

Joseph Keane

My name is Jaime Stanley Wheelock. I was born on May 30, 1947 in Managua, Nicaragua. I grew up in a wealthy family that had vast land holdings. My privileged upbringing allowed me to see the disparities and inequities that were present in my country. As a result, I joined the FSLN in 1969, having grown tired of the oppression of the common people by the U.S. backed imperialist powers. After having been accused of killing a National Guard officer, I fled to Chile where I immersed myself in the study of politics, sociology, and agricultural law. After studying in Chile, I moved to Germany where I further studied the teaching of Marx. While there, I wrote several books focusing on Marxist analyses of history, especially of my native Nicaragua. As a result of my studies there, I became the best theoretically trained Marxist on the National Directorate. I returned to Nicaragua in 1975 where I was briefly ousted from the FLSN over internal strife.

In 1979, the FLSN healed its wounds and we were able to refocus our energies to fight the imperialist powers as a united front where I served as Commander of the Revolution. I now serve as a member of the National Directorate and as the Minister of Agriculture in the Sandanista government. We stand now on the verge of enacting new laws that would grant autonomy to the region inhabited by the Miskitu tribe. This would put an end to the fighting between the Revolutionary government of the Sandanistas and the counterrevolutionary activities of the Miskitu peoples. This law is the result of the formation of the national autonomous commission formed in 1984. To fully understand why this law is necessary and how it will aid the revolution, we must look at how the Miskitus fit into history. This will allow us to answer why the Miskitus fought with our government when we have the same interests as well as how they fit into the worldwide struggle against imperialism and capitalism. I authored a book titled *Raices indigenas de la anticolonialista en Nicaragua* (Indigenous Roots of Anti-colonial Struggle in Nicaragua). In this work, I deconstruct the traditionally racist history of the Indigenous people of Nicaragua. This includes the all important myth of the harmonious mestizaje. In this lie that has its roots in Spanish imperialism, it is said that the Indians and the Spanish came together through peaceful means rather than force.

I also chronicle the constant resistance to the imperialist powers. Around the beginning of the 19th century, the main source of the indigenous resistance moved from ethnicity to class consciousness. With this move, the Indians joined the rest of the proletariat in the inevitable revolution that will bring about true equality and solidarity. The armed conflict with the Miskitu occurred because of an unfortunate mixture of misunderstanding and intervention by the United States. The misunderstanding, which I was guilty of myself for many years, came from the overemphasis of an economic approach to society and politics while ignoring the role ethnicity played. Until now, we have been operating under the assumption that the oppressed Indians only interest was that of the class struggle in which we have all been engaged, this is not the case. They are also concerned with ethnic identity and protection from racism, which every good member of the Nicaraguan state should enjoy. They wish to retain some of their traditional ways such as language, culture, religion, and other important aspects of their lives. Another reason for this armed conflict is the intervention of the United States. The Miskitu were resentful of our policies which appeared to convey the idea that they should be totally assimilated. This is definitely not the case. While it is in the Miskitus' best interests to cooperate with and participate in the revolution, we do not wish to oppress them any further.

Playing on their fears, the United States was able to deceive the Miskitu into believing that their counterrevolutionary methods would preserve their heritage when in fact the U.S. was using the Miskitu as pawns, fearing the success of the revolution. Once we, as Sandanistas, were able to correct our slight misperceptions about the Miskitu, and the Miskitu were shown that we were really allied with mutual interest, agreement was not far behind. The Miskitu should be granted autonomy to protect their culture, language, and way of life. At the same time, they should recognize the goals of the revolution and work within these goals. They should not strive to disrupt the revolution, as this would ultimately harm them. We wish to align our movement with the Miskitus, that is to free all oppressed people and bring them into our vision of an equal state. The Miskitu should be allowed to function in a somewhat autonomous capacity as long as it is within the Nicaraguan state. This is exactly what the proposed law does. It allows the region of the Miskitu to function autonomously to a degree without coming into conflict with the supremacy of our revolutionary goals or the Nicaraguan state. This law, and the resulting autonomy for the Miskitus would

allow our nation to exist in a more peaceful state which would allow us to further our goals and defeat the U.S.-backed contras. The law would give the Miskitu no reason to take up arms against the revolution. It would also prevent the Miskitu from being manipulated by the United States which has, and will continue to stop at nothing in order to contain our revolution and its goals. The United States willingly sinks to manipulation and lies because of fear. They see how we are committed to true equality, with out regard to class, race or gender and they fear it. They know that it is only a matter of time before the oppressed classes in their country gains consciousness and rises up to assert their rights. This law is necessary to correct some of the errors in the way in which the Sandanista government has treated the Miskitu peoples. It will also allow the Miskitu to beak form the corrupting and harmful influence of the United States. From this will result in an alliance between the Miskitu and the Sandanista government. This in turn will lead to a more unified and stronger revolutionary movement, which should be the aim of all our efforts as proper Nicaraguan citizens. It is too late and not close to desirable to try to stop or even slow the wave of revolution.