

Luis Carrion's Acceptance Letter to Harvard's Kennedy School of  
Government: Masters Program

January 1993

To the Acceptance Committee at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government,

First of all I would like to thank you for my acceptance in to the Edward S. Mason program for Third World leaders in mid-career. I have heard that there has been some controversy about my acceptance to Harvard, and the sponsorship of the OAS (Organization of the American States.) I understand that some questions have been raised about my participation in the Sandinista movements in Nicaragua and numerous human right violations<sup>1</sup>.

Despite Nicaragua's backward economy I, like fellow FSLN member Jamie Wheelock, come from an upper- class family and had the benefit of attending a New England Preparatory school<sup>2</sup>. While still in Nicaragua I attended the prestigious Christian Brother's School for my first three years in high school. After finishing my senior year at the Phillip Exeter Academy, I then attended the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. Unfortunately I only completed one year there, before returning to my native country and entering the University of Central America<sup>3</sup>. I have been informed that despite rumors that I did not graduate from the University or even possessed a graduate degree at all, Harvard saw great potential for my future and deemed that enough to grant admission<sup>4</sup>. I again thank you.

Now that I have cleared up the confusion about my education I will now focus on my political alliances and accomplishments. To begin with I would like to explain why I became a member of the Sandinista movement, "I became involved in the revolution through a religious experience. My first motivations were of this type. My growing concern with the concept of justice, my first search for identification with the people took this road.... As I began to advance and grow as a revolutionary, I found other reasons and motivations. I developed an objective consciousness of the roots of exploitation, of the suffering of the people, and I began to see things from another perspective."<sup>5</sup> Along with fellow members Jamie Wheelock and Carlos Núñez, I was the third controlling member of the Proletariat faction of the FSLN Directorate. Combined with these duties I was also Deputy Minister of the Interior and a member of the party Military Commission. Later I became a member of the Defense and Security Council under the leadership of Thomas Borge and Humberto Ortega. In this position I was involved in coordinating security policies and overseeing party networks<sup>6</sup>.

Some other accomplishments that I have been credited to my name by the now deceased Nicaraguan defective Alvaro Baldizon (who unfortunately died of food poisoning in a Las Angeles restaurant) are having the authority along with Borge to approve of extrajudicial killings of FSLN opponents. Because of this power it has been implied that I am responsible for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Wattenburg, "Harvard's New Interior Minister", *American Spectator* 26 (1993): 36.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Gilbert, *Sandinistas*, (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1988), 42.

<sup>3</sup> Wattenburg, 36.

<sup>4</sup> Wattenburg, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Gilbert, 148.

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert, 11, 46, 63.

deaths of hundreds of FSLN political enemies. Also with my help the Ministry of the Interior (MINT) became an effective internal security venture that boasted of 15, 000 members. This group successfully operated many prisons where enemies of the state were detained in less than desirable conditions<sup>7</sup>. It also was my duty to “build the party’s capacity to maintain control no matter how unpopular it became.” Some other credits to my past are being able to avoid being the prime suspect and taking the blame in an internal investigation supported by Borge into the matter of numerous “special measures” (or the execution of hundreds of political prisoners.<sup>8</sup>)

I also had the honor of being in control of Sandinista relations with the Miskito Indians on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua. I held this position from 1981 to 1985, and during these years it was my goal to end the traditional patterns of life that the natives practiced. I was influential in the flood of Marxist teachers and doctors in to the Miskito villages. Meanwhile, the FSLN was busy relocating tens of thousands of indigenous people in to the “Promised Land” as we in the government liked to call these relocation camps<sup>9</sup>. It was important for the Proletariat faction of the FSLN that the working class supported them, the Miskito Indians were a large group of people that due to colonialism and imperialism had been held back by the Europeans. It became imperative for the indigenous people to abandon their backward ways and join the working class. The Sandinista government decided that the fastest method for this to occur would be granting the Miskito a limited form of autonomy. In July of 1985 the Sandinista Government of Nicaragua proposed a draft law on autonomy. The goals of this law were to grant the Miskito Indians a limited freedom that would give them equal rights with the rest of Nicaraguan citizens. The projected outcome of this proposal was two- fold; the first was that under the guidance of the national government the Miskito Indians would leave their backward ways behind and create their own working class. With out the support of a working class or proletariat a successful Marxist revolution could not occur. The second goal of the proposal was to placate the indigenous people and gain their support. It was important to us that the native populations support our goals, because we have their best interests in mind when we proposed this law. As I’ve said before and told the UNAG’s First National Congress, “At the same time that we warmly support the process of cooperativization, it should be clear that the FSLN categorically rejects the use of coercion or force to operate cooperatives. The distribution of land to peasants who demand it should not be used to force cooperativization. ... Cooperatives should only develop as a product of the free will of the peasants.<sup>10</sup>” It was our hope that this new social class created by the “autonomous” natives would generate a more Marxist social consciousness<sup>11</sup>.

This proposal had many positive aspects to it. First it allowed the Miskito people the freedom to control their own land and what happens on that land, while they still remained a part of Nicaragua’s indivisible nation. Second it allowed the Miskitos to overcome the years of oppression and exploitation by the Europeans. The natives should abandon their backward ways and become involved in the Nicaraguan movement under the control of the Sandinista party. Unfortunately they needed practice in functioning in a society; these people needed to experience a Capitalist economic structure before they could move on to the more advanced Marxist system. This proposal on Autonomy gave the Miskito the chance to improve their lives by achieving Marxists ideals and living in a Marxist society. This proposal was not fulfilling these Marxists ideals, but it was a step in the right direction towards creating a nation that successfully function in a Marxist fashion.

I again thank you for the chance to explain my motives as a member of the FSLN and for my acceptance into the Edward S. Mason program for Third World leaders in mid-career.

---

<sup>7</sup> Wattenburg, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Wattenburg, 37.

Thank you,  
Luis Carrion Cruz