



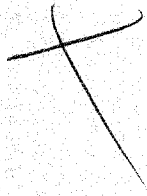
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in their grief and shock. Till today no official of the government has visited their village to inquire into the incident. No one apparently cares that the life of an innocent woman has been taken at the hands of trigger-happy policemen. Reportedly PSI Sahane proudly claims that this is the third shooting that he has been in. Last year in February, PSI Sahane was in yet another incident of this nature. Only at that time it was another village in Makhada called Mahal Talasari.

These facts may appear unbelievable and maybe some will dismiss them as exaggeration. Yet the death of Jumnibai and wounding of Sitibai cannot be dismissed. We want to appeal that justice be done in this case. It is ironic that 1987 has been declared the International Year for Shelter for the Homeless.

We want to ask you to assist her to obtain justice. If you can, please do the following:

1. Send a telegram to the Chief Minister, Maharashtra, Mantralaya, Bombay, condemning the atrocities; and demanding the following:
2. Judicial inquiry into the firing.
3. The apprehension of those responsible both from the police and FDCM.
4. Compensation for the deceased's family and the injured.
5. The return of all the illegally confiscated timber taken from the dwelling houses.
6. An inquiry into the illegal timber trade in the area.
7. The immediate withdrawal of fabricated cases against tribals and their release.

Sources: Kashtakati Sanghatna.

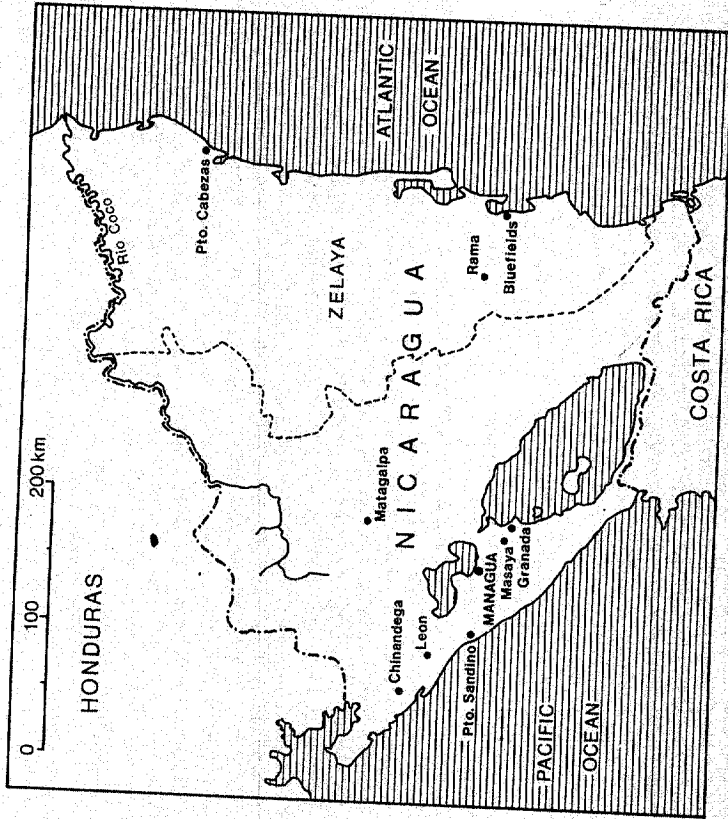
Nicaragua: The Miskitu conflict on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua

By: Philippe Bourgois

The relationship between the Sandinista Revolution and the ethnic minority populations - especially the Miskitu Indians - residing on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua has generated a bitter polemic among scholars, politicians, Amerindian rights activists, and even leftist revolutionaries. It has resulted in unlikely alliances and enemies. For example, Russel Means, a militant of the American Indian Movement (AIM) (AIM has formally repudiated Russel Means' stance on Nicaragua) and primary leader in the 1973 armed uprising against the U.S. government at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, has found himself in meetings with Reagan administration officials to request funding for armed struggle (cf. Washington Post, March 11, 1986). (High-level State Department officials proudly boast in the press that the United States evacuated two wounded comrades-in-arms of the veteran insurgent from South Dakota (cf. Elliot Abrams' letter to the editor in the Washington Post, March 13, 1986)). President Reagan himself, who is not otherwise known for his sympathy towards oppressed ethnic minorities, frequently invokes in glowing moral and humanitarian language his unswerving defense of the rights of the Miskitu. (President Reagan became so caught up in his human rights rhetoric outside the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in May of 1985 that he called himself not only "... a Jew in a world still threatened by anti-Semitism..." but also "... a Miskito Indian in Nicaragua. I, too, am a potential victim of totalitarianism (cited in Americas Watch 1985:49).") Significant

*

Paper presented at the 13th annual meetings of the Latin American Studies Association, Boston, October 23-25, 1986



Map of Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast

ly, Reagan did not call himself "A Navaajo about to be forcibly relocated from my homeland by the U.S. government" or "a Maya terrorized by the genocide of the Guatemalan army". At the same time, more reputable scholars, and even liberals opposed to the Reagan administration's Central American policies have expressed disillusionment with the revolutionary process in Nicaragua precisely because of the "Miskitu question" (cf. The Nation, Sept. 14 and 28, 1985).

Part of the problem stems from the dearth of reliable information available in the public debate. Interpretations of Sandinista/Miskitu relations tend to be formed - for lack of objective data - on preconceived political opinions, personality likes and dislikes, or just plain old misinformation. Indeed, ever since Secretary of State Alexander Haig angrily waved, at a Miami press conference, a photograph of the Red Cross burning the cadavers of victims of Somoza's National Guard, and dramatically claimed that his three year old picture depicted a Sandinista massacre of Miskitu Indians, hot off the battle fields, it has been difficult to believe any reports emanating on the subject.

I had the good fortune in 1979-80 of living and undertaking fieldwork among the Miskitu in the heartland of their territory on the Coco River along the Nicaragua/Honduras border, prior to the outbreak of military conflict in the region (See Map). It was during these months, just after the overthrow of Anastasio Somoza by the Sandinistas, that the militant Indian rights organization, MISURASATA, grew into a powerful social, political, and later military movement in Miskitu territory. I was obliged to leave the region before it erupted into a military battlefield from 1981 through 1983; subsequently, however, I returned several times, including a visit in July/August 1985 to the Coco River following a cease fire with the government just as the population, which had been evacuated from the border area in 1982, was returning to rebuild their decimated communities.

My field research observations have allowed me to attempt to "depoliticize" the controversy as much as possible. The historic roots of the conflict on the Atlantic Coast have been documented elsewhere (Bourgois 1986a). I will not repeat the historical argument here except in so far as to assert that the hatred that a large proportion of the Miskitu feel for the non-Indian population has little to do with the political orientation of the Sandinistas. It is rooted in the radically different history of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and in the three centuries of strife and hostility between Indians and Hispanics in the region.

Most importantly, the ethnocentrism that Sandinista cadres have exhibited towards ethnic minority populations is not a product of their political orientation. It is part of the ideology of ethnocentrism which has arisen out of the racial division of labor initiated during the British colonial penetration of the region in the 1700s, and further systematized under the U.S. transnational enclave (lumber, mining, and banana production) which has dominated the entire Atlantic Coast of all of Central America for the past century. Indeed, as has been documented elsewhere, structurally based inter-ethnic conflict is extremely polarized all through the Caribbean rimland of Central America; it is not limited to Nicaragua (cf. Bourgois 1985b, Gordon 1985). (For example, in an informal discussion on the Miskitu conflict with Guaymí Indians in Panama near the Costa Rican border, a Guaymí community leader interrupted me with exasperation and said, "Why don't the Americans give us guns too: we are also ready to fight against the <Panamanian> government for our lands.").

Obviously, Hispanic Sandinistas did not invent racism against the Miskitu; the Sandinistas are - if anything - less racist than the Hispanic, right-wing, Somozist-dominated, counter-revolutionary (contra) forces based in Honduras. Nevertheless, the explosive tensions inherent in the social fabric of the



A Miskitu woman at Tasba Pri, 1982 (Photo: Cordelia Dilg)

Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua were catalyzed by the revolutionary process and then exacerbated by the war. Ironically, therefore, it was the revolution itself which initially mobilized the Miskitu, as Brooklyn Rivera, the head of MISURASATA, explained to me in an interview:

Of course, the Revolution made this whole movement possible. The fervour of the revolutionary triumph injected into the soul, heart and atmosphere that everybody could express themselves and participate. Before there was no incentive... we were just asleep.

Suffice it to say that following the revolutionary opening provided by the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, the CIA did not have to be particularly skillful or persuasive, nor the Sandinistas particularly ethnocentric and clumsy, for the Miskitu to feel it necessary to initiate armed struggle.

Despite the confusion, polemic, and above all the politicized rhetoric on this subject, the debate on ethnic minorities in the Nicaraguan revolution has contributed on a theoretical level to our understanding of ethnic processes and also, more importantly, on a practical level, to the political/humanitarian advance of the rights of indigenous peoples throughout the continent. In the realm of theory, the Miskitu mobilization has:

- 1) demonstrated the importance of ethnicity and racism in mobilizing population groups;
- 2) underlined the failure of the left - especially the Latin American revolutionary left - to deal with ethnic/national realities and concurrently the inability of the indigenous rights movement - the "fourth worldists" - to grapple consistently with the international geo-political implications of the mobilization; and

- 3) provided yet more evidence of the tragic implications of U.S. intervention in inter-ethnic struggles in the Third World.

The CIA - despite its clumsiness and internally ethnocentric orientation - has been successful, once again, in mobilizing the legitimate, historical grievances of an oppressed ethnic minority behind the U.S. government's objectives. The classic example of CIA "ethnic liberation" opportunism is the arming of the Hmoung people in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. The U.S. Army contracted anthropologists to study ethnic minorities in North Vietnam (cf. Kensington Office of the American Institutes for Research 1972. See also the discussions of the complicity of anthropologists in U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Southeast Asia and Latin America by Gough 1973, Sahlins 1973, Wolf and Jorgensen 1970, and New York Times, March 20, 1967, p. 11).

In a more practical vein, the international attention accorded to the Miskitu and the Indian people's extraordinary capacity for military resistance has raised the level of recognition and discussion of Indian rights throughout the Americas. Both because of - and yet despite - the bitter fighting and bloodshed in the Atlantic region, the Sandinistas have taken steps in favor of Indian rights which are more radical than any other country in the hemisphere. For example, the right of the Miskitu and other peoples of the Atlantic Coast to regional political autonomy is now publicly recognized by the Sandinistas. Despite serious internal party opposition to autonomy, the Sandinista leadership has committed itself to codifying autonomy into the new constitution once its scope and nature have been defined. Adult literacy training in indigenous languages and primary education in maternal tongue is now recognized as a self-evident right for all ethnic minorities in Nicaragua. Indeed, ironically, there is no other country in the Americas where Indians as a whole have won from the government such far reaching recognition of their political, economic and cultural rights as peoples. (Some anthropologists

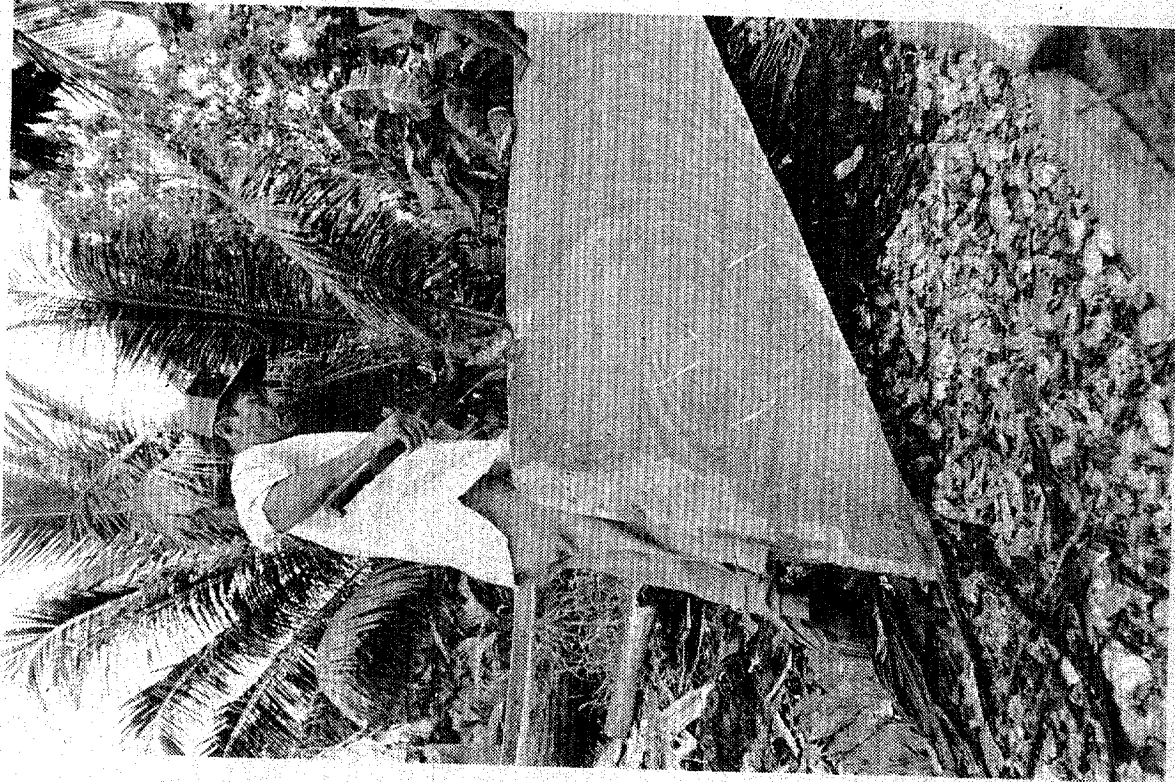
might argue that indigenous people in Panama have long since enjoyed such basic rights. While that may be true for the Kuna in San Blas, it is not the case for the Guaymí in Bocas del Toro, Veraguas and Chiriquí who suffer bitter discrimination and economic exploitation and whose rights to ancestral lands have not been formally recognized by the government (cf. Bourgois 1985b and Gjording 1981)). Tragically it has taken several years of bloody fighting with serious human rights violations and civilian casualties for these initial advances to take place; nevertheless, it is doubtful that indigenous struggles anywhere in the Americas will be unaffected by the demands of the Miskitu and the concessions of the Nicaraguan government.

In the remaining pages I would like to illustrate these issues by examining the details of the change in attitude and policy of the Sandinistas since the initiation of combat in late 1981. The years from 1982 through 1983 were marked by bitter fighting and serious human rights violations. Several independent human rights organizations (most notably Americas Watch 1984, 1985 and Amnesty International 1986) have documented in detail the extent of civilian victims during this first period of military confrontation. Although the tragedy of a human victim can never be qualified, it is significant that the civilian deaths and abuses committed by the Nicaraguan government troops never even remotely approached what the Reagan administration claimed; it is also relevant to note that the Miskitu insurgents also engaged in violent human rights violations, often against fellow Indians (cf. Americas Watch 1985 and Amnesty International 1986).

In late 1984 negotiations were initiated with MISURASATA, the Miskitu armed organization with less direct links to the CIA-controlled contra organization based in Honduras known as the FDN. By 1984 MISURASATA agreed to an unofficial cease fire and there were no more systematic military confrontations between the organization and the army. By this time, high-level

government officials had begun revising their interpretation of the conflict. The Miskitu armed opposition was no longer lumped into the same category as the rest of the Hispanic contra whose military leadership was (and still is) dominated by national guardsmen from Somoza's era. In 1985 Sandinista military officials initiated negotiations with local-level commanders of MISURA, the indigenous armed organization founded in 1981 with direct ties to the FDN and the CIA in Honduras. In May of 1985 a cease fire agreement was signed and the Sandinistas publicly recognized many of their serious errors, including their own profoundly ethnocentric orientations and - somewhat less publicly - the tragic consequences of their military approach to indigenous discontent. The most onerous policies (identification cards, relocation from home communities in war regions, obligatory military service, etc.) were immediately discontinued and, when possible, reversed - as in the case of the return of over 10,000 Miskitu to their homes along the Coco River. Most importantly on a political level, the Sandinistas officially recognized the right of the Atlantic Coast peoples to autonomy. They initiated a complicated (and controversial) process of public consultation with the local population to formulate a statute of autonomy. As further evidence of good faith, almost all the Miskitu prisoners were released and some of the officers responsible for human rights abuses in the region were punished. (In a controversial move, the amnesty of the Miskitu imprisoned during the 1982-1984 period was extended to cover government officers guilty of abuses during that same period of fighting.) In 1982-1984 it had been considered counter-revolutionary to advocate regional autonomy for the Atlantic Coast; by 1985 it was a subject of public debate. (For a detailed discussion of the 1984-1985 transition period see Diskin et al., 1986a, 1986b).

The about-face in policy was abrupt and can be documented through the speeches of high-level leaders of the Revolution. It is most clearly evident in Tomas Borge, the highest level



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

Sandinista leader in charge of the Atlantic Coast. Whereas his public speeches through early 1985 frequently have been reprinted or quoted by indigenous rights activists and even by the U.S. Department of State (cf. 1986:6) to illustrate Sandinista ethnocentrism, by early 1986 he was self-critical about his former attitudes:

The ideological framework.... had taught us that ... Indians still need to be civilized. People felt ashamed of having Black or Indian blood.

This ethnocentric vision did not allow us to understand the historic needs of our people and communities on the Atlantic Coast (People's World, December 28, 1985).

We lacked an anthropological vision. At times we didn't show enough heart, enough love, enough understanding (Wall Street Journal, March 6, 1986).

We were confronted with an unfamiliar problem: the ethnic dimension. Our unfamiliarity with it led us to commit errors.... The Frente <Sandinista Party> did not understand the ethnic issues and in the best of moments we treated them as secondary problems. We thought that economic development... would resolve all their demands (Barricada Internacional, 19 Oct., 1985, p.1).

By late 1985 the Nicaraguan government was distributing publications through its embassies which included interviews with Miskitu armed opposition leaders condemning Sandinista policies:

We rose up in arms in order to force the Sandinistas to listen to us - the war will continue if they refuse to listen to us... They don't understand the profound problem of the Atlantic Coast. The Sandinistas have to hand over power to those it belongs to: the people (Barricada Internacional 19, Oct., 1985, p.5-6).

The official Sandinista party newspaper has published self-criticisms in its editorials:

... we did not see clearly... and we sacrificed correct political principles for an incorrect political project. As Tomas Borge has said, 'just because imperialism has manipulated just principles doesn't mean revolutionaries should renounce those principles'.

A problem persists, however: these experiences have not been absorbed by the bulk of Nicaraguan society and there is

still an attitude of rejection towards these just demands solely because they come from a group which has had contradictions with the Revolution... That is negative, because... there can only be national liberation with autonomy (Barricada, July 12, 1986).

In the same vein, the Miskitu representative to the national legislative assembly who ran on the Sandinista party ticket stated to the press:

In 1982 the Sandinista government reacted with force when confronted with the particular situation of the Atlantic Coast because they did not understand the situation and the Indians were obliged to take up arms to defend their rights. Today the government is approaching the problematic of the Atlantic Coast with a more open and respectful attitude and is providing the space for us to solve our problems without shedding more blood (Barricada Internacional, 19, Oct., 1985, p.8).

Unfortunately a solution to the conflict free from more bloodshed is not imminent. The Indian leader who signed the May of 1985 cease fire for MISURA without the approval of the organization's political leadership based in Honduras was mysteriously killed in an "accident" while meeting with other military commanders less receptive to his negotiations for peace. The armed opposition subsequently fragmented into a half dozen groups, some of which have respected the cease fire and others of which have not. The position of the various armed splinter groups tends to be formed more by the personality of the local commander than by an institutionalized process of consultation with the local population and with the troops. These splinter groups loosely belong to three major armed organizations: KISAN-war, KISAN-peace, and MISURASATA. The leadership of KISAN-war is based in Honduras and the organization is a member of UNO, the opposition group dominated by the FDN under CIA auspices. KISAN-war has been publicly promised \$ 5 million of the \$ 100 million voted by the U.S. Congress for the contra in late 1986. Its leader has adopted uncompromising positions, anathema to political compromise or negotiation:

Communists only want the poor and Indians to be instruments of their power. How can we come to an agreement with the people who destroyed 117 of our communities and 86 of our churches and butchered our domestic animals? (Wall Street Journal, March 6, 1986).

Other hard-line Miskitu military leaders have been less politic in their statements to the press:

I love killing; I have been killing for the past seven years. There's nothing I like better. If I could, I'd kill several people a day (Washington Post, Sept. 30, 1984; cited in Americas Watch 1985: 71).

In contrast, KISAN-peace is amenable to a negotiated solution; it controls territory around the community of Yulu near Puerto Cabezas, the capital of the northern region of the Atlantic Coast (see Map). Its troops receive medicine, food and even armament from the Sandinistas on condition that they do not accept support from the CIA and that they help the government keep the FDN out of the region. Negotiations with the Sandinistas have progressed furthest with KISAN-peace, but there are many sub-commanders; localized loyalties within conflicting chains of command are often contradictory and have led to confusion and even violence.

The third group, MISURASATA, controls territory to the south of Puerto Cabezas along the Coast and along the Prinzapolka River. Although it is the smallest of the three organizations it has the largest international projection and is set squarely in the "fourth worldist" international Indian movement. Negotiations broke down between MISURASATA's leadership and the Sandinistas in 1985 and there have been stinging international condemnations back and forth ever since. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether MISURASATA will accept the conditions of subordination which the FDN and the CIA are insisting upon in return for a share of U.S. funding (cf. New York Times, August 3, 1986). The reasons for the breakdown in negotiations between MISURASATA and the Sandinistas are not clear; they appear to be a combination of personality conflicts and the radical stances

of the international indigenous rights advisors who have a strong influence in MISURASATA and who shun compromise or power sharing. The Sandinistas claim that MISURASATA insists that it is the sole representative of indigenous peoples in Nicaragua and that it refuses to recognize the right of the other indigenous armed and unarmed organizations to participate in the negotiation process for autonomy on the Atlantic Coast (Personal communication, Dr. Orlando Nunez, June 3, 1986). MISURASATA claims the Sandinista autonomy project is a cynical ploy strictly for international consumption. In the international arena, however, there are inconsistencies within the fourth worldist Indian movement between its militant activism against the Nicaraguan government versus its less energetic role in mobilizing against other North and South American governments which are ruthlessly violating the human rights of their indigenous populations. (The issue of the radicalization of Indian demands is an interesting one. Both MISURASATA and KISAN-peace advocate a form of regional autonomy within the framework of the Nicaraguan state. Increasingly, however, one hears statements by Miskitu civilians advocating total national separation from Nicaragua. There is a significant sector of the indigenous population which has been radicalized beyond the possibility of a reformist solution. (Personal communication, Martin Diskin, Sept. 14, 1986, and personal observations). The same may be true on the international level among the leaders and activists in the fourth worldist Indian movement who do not trust the current process of compromise and regional autonomy and who energetically lobby public opinion against it.)

Finally the last crucial dynamic in this conflict is the role of the United States. If MISURA, KISAN-war, and to a lesser extent MISURASATA had not been provided with sophisticated military hardware, intensive military training and millions of dollars of spending money, there would never have been a

protracted armed struggle. There would have been serious conflicts between the Miskitu and the Sandinistas, and there probably would have been bloodshed; but it would not have degenerated into a prolonged, bloody, fratricidal civil war. It probably could have been resolved through a tensely charged process of dialogue, confrontation and compromise as has been occurring unsteadily since 1985.

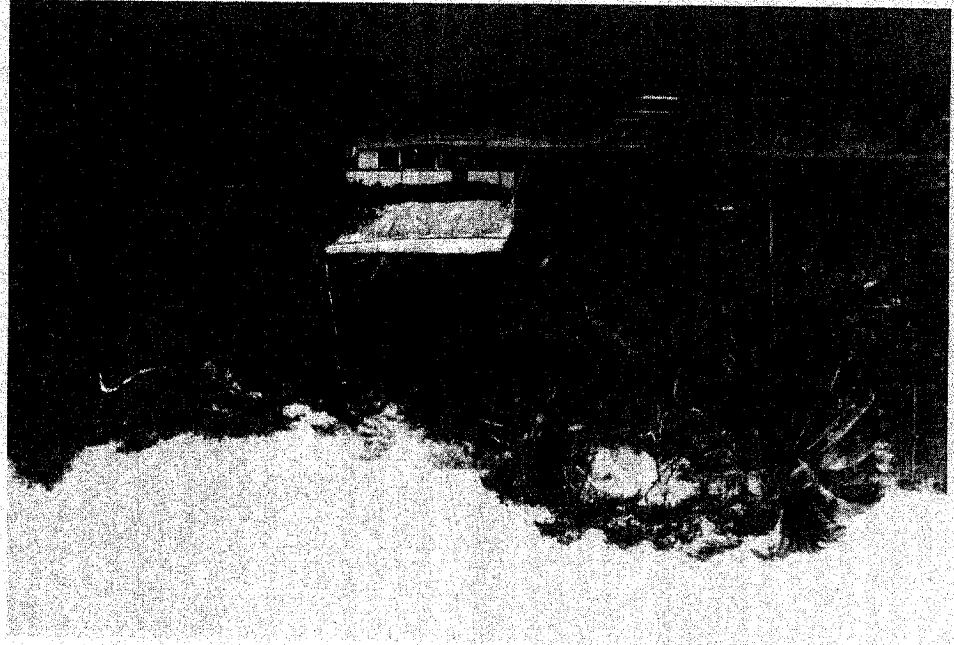
The extraordinary distorting effect of U.S. military aid is clearly visible in the details of the negotiations process. The first group to have its funding cut, or at least drastically reduced by the CIA was MISURASATA when it refused to cooperate organically with the other U.S. dominated contra groups. Not coincidentally, MISURASATA was the first group to enter into negotiations with the Sandinistas.

Subsequently, the more substantive cease fire agreements with the MISURA commanders in May of 1985 took place virtually spontaneously without the approval of the political leadership based in Honduras during an economically and logistically imposed lull in the conflict. The U.S. government had been obliged by a congressional vote to drastically curtail its funding for the contra. The Miskitu fighters on the payroll were the first to feel the pinch since the CIA's closest relations were with the former officers of Somoza's National Guard, most of whom are Hispanic and are virulently racist against Indians. MISURA commanders inside Nicaragua, therefore, were forced to rely on the civilian population for sustenance. The Miskitu leadership based in Honduras and most directly linked to the CIA and the FDW, consequently, lost its political control over the MISURA forces inside Nicaragua who were doing the actual fighting and dying. Local Miskitu communities which were suffering tremendous economic and physical hardships due to the fighting, increasingly pressured the MISURA guerillas to refrain from ambushing and killing government doctors or relief agents carrying medicine and food to the

war-stranded zones. The supply lines to the hard-line Honduras-based and CIA-controlled leadership had broken down. In this manner, during late 1984 and early 1985 the fighting slowly ground to a halt. Apparently, the locally based MISURA commanders arrived at the first peace talks with the Sandinistas in tattered clothing and poor health despite their first-rate armament.

The confusing events immediately following the cease-fire agreements - the mysterious death of the MISURA local-level commander who initiated the negotiations process, the disappearance of several other Miskitu leaders sympathetic to the peace process, the exclusion of high-level MISURASATA leaders from the unity discussions held in Honduras in September of 1985, the formation of KISAN-war, and the splintering of the Miskitu armed opposition - suggest a renewed direct intervention on the part of the CIA (cf. New York Times, Aug 3, 1986). Most dramatically, the evacuation by KISAN-war of the Miskitu communities which were in the process of re-establishing themselves along the Coco River as a first step in the normalization of Sandinista/Miskitu relations appears to have been an engineered ploy to obtain U.S. funding and to re-ignite a military blood bath. Although the evacuation took place immediately after a confrontation between KISAN-war and the Sandinista army, evidence suggests that it was planned well in advance. For example, the U.S. embassy organized logistics for a bevy of journalists to be on site when the refugees from the Coco River were "scheduled" to be led into Honduras by KISAN-war troops. Due to awkward logistics, bad weather, and clumsy stage managing, the publicity coup backfired, and it became evident to the journalists on the scene that the operation was being engineered for their benefit:

"It was the worst public relations job I've ever seen," said one foreign relief official. He said exile leaders told him they had delayed refugees at the border so they could "make them politically conscious" before facing questioners



in the camps (Boston Globe, April 7, 1986; cited in Americas Watch 1986: 4)

The Philadelphia Enquirer ran an article under the headline "A Media Event - With no Audience:"

About 9:45 a.m. Thursday a team of U.S. military (medical) personnel... were flown in Chinook helicopters to Auka as planned. They brought along 20 truckloads of medical supplies... according to a refugee official who was present. Only about 40 refugees were there. "The (U.S.) colonel was very angry," the official said. "He said, 'Where are the refugees?'" The doctors and nurses completed their work in about 15 minutes and spent several hours pulling rotten teeth from local Indians... "It was the best show I've seen in years," quipped another refugee official. "I'm very sorry I didn't take a camera there." (Philadelphia Enquirer, April 6, 1985; cited in Americas Watch 1986:4).

The confusing train of events in this last evacuation of Miskitu civilians from Nicaragua has been carefully reconstructed in a recent publication of Americas Watch (1986) which specifically documents the U.S. role in prolonging and deepening the Miskitu conflict. Indeed, the entire exodus was apparently scheduled to time with the vote for contra aid in the U.S. congress. At least half of the 8,000 to 10,000 Indian civilians affected by the evacuation have since returned to their abandoned houses along the Coco River (Personal communication, Dr. Martin Diskin, Sept. 14, 1986 and Dr. Juan Mendez, Sept. 16, 1986; see also In These Times, Sept. 3-9, 1986, p. 8-9, and Barricada, July 12, 1986).

The dramatic resurgence of U.S. funding for the contra in late 1986 promises to bolster the hardest line factions within KISAN-war and to disrupt further the negotiations process leading to regional autonomy for the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. Evidently, the real fear of the CIA and the U.S. State Department is not that the Sandinistas might mistreat their ethnic minorities but rather the opposite. The Sandinista effort to

admit past errors and tragedies, and to dismantle the historic patterns of inter-ethnic domination and economic exploitation on the Atlantic Coast threatens to set a "subversive" precedent for other multi-ethnic nations. By promoting armed struggle and ensuring the prolongation of an agonized blood-bath, therefore, the United States has been able to retard - if not prevent - the emergence of that liberating example. Even without U.S. interference, however, it would be a torturous process as the following comments from two different Miskitu convey quite succinctly:

Now the Sandinistas have recognized many of their errors. For the second time they have offered us autonomy. We are glad for these changes, and we still want autonomy. But it is difficult to trust the Sandinistas, because of all that has happened in the last few years, and moreover, because (ispail nani ba uba kuninkira sa) Spaniards (Hispanics) in general are tricksters and liars (cited in Hale 1986).

We like the Sandinistas and autonomy and all that. But if they don't give us what we want we will shoot and kill them (Personal communication, Dr. Martin Diskin, Sept. 14, 1986).

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Figure 1: Summary of events and organizations

- 1979: Overthrow of Somoza
Founding of MISURASATA
- 1981: MISURA founded in Honduras with CIA backing
- 1982: MISURASATA joins armed struggle. Region in state of war.
- 1984: Negotiations initiated between Sandinistas and MISURASATA
- 1985: Cease fire signed with local MISURA commanders
Autonomy discussions initiated
Coco River population return to decimated villages
KISAN-war and KISAN-peace founded
- 1986 Dramatic escalation in U.S. funding for KISAN-war.