honduras. Annals of the Association of American Geographers. Vol. XLV, No., 1 pp. 36-63.
- Pérez-Valle, E., (Ed.) 1978: Expediente de Campos Azules, Historia de Bluefields en sus documentos. Managua.
- Pijoan, M., 1946: The health and customs of the Miskito Indians of northeastern Nicaragua. América Indígena, Vol. VI, No. 1, pp. 41-66 and Vol. VI, No. 2, pp. 157-183.
- Pogrom, 1980: Nicaragua, Vol. XI, No. 74/75, pp. 35-40.
- Ramírez, S., 1981: "Eine sehr gefährliche Lage", Nicaragua um die Rückkehr nach Honduras geflohener Miskitos bemüht - "Keine Rassentrennung". Monitor-Dienst Lateinamerika, 20 Mai, pp. 6-7. *
- Ramírez, W., 1981: Entrevista con William Ramírez, von Michael Rediske, Managua, August (Ms.). *
- Ramírez, W., 1981: Indígenas tienen derecho a organizarse, Pero MISURASATA no existe. Barricada, 4 September.
- Ramírez, W. 1981: Sobre la Reforma Agraria en la Costa Atlántica. In CIERA (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de la Reforma Agraria) 1981: Testimonios sobre la Reforma Agraria, Vol. I, Managua, pp. 59-63.
- Ramírez, W., 1981: La amenaza imperialista y el problema indígena en Nicaragua. El Boletín INNICA No. 9 December. *
- Ratlos, R., 1982: Nieder mit den Sandinistas!, Oder: Schwierigkeiten mit meiner Solidarität. Radikal Zeitung für unbeschwerte Stunden. Vol. VII, No. 103, April, p. 22.
- Rediske, M. & R. Schneider, 1981: Die Indianer Nicaraguas zwischen Kolonialismus und Revolution. Informationsbüro Nicaragua (Eds.), 1981: "und lernen die Freiheit", Zwei Jahre Revolution in Nicaragua, Wuppertal, pp. 44-48.
- Rediske, M., & R. Schneider, 1982: The Indians of Nicaragua between colonialism and revolution. IWGIA Newsletter No. 30, pp. 29-36.

- Riding, A., 1981: Nicaraguan Indians clash with the Regime, Thousands free across border as Sandinists Bungle Integration - "It's a terrible mess". New York Times 18 June.
- Rivera, B., 1980: "An Indian without land is not an Indian!" In R. Schneider, 1982: Kultur und Sprache der Rama, Tief-landindianer der nicaraguanischen Atlantikküste, Berlin, (Ms.) pp. 108-110. *
- Rivera, B., 1981/2 Nicaragua, "Nir der Indio rettet den indio" Pogrom, Vol. XII, No. 86, pp. 24-28.
- Rivera, B., 1981: Entrevista con Brooklyn Rivera, with Michael Rediske, Managua, April. (Ms.) *
- Rivera, B., 1981: Entrevista con Brooklyn Rivera, with Michael Rediske, Puerto Cabezas, July. (Ms.) *
- Rivera, B., 1981: Informe de la Problemática indígena con la Revolución Sandinista en Nicaragua. September. (Ms.) *
- Rivera, B., 1982 Miskito Nation, Some further words, Interview with Brooklyn Rivera. Akwesasne Notes Vol. XIV, No. 3, pp. 18-20.
- Rivera, B., 1982: Die Eskalation der Gewalt, taz-Interview mit Brooklyn Rivera. Die Tageszeitung, 6 July.
- Rivera, B., 1982: Lucha de indígenas contra sandinismo. La Nación, San José de Costa Rica, 11 July.
- Rojas Smith, A., 1977: Comunidades indígenas de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua. Revista de Derechos y Ciencias Sociales. No. 8, UNAN León, pp. 199-244.
- Rojas Smith, A., 1980: Anmerkungen eines Miskito zur Situation der Atlantikküste, integration -der Partizipation? Pogrom, 1980, Vol. XI, Nr 74/75, pp. 35-36.
- Sanders, D., 1981: Self determination and Indigenous peoples: The experience of Nicaragua. Paper presented to the 5th Assembly of the American Association of Jurists, Managua, August (Ms.).
- Savery, E., 1980: "Sie gewinnen uns jetzt oder nie!", Religion, Dorfororganisation und Gemeinschaftsarbeit an der Atlantikküste (Gespräche mit Ernán Savery, dem Vorsitzenden von SICC). In Tangermann, 1980: Ein Vulkan... pp. 82-83, 86-89.
- Schneider, R., 1982: Sandinista integration policy is blocked by the counter-revolutionary guerrilla war. IWGIA Newsletter, No. 30, pp. 36-37.
- Schneider, R., 1982: Rama. Die sterbende "Sprache der Tiger", Ethnische Identität, indianische Sprache und sandinistische Revolution im nicaraguanischen Tiefland. Peripherie, No. 8, pp. 71-85.
- Selser, G., 1982: Los Reaganistas, Kirkpatrick liga a Nicaragua con los Nazis, Haig imita a Goebbels. El Día, México. 9 March.

- Stone, D., 1966: Synthesis of Lower Central American Ethnohistory. In R.Wauchope (Ed.) 1966: Handbook of Middle American Indians, Vol.IV, Ethnohistory. Austin,pp.209-33.
- Süss,P.& P.Tierra, 1981: Revolução, Uma surpresa: os índios, Agora o diálogo. Porantim, December, pp.12-17.
- Tahal Consulting Engineers Ltd., 1979: Proyectos Fronteras Agrícolas, Vol.I-VIII, Tel Aviv.
- Tangermann, K.-D., 1980: Ein Vulkan, Zentralamerika, Politische Reisen durch Guatemala, El Salvador und Nicaragua. taz-Journal, No.2, Berlin.
- Tecnoplan,S.A.& Tahal Consulting Engineers Ltd., 1978: Potencial de Desarrollo Agropecuario y Rehabilitación de Tierras en la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua.Dirección de Planificación Nacional (Eds), Vol.I-VI, Tel Aviv.
- Tierra,P., 1982: Nicaragua, Miskito: o nervo exposto da Revolução. Porantim, June/July, pp.14-15.
- Valle-Castillo.J.,(Ed.) nd Poesía Atlantica, Managua.
- Vanegas,L.& Ch.Hale et.al.1981: Causas histórico-estructurales de la discriminación racial en America Latina y posible soluciones. Seminario de la Naciones Unidas, Managua, 12-22 december (HR/Managua/BP/3).
- Weiss,B., 1977: Economía del tortuguero: En cada venta una perdida. In Nietschmann (Ed.),1977:Historia Natural... pp.161-179.
- Weissberg,A., 1982: Terrorists hit Atlantic Coast, Counter-Revolutionaries murder,pillage and rape. Intercontinental Press, Vol.XX, No.5. 15 February,p.108.
- Wheelock,J.,1974: Raíces indígenas de la lucha anticolonialista en Nicaragua, México, D.F..
- Wheelock,J., 1975: Imperialismo y dictadura: crisis de una formación social, México, D.F..
- Wilde, M., 1982: The Church as Advocate in Eastern Nicaragua. The Christian Century 6-13. January.
- Wilde,M.D., 1982: The Sandinistas and the Costeños. Reconciliation and Integration? Caribbean Review, Vol.XI.No.1, pp. 8-14,44.
- Wiggins, A.,1982: Colonialism and Revolution, Nicaraguan Sandinism and the liberation of the Miskito, Sumu and Rama Peoples, An Interview with Armstrong Wiggins. Akwesasne Notes, Vol.XIII, No.4, pp.4-15.

- Wilson, J.F., 1975: Obra Morava en Nicaragua: trasfondo y breve historia. Thesis Sem. Bibl. Latinoamericano, San José de Costa Rica (Ms.).
- Wilson, J.F., 1978: Vida y obra de los Moravos en Nicaragua. Boletín Nicaragüense de Bibliografía y Documentación, No. 25, Managua, pp.49-57.
- Wünderich, V., 1982: Die Indianerevakuierung der nicaraguani-schen Atlantikküste, Der Marsch der Achttausend und das Siedlungsprojekt "Tasba Pri" Die Tageszeitung 26 March, pp.14-15.
- "Ya Veremos", 1980: La Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua, Un mundo por descubrir. Vol.I, No.5, Managua, 27-42.

July 1982

ABBREVIATIONS

AID	<u>Agency for International Development</u> (administration for developmental aid in the U.S.A.)
ALPROMISU	<u>Alianza para el Progreso de los Mískito y Sumu</u> Alliance for the progress of the Mískito and Sumu (indigenous organisation founded in 1974 in Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast; founding member of WCIP; since 1979 has been MISURASATA)
AMNLAE	<u>Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses "Luisa Amanda Espinoza"</u> Nicaraguan Women's organisation "Luisa Amanda Espinoza" (Sandinist mass organisation)
ANN	<u>Agencia Nueva Nicaragua</u> Agency New Nicaragua (governmental News Agency in Nicaragua)
ARDE	<u>Alianza Revolucionaria Democrática</u> Revolutionary democratic alliance (coalition of anti-Sandinist opposition groups based in Costa Rica; members: FRS, MISURASATA-SICC (headed by Brooklyn Rivera), MDN,UDN-FARN (since March 1983 alliance with FDN); founded in September 1982)
ATC	<u>Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo</u> Association of agricultural labourers (Sandinist Union)
CDS	<u>Comités de Defensa Sandinista</u> Sandinist Defence Committees (Sandinist rural and municipal committees)
CENDER	<u>Centro de Desarrollo Regional de Salud</u> Regional Centre for Health Development (protestant development aid-organisation for the northern Atlantic Coast)
CEP	<u>Colectivo de Educación Popular</u> Collective for popular education
CMPI	<u>Consejo Mundial de Pueblos Indígenas</u> = WCIP
CONDECA	<u>Consejo de Defensa Centroamericana</u> Central American Defence Council (military pact between Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua; founded by the US in 1964)

CORPI	<u>Consejo Regional de Pueblos Indígenas</u> Regional Council of Indigenous Peoples (alliance of independent indigenous movements in Central America; regional organisation of WCIP)
DEPEP	<u>Departamento de Propaganda y Educación de FSLN</u> Department for propaganda and education of the FSLN
DGSE	<u>Dirección General de Seguridad del Estado</u> General Directive of State Security (Sandinist State Security Service: Subordinated to the Interior Ministry MINT)
DN	<u>Dirección Nacional del FSLN</u> National Directive of the FSLN (members: Bayardo Arce, Tomás Borge, Luis Carrión, Carlos Núñez, Daniel Ortega, Humberto Ortega, Henry Ruiz, Victor Tirado and Jaime Wheelock)
ENABAS	<u>Empresa Nicaragüense de Alimentos Básicos</u> National interior enterprise for basic food (subordinated to the Ministry of Trade MICOIN)
EPS	<u>Ejercito Popular Sandinista</u> Sandinist Popular Army (Minister of Defence: Humberto Ortega)
FAS	<u>Fuerzas Aereas Sandinistas</u> Sandinist Air Force
FAS	<u>Fuerzas Armadas Sandinistas</u> Sandinist Armed Forces
FDN	<u>Frente Democrático Nicaragüense</u> Nicaraguan Democratic Front (coalition of anti-Sandinist opposition groups based in Honduras and Florida; alliance with MISURASATA (also MISURA or MISURATA or "Guerrilla Miskita" headed by Steadman Fagoth))
FRS	<u>Frente Revolucionario Sandino</u> Revolutionary Front Sandino (anti-Sandinist opposition based in Costa Rica; headed by Edén "Cero" Pastora)
FSLN	<u>Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional</u> Sandinist National Liberation Front

INFONAC	<u>Instituto Nicaragüense de Fomento Nacional</u> Nicaraguan Institute for National Development (Institute for development aid during the Somoza regime)
INNICA	<u>Instituto Nicaragüense de la Costa Atlántica</u> Nicaraguan Institute for the Atlantic Coast (Minister: William Ramírez; was disbanded in August 1982 and replaced by regional administrations and the Investigation and Documentation Centre for the Atlantic Coast CIDCA)
INRA	<u>Instituto Nicaragüense de la Reforma Agraria</u> Nicaraguan Institute for Agrarian Reform (part of MIDINRA)
IRENA	<u>Instituto Nicaragüense de Recursos Humanos y del Ambiente</u> Nicaraguan Institute for Natural Resources and the environment (Minister till December 1982: Jorge Jenkins)
JGRN	<u>Junta de Gobierno de Reconstrucción Nacional</u> Junta of the Government for National Reconstruction
JM	<u>Juventud MISURASATA</u> MISURASATA Youth (indigenous youth-organisation; founded in 1980)
JS 19	<u>Juventud Sandinista "19 de Julio"</u> Sandinist Youth "19th. of July" (Sandinist mass organisation)
LANICA	<u>Lineas Aeronauticas Nicaragüenses</u> Nicaraguan Airline (National airline; till 1979 in private possession of Somoza; since 1981: AERONICA)
LIMON	<u>Levantamiento Indígena Montán Río Oriental</u> Indigenous Movement at the Montán Río Oriental (association of Sumu communities; since 1979: SUKAWALA)
MASTA	<u>Miskitu Asla Takanka</u> Miskito Alliance (Miskito organisation in Honduras)
MED	<u>Ministerio de Educación</u> Ministry of Education (Minister: Carlos Tünnermann)

MDN	<u>Movimiento Democrático Nicaragüense</u> Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (Conservative opposition party headed by Alfonso Robelo)
MICION	<u>Ministerio de Comercio Interior</u> Ministry of Interior Trade (Minister: Dionisio Marenco)
MIDA	<u>Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario</u> Ministry for Agrarian Development (part of MIDINRA)
MIDINRA	<u>Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario y de Reforma Agraria</u> Ministry for Agrarian Development and Reform (Association of MIDA and INRA since December 1979; Minister: Jaime Wheelock)
MINT	<u>Ministerio del Interior</u> Interior Ministry (Minister: Tomás Borge; Vice-Minister: Luis Carrión)
MISURASATA	<u>Miskitu Sumu Rama Sandinistas Asla Takanka</u> Miskito, Sumu, Rama and Sandinists United (Nicaraguan indigenous movement, founded in November 1979; National Directive: Brooklyn Rivera (co-ordinator), Steadman Fagoth (member of the State Council) and Hazel Lau (responsible for the alfabetisation in indigenous languages))
MM	<u>Mujeres de MISURASATA</u> MISURASATA women (indigenous women's organisation, founded in 1980)
MPS	<u>Militias Populares Sandinistas</u> Sandinist Popular Militias (founded in January 1981; headed till April 1982 by Edén Pastora, since that time by Humberto Ortega)
NGO	<u>Non Governmental Organisation</u> (consultative member at the UN)
OSN	<u>Oficina de Seguridad Nacional</u> Office for National Security (Somozist State Security Service)

PCD	<u>Partido Conservador Democrata</u> Conservative-Democratic Party (conservative opposition party)
POI	<u>Policia del Orden Interior</u> Internal Order Police (subordinated to the Interior Ministry MINT)
PSC	<u>Partido Social Cristiano</u> Social-Christian Party (conservative opposition party)
PSD	<u>Partido Social Democrata</u> Social Democratic Party (conservative opposition party)
PSN	<u>Partido Socialista Nicaraguense</u> Nicaraguan Socialist Party (allied with the USSR; Communist Party)
SICC	<u>Southern Indigenous and Creole Community</u> (indigenous organisation of the Creoles-Afro-Americans of the Southern Atlantic Coast; founded in 1977; worked until October 1980)
SUKAWALA	<u>Sumu Kalpa Pakna Waingre Lane</u> Indigenous movement of the Sumu communities (founded in 1979; worked till mid-1981 within MISURASATA)
UDN-FARN	<u>Unión Democrático Nicaraguense - Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Nicaragua</u> Nicaraguan Democratic Union-Nicaraguan Revolutionary Armed Forces (anti-Sandinist opposition based in Costa Rica, headed by Fernando "El Negro" Chamorro)
UNHCR	<u>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</u>
VIMEDA	<u>Vice-Ministerio de Educación de Adultos</u> Vice-Ministry of Adult Education (part of MED; Vice.Minister: Francisco Lacayo)
WCIP	<u>World Council of Indigenous Peoples</u> (alliance of independent organisations of autochthonous peoples; consultative member at the UN as NGO)

Reports printed in the Documentation Series are:

- No. 1 Declaration of Barbados
- No. 2 Karl E. Knutsson: Report from Eritrea (out of print)
- No. 3 A. Barrie Pittock: Aboriginal Land Rights (out of print)
- No. 4 Rupert R. Moser: The Situation of the Adivasis of Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas, Bihar, India (out of print)
- No. 5 John H. Bodley: Tribal Survival in the Amazon: The Campa Case
- No. 6 René Fuerst: Bibliography of the Indigenous Problem and Policy of the Brazilian Amazon Region
- No. 7 Bernard Arcand: The Urgent Situation of the Cuiva Indians of Columbia
- No. 8 Stefano Varese: The Forest Indians in the Present Political Situation of Peru
- No. 9 Walter Coppens: The Anatomy of a Land Invasion Scheme in Yekuana Territory, Venezuela (out of print)
- No. 10 Henning Siverts: Tribal Survival in the Alto Marañon: The Aguaruna Case (out of print)
- No. 11 Mark Münzel: The Aché Indians: Genocide in Paraguay
- No. 12 Nelly Arvelo Jiménez: The Dynamics of the Ye'cuana («Maquiritare») Political System: Stability and Crisis (out of print)
- No. 13 Carmen Junqueira: The Brazilian Indigenous Problem and Policy: The Example of the Xingu National Park
- No. 14 Douglas E. Sanders: Native People in Areas of Internal National Expansion: Indians and Inuit in Canada.
- No. 15 Alicia Barabas and Miguel Bartolomé: Hydraulic Development and Ethnocide: The Mazatec and Chinantec People of Oaxaca, Mexico
- No. 16 Richard Chase Smith: The Amuesha People of Central Peru: Their Struggle to Survive
- No. 17 Mark Münzel: The Aché: Genocide Continues in Paraguay
- No. 18 Jürgen Riestler: Indians of Eastern Bolivia: Aspects of Their Present Situation
- No. 19 Jean Chiappino: The Brazilian Indigenous Problem and Policy: The Example of the Aripuana Indigenous Park
- No. 20 Bernardo Berdichewsky: The Araucanian Indian in Chile
- No. 21 Nemesio J. Rodriguez: Oppression in Argentina: The Mataco Case
- No. 22 Jacques Lizot: The Yanomami in the Face of Ethnocide
- No. 23 Norman E. Whitten, Jr.: Ecuadorian Ethnocide and Indigenous Ethnogenesis: Amazonian Resurgence Amidst Andean Colonialism
- No. 24 Torben Monberg: The Reactions of People of Bellona Island Towards a Mining Project
- No. 25 Felix Razon and Richard Hensman: The Oppression of the Indigenous Peoples of the Philippines
- No. 26 Peter A. Cumming: Canada: Native Land Rights and Northern Development
- No. 27 Peter Kloos: The Akuriyo of Surinam: A Case of Emergence from Isolation
- No. 28 Ernesto Salazar: An Indian Federation in Lowland Ecuador
- No. 29 Douglas E. Sanders: The Formation of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples

- No. 30 Julio Tumiri Apaza (ed.): *The Indian Liberation and Social Rights Movement in Kollasuyu (Bolivia)*
- No. 31 Norman Lewis: *Eastern Bolivia: The White Promised Land*
- No. 32 Ernest G. Migliazza: *The Integration of the Indigenous People of the Territory of Roraima, Brazil*
- No. 33 *Guatemala 1978: The Massacre at Panzós*
- No. 34 Norman E. Whitten, Jr.: *Amazonian Ecuador: An Ethnic Interface in Ecological, Social and Ideological Perspectives*
- No. 35 Richard Chase Smith: *The Multinational Squeeze on the Amuesha People of Central Peru*
- No. 36 Gerald D. Berreman: *Himachal: Science, People and »Progress«*
- No. 37 *The Yanoama in Brazil 1979*
- No. 38 *Chile 1979: The Mapuche Tragedy*
- No. 39 A. Barrie Pittock: *Australian Aborigines: The Common Struggle for Humanity*
- No. 40 Torben Retbøll (ed.): *East Timor, Indonesia and the Western Democracies*
- No. 41 Susana B. C. Devalle: *Multi-ethnicity in India: The Adivasi Peasants of Chota Nagpur and Santal Parganas*
- No. 42 Brigitte Simón, Barbara Schuchard, Barbara Riester and Jürgen Riester: *I Sold Myself; I Was Bought – A Socioeconomic Analysis Based on Interviews with Sugar-cane Harvesters in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia.*
- No. 43 Sören Hvalkof and Peter Aaby (eds.): *Is God an American? an anthropological perspective on the missionary work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, joint publication with Survival International, London.*
- No. 44 Paul L. Aspelin and Silvio Coelho dos Santos: *Indian Areas Threatened by Hydroelectric Projects in Brazil.*
- No. 45 Robert Paine: *Dam a River, Damn a People? Saami (Laap) Livelihood and the Alta/Kautokeino Hydro-Electric Project and the Norwegian Parliament.*
- No. 46 Nicolás Iñigo Carrera: *»Violence« as an Economic Force: The process of proletarianisation among the indigenous people of the Argentinian Chaco, 1884-1930.*

Spanish Documents

- No. 1 Ricardo Falla: *Masacre de la Finca San Francisco Huehuetenango, Guatemala (17 de Julio de 1982)*

The reproduction and distribution of information contained in the IWGIA NEWSLETTERS and the IWGIA DOCUMENTS is welcome as long as the source is cited. However, reproduction of whole DOCUMENTS should not occur without the consent of IWGIA, according to our copyrights.

© Copyright 1983
by International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
All rights reserved