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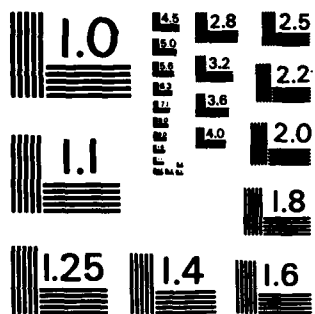
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APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Thesis: An Examination of the Historical, Social, Economic, and Political Factors of the Marxist Insurgency in Guatemala.

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ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: An Examination of the Historical, Social,
Economic, and Political Factors of the
Marxist Insurgency in Guatemala.

James Davie Bjostad, Master of Science in Strategic
Intelligence, 16 September 1985

Thesis Committee Chairman: Dr. Hazel M. B. Ingersoll

→ The purpose of this thesis is to present a comprehensive study of the Marxist insurgency in Guatemala, through an examination of historical, social, economic, and political factors, and to discuss the probability for success of United States foreign policy in support of the Guatemalan government and its counterinsurgency program. *the thesis covers*

~~Chapter 1~~ introduces the reader to the violence historically endemic in Guatemala, and the roots of the Marxist insurgency which began in 1960, ~~Chapter 2~~ discusses the Mayas from their earliest known existence, continuing through the Spanish conquest, up until independence was declared September 15th, 1821. Chapter III relates the battle for control of post-independence Guatemala between the Liberals and Conservatives; continues through the "war of the mountain," the Indian revolt which resulted in Indian control from 1838 until 1865; discusses the Liberals' return to power and the resulting series of dictators; and concludes with the short-lived 1944 Guatemalan Revolution, which ended in a C.I.A.-backed coup d'etat in 1954.

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Chapter VII discusses the efforts of the current government to control the insurgency while implementing reforms, and Chapter VIII presents the recommendations of President Reagan's National Bipartisan Commission on Central America (the "Kissinger Commission"), along with an analysis of its findings, Chapter IX concludes this paper with the author's recommendations for immediate and long term United States foreign policy actions in Guatemala which will prevent a Marxist overthrow while fostering necessary reforms.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND
POLITICAL FACTORS OF THE MARXIST INSURGENCY IN
GUATEMALA

by

James Davie Bjostad



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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Defense Intelligence
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Introduction

Siempre la violencia - "Always the violence"

Terrorism probably has as many definitions as there are terrorist organizations in the world today. One of the better definitions comes from correspondent Claire Sterling in her book The Terror Network. Quoting the 18th century military strategist von Clausewitz's definition of war as "the continuation of politics by other means," Sterling defines terrorism as the continuation of war by other means.¹ In Guatemala, this definition is particularly fitting.

The "war" in Guatemala consists of a twenty five year old struggle between primarily-Marxist left-wing insurgents on one side and the Guatemalan army, supported by right-wing death squads, on the other. Both sides have used terrorism as a tactic against each other since 1966. Continually caught in the middle of this conflict have been the Indians, descendants of the pre-Columbian Mayan Empire, who comprise about half of the country's population.

The violence in Guatemala didn't begin with the insurgency, though. Throughout history, violence has permeated life in Guatemala, from the human sacrifices of the Mayan priests to the late night "disappearances" conducted by contemporary right-wing "death squads." As this paper nears completion in September, 1985, the Guatemalan government remains under the control of the military as it

has for 31 years. Although presidential elections have been scheduled for late October of this year, with the successful candidate to take office in January, both the leftist insurgents and the right-wing elite are determined to either undermine or simply prevent them.

The left realizes that it cannot campaign seriously in the atmosphere of right-wing violence historic in Guatemala. The left can therefore be expected to continue guerrilla attacks to provoke either a repressive government backlash, which would discredit the elections, or an outright cancellation of them. The right-wing, on the other hand, fears any possible electoral victories by left-wing or moderate candidates, and would prefer to eliminate any candidates who have even a remote chance of winning.

Since cutting off foreign aid to Guatemala in 1977 because of human rights violations, the United States government has been attempting to persuade the Guatemalan government to hold free elections and establish a representative democracy. The U. S. has had to balance the concern for human rights, though, with the threat of the consequences of a Marxist overthrow of the Guatemalan government. Strategically, Guatemala is the linchpin of Central American security. As a result of the 1979 takeover by a Marxist regime in Nicaragua, the stability of the Guatemalan government has become crucial to the governments of El Salvador and Honduras, both sandwiched geographically between Nicaragua and Guatemala. Should Guatemala fall

victim to a Marxist overthrow, the spectre of a hostile Marxist Central America threatening our southern border neighbor, Mexico, becomes a distinct possibility.

Guatemala's military government, anxious to regain American foreign aid money, is facing an economic crisis while conducting an increasingly expensive rural counterinsurgency program against the leftist guerrillas. Although the primary focus of the counterinsurgency program has shifted from military operations to civic action programs, in order to deny the insurgents any popular support, the costs of the program have increased. Complicating the military's effort to win the loyalty of the rural population is the urban violence of the right-wing death squads, directed against anyone considered left of center politically.

My research effort will focus primarily on the roots of the leftist insurgency, the historic responses to that insurgency, and the probability for success of current U. S. foreign policy in preventing a successful Marxist revolution in Guatemala while fostering the establishment of meaningful reforms in labor laws, land distribution, the economy, and human rights.

The Roots of Violence

"In this country there are just two sectors - the exploited, and the exploiters."

President Rios Montt, 1983 2

One of the keys to understanding the people of contemporary Guatemala is to understand the ethnic difference between the Mayan Indians and the Hispanicized, Spanish-speaking ladinos. The process of becoming a ladino is deceptively simple. An Indian who abandons his Indian community and customs and adopts the Spanish language and customs will generally be accepted as a ladino.³

The differences between ladinos and Indians goes much further than language and customs, though. These differences are best illustrated by simple statistics. The literacy rate among ladinos is 80%; among Indians, 20%.⁴ Life expectancy for ladinos is over 60 years; for the Indians, less than 45 years.⁵ Virtually all of the members of the upper and middle classes, comprising 20% of the overall population, are ladinos. Two thirds of the remaining 80% of the population, considered the poor classes, are Indians,⁶ the exploited sector of former President Rios Montt's simplistic appraisal of his country's citizens.

A second key, as important as the first, is the vast imbalance in the distribution of land. It is estimated that just 2% of the people in Guatemala own over 63% of the cultivated land.⁷ Conversely, 87% of the people own just 19% of the cultivated land.⁸ There are basically two types of farms: the latifundistas, or fincas, which are the large, lush coastal plantations of prime agricultural land owned by the extremely wealthy ladino elite (the 2%), and the minifundias, which are small inefficient plots of marginally

arable land tilled by the peasants and Indians, (the 87%).⁹ There are few exceptions between these extremes.

For almost 2,000 years, the Maya Indians have been exploited, first by the elite class of Mayan priests, then by the Spanish conquerors, and finally by the ladinos. This exploitation has consistently been the result of who is in control of the land.

As they have for millenia, the Indians almost exclusively grow corn, their primary and frequently only subsistence, on their small plots of land. The ladinos, on the other hand, grow export crops of coffee, cotton, sugar, and bananas on their large plantations.¹⁰ Ladinos do not, however, perform any of the manual labor on their farms. They consider the actual labor beneath their station, and look upon farm ownership as a source of income to allow them to pursue other business and political interests. The work on their farms is done by the Indians, who have become a colonized class of the ladino.¹¹ The vast majority of these workers can't even afford to buy what they produce; the cost of feeding the average family of six a subsistence diet in modern Guatemala, for example, is double the minimum wage, and many Indian families have up to 12 members.¹²

The large plantation owners depend on the Indians to provide cheap, abundant labor to pick cotton and coffee beans, and cut sugar cane. These labor intensive crops, accounting for three-fourths of Guatemala's exports, require a temporary work force of over half a million people, but

only at harvest time. The remainder of the year the farm work is done by the colonos, resident workers who remain on the plantation for the relative security of regular work, a private plot to grow corn and beans, and a rancho, a plantation-owned thatched hut. Since they are semi-permanent residents, the colonos are treated better than the migrant workers.

Over the last 150 years, the ladino landowners have found numerous devices to insure an adequate supply of cheap Indian labor at harvest time. Even those Indians fortunate enough to own a minifundia cannot survive on the corn and beans they grow, and they need to earn cash to supplement their diet.¹³ In addition, Indian communities frequently have one or more cofradías (religious brotherhoods) which are a strong source of ethnic pride but which require relatively high expenditures for liquor, clothing, candles, and fireworks for religious rituals on specific church holidays.

Taking advantage of these needs, ladino landowners make liberal loans to the Indians, sell them the items they need, and then require repayment in the form of labor.¹⁴ Even those Indians who don't incur debts tend to perform wage work on the plantations to earn additional income. Landless peasants are even easier targets for the landowners, who will rent small plots of land to Indians in return for their agreement to labor on the plantations during the harvest.¹⁵

The ladinos have a vested interest in keeping the Indians either landless, or held to a minimum amount of marginal land, for if the peasants had enough land to survive without working for wages, there would be no cheap labor for the latifundistas.¹⁶ Of the few communal lands that remain, most are relatively unfertile; fertile lands tend to attract ladinos who transform it into their own private property.¹⁷

Since 1954, the Guatemalan army and the ladino elite have operated Guatemala virtually as a business for their mutual benefit. The military governments have maintained a profitable climate for the elite, and the elite have fostered the creation of a comfortable military class, between the middle class and the elite. Military class privileges include special housing, special banks with low interest loans, and opportunities to invest in, or purchase outright, businesses and land. This cozy relationship has functioned well for both the army and the elite, but not for the Indians, who are forced to support them.

To understand how the Maya came to be the exploited class of the Hispanic culture in Guatemala, and the significance of this situation on the insurgency in Guatemala, the student must look at the history of the Maya from long before the Spanish conquest to the present. Chapter II discusses the Mayas from their earliest known existence, continuing through the Spanish conquest, up until independence was declared September 15th, 1821. Chapter III relates the battle for control of post-independence

Guatemala between the Liberals and Conservatives; continues through the "war of the mountain," the Indian revolt which resulted in Indian control from 1838 until 1865; discusses the Liberals' return to power and the resulting series of dictators; and concludes with the short-lived 1944 Guatemalan Revolution, which ended in a C.I.A.-backed coup d'etat in 1954.

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Notes

- ¹ Claire Sterling, The Terror Network (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981), p. 3.
- ² Richard F. Nyrop, ed., Guatemala: A Country Study (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 50.
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Pre-Independence

The Mayan Empire

Although the exact origin of the Mayan civilization is impossible to determine, an ancient Mayan center discovered in 1982 near Cuello, in northern Belize, is believed by archeologists to have been established around 2400 B. C. Evidence of human sacrifices found near the site indicates that early Mayan tribes settled in the area 1600 years earlier, around 4,000 B. C.¹

The Mayan Indians are thought to have originally come as early as 1500 B. C. to the central wooded mountains of Guatemala, now the provinces of Alto and Baja Verapaz, from the Tabasco and Veracruz provinces of southern Mexico.²

Four great cultural and religious temple-cities, Copan in Honduras; Tikal in the Peten region of northern Guatemala; Palenque in the northern foothills of Mexico's Chiapas province; and perhaps the best known, Chichen Itza, in Mexico's Yucatan province, dominated Maya overland trade routes. Tikal, the largest of the four cities with an area of over 50 square miles, had the tallest pyramids in the New World and a population of 20-80,000 people at the height of its development (about 800 A. D.)³ The surrounding Peten region contains over 1100 known archeological sites, a testimonial to the extensive development of the Maya.⁴

Before their decline, the great cities of the Maya were centers of a bureaucratic elite class of priests who

performed sacred rituals, preserved the knowledge of their culture, and administered the theocracy which controlled much of Middle America. The common Indians, who lived outside of the cities, believed the land belonged not to man, but to the gods. As a form of tribute, or tithe, firewood and a portion of the Indians crops were contributed to the temple-cities to support the priests.⁵

Tikal and the smaller Maya cities located in what is now Guatemala were suddenly abandoned about 900 A. D.,⁶ possibly due to a shift from overland trade routes to seagoing canoes.⁷ As a result, the Maya's centralized theocracy lost its grip on the area that was to become Guatemala; and the Mayan Indians formed into small communities centered around communal lands.⁸ The bond which developed between the Indians and their land became a source of identity. Over the thousand years since, the succeeding generations of Indians have continued to till the land in order to fulfill their bond with it and thus be "whole."⁹

The origins of the Mayan religion probably stem from attempts to reduce the mysteries of nature to an understandable level. One of their many gods was Chac, the god responsible for the rains and therefore the crops on which the Mayas' lives depended. Human sacrifices and other offerings to Chac were thrown into sacred cenotes (huge natural wells). These sacrificial victims frequently survived, however, since they were retrieved from the well if they didn't drown within a few hours.¹⁰ Other gods were

thought to require offerings of human blood. At the culmination of divine ceremonies, priests would rip open the breasts of peasants, prisoners, or devout volunteers, with obsidian knives and tear out their still-beating hearts as a sacrifice. These violent attempts to appease the gods were a harbinger of sorts to the violence which has plagued Guatemala ever since.

The ancient Maya were well fed before the arrival of the Spanish.¹¹ Although they practiced the destructive agricultural method of "slash and burn," in which land is cleared by cutting trees and brush and then burning them,¹² the lowlands of Guatemala were especially fertile and grew abundant crops of corn.¹³ The Maya must have controlled a vast area, though, since recovery from the "slash and burn" technique requires land to remain fallow for years after growing only a few crops.¹⁴

The corn crop represented a bridge between wandering tribes and an agricultural lifestyle that promoted civilization, thus helping to raise the Indians from savages to a culture.¹⁵ Even after the great cultural centers of the Mayan Empire were abandoned, Mayan lands continued to be cultivated as communal lands, though now only by families or small clans.

The Spanish Conquest

Early in the 16th century, having reconquered the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors, Spain turned her attention to the New World with its cities of gold, abundant land, and seemingly bottomless labor pool. A band of Spanish conquistadores under Hernan Cortes landed at Veracruz on Mexico's Gulf coast in 1519 and soon conquered the Aztecs of Central Mexico and then the Maya of southern Mexico.

In 1524 Cortes's lieutenant, Pedro de Alvarado, fought his way into what is now Guatemala, and by 1527 had settled the city now known as Antigua Guatemala just to the west of the current site of Guatemala City.¹⁶ The Guatemala audiencia (a major judicial-political area), stretching from Costa Rica to the Chiapas region of Mexico, was formed in 1527 as a part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico). In 1560, the audiencia was directly subordinated to the King of Spain and an authoritarian Captain-General was appointed to administer the Captaincy-General, or "Kingdom," of Guatemala.¹⁷ Of the six states in the Kingdom (Chiapas, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica), Guatemala had the largest number of Indians to exploit as a labor resource.²⁴

The conquistadores in Guatemala received large land grants, known as encomiendas, in recognition of their services to the Spanish Crown. Indians living on the lands of the newly-established encomiendas became serfs of their new Spanish masters, who were responsible for the Indians'

conversion to Christianity. The remainder of the Indians continued to live in their villages and work the communal lands that had not been converted to encomiendas.

Between 1531 and 1542, the Spanish masters of the encomiendas seized more and more of the Indians' land. Eric Wolf explained in his book, Sons of the Shaking Earth,

"[The haciendas] needed and wanted more land, not to raise crops, but to take the land away from the Indians in order to force them to leave their holdings and become dependent on the hacienda for land and work."¹⁹

However, the Spanish conquerors didn't take very good care of the Indians they sought to control: an estimated 60-80% of the Mayan Indians in Guatemala died or were killed between 1524 and 1610, which forced the Spanish at one point to import black Carib Indian slaves from Cuba.

In 1542, in order to preserve the labor supply, the King of Spain decreed the New Laws, which ended the further granting of encomiendas, but permitted existing ones to be retained.²⁰ The surviving Mayan Indians were declared to be vassals of the King of Spain and were resettled into municipios, Spanish-controlled villages surrounded by communal fields (ejidos) granted by the King. They were required to provide a portion of the crops grown on the ejido to the King, much as their ancestors had done to the Mayan priests, and to attend church.²¹ Lands which were neither encomiendas nor ejidos became known as baldia (unclaimed).

Spanish colonists kept the Indians under control for the next 300 years through three basic devices: debt slavery, mandamiento, and repartimiento. Debt slavery was simply the advancing of funds to Indians who would then be forced to work off the debt at very low wages, often so low that they had to borrow more to keep themselves and their families from starving. Mandamiento was a requirement that Indians perform a certain number of weeks of labor per year for the Spanish crown.²² Repartimiento, similiarly, was required service on the encomiendas at harvest time.

As the encomiendas were being established, Guatemala's first bishop, the Dominican Francisco Marroquin who had arrived shortly after the Spanish conquest, began training priests in the local Mayan dialects and setting up schools for Spanish and Indian children.²³ The parish priests who built churches among the Indians became the focal points of the Indian villages and were instrumental in the development of the syncretic folk Catholicism that exists throughout Guatemala today.²⁴

The priests found great success in converting Indians by assimilating the old Indian gods into the ranks of Christian saints.²⁵ By accepting this set of syncretic beliefs, the Catholic church built a bridge from the old ways of the Indians to the new ways of the Spanish. The Indians found it easier to accept a new faith that recognized and incorporated their old one.²⁶ This synthesis of religion is manifested today by Indians who are "Christians in the

church but pagans in the field," praying to both Christian and pagan deities, sometimes simultaneously, to insure favor.²⁷

When the Captaincy-General of Guatemala proclaimed its independence in 1821, control of Guatemala remained in the hands of the former colonists and their descendants, the ladinos. A strong power behind the scenes, however, was the Catholic Church, which had developed the trust and obedience of the Indians.

Notes

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²⁷ John Scofield, "Easter Week in Indian Guatemala," National Geographic, March 1960, p. 417.

Independent Guatemala 1821-1954

The Liberals

During Napoleon's occupation of Spain in the early 1800's, the Spanish government-in-exile in the city of Cadiz (near the Strait of Gibraltar), was dominated by enlightened liberals, who tried to promote modernization through political and economic reforms.¹ Their Liberal Movement spread to the Spanish colonies in the New World, including the Kingdom of Guatemala, where many young politicians embraced Liberalism. These men were the driving force behind the declaration of independence of the Central American provinces from Spain on September 15, 1821,² just five months after the president of the Mexican viceroyalty had paved the way by declaring Mexico's independence.³

The Liberals sought to establish a Central American Republic, composed of the individual provinces of the former Kingdom of Guatemala, because they believed one large republic would be more effective in establishing Liberal reforms than five small states.⁴

The Liberals' desires, both for reforms and a republic, were resisted by two other groups, the Conservatives and the rural peasants, for very different reasons. The Conservatives, preferring the privileges they had enjoyed as colonists under Spanish protection, rejected Liberal reforms because they wanted to keep Guatemala a separate state, essentially unchanged. The peasants, on the other hand, were

the rural classes of Mayan Indians, mestizos (mixed Indian-Spanish), and zambos (mixed Indian-black or Spanish-black), who were suspicious of, and hostile toward, any change in their way of life.⁵ In the 1820's, the peasants in Guatemala lived in a totally separate culture from the Spanish "white man." Even within the peasant culture, the Mayan Indians, who comprised 70% of the rural population, spoke 19 different native dialects, all mutually incomprehensible.⁶

After a short-lived membership in the Mexican Empire in 1822, the Liberals of the five Central American provinces formed the United Provinces of Central America (the Central American Republic) in 1823, against the wishes of the Conservative minority.⁷ Although civil wars raged almost continuously during the next 6 years between the Liberals and the Conservatives both within and between the states, the rural peasants were for the most part unaffected.⁸

The struggle for control in Guatemala was settled, at least temporarily, in 1829 when Honduran Liberal Francisco Morazan and his men seized Guatemala City, the seat of the Republic. Morazan's victory gave the Liberals a control of Central America that would last for the next ten years.⁹

After a successful campaign for the presidency of the Republic in 1830, Morazan expelled the Spanish Catholic religious orders, along with the archbishop, confiscated and sold church land and other holdings, and otherwise worked to weaken the position of the long-entrenched Catholic Church in Central American affairs. The Liberals recognized the

immense power of the Church, particularly in the rural areas, and sought to eliminate the threat it posed to Liberal control. Morazan also attempted well-intentioned reforms in education and law, but he failed to consider the Indians' resistance to change. Later that year, rural priests would fuel the Indian anger over the reforms by blaming a (coincidental) series of destructive earthquakes on "God's wrath" for the anti-Church actions.¹⁰

In 1831, Dr. Mariano Galvez, a Liberal who had been instrumental in getting Morazan to occupy Guatemala City in 1829, was elected governor of Guatemala. During the next six years, Galvez initiated numerous reforms to improve the lives of Guatemalans, including continued control over the Catholic Church, modernization of education, land reform, and implementation of the Livingston Codes, a new judicial system based on a model by former United States Secretary of State Edward Livingston.

To stimulate economic growth, Governor Galvez stressed the growing of two export cash crops, coffee and cochineal, a natural dye. Galvez turned over vast tracts of tierra baldia (the unclaimed lands) to foreign companies to aid in the expansion.¹¹

Ironically, the reforms which the Liberals hoped would modernize Guatemala for the common good of the people ended by generating an Indian revolt which drove the Liberals from power. The Indians were angry at the expulsion of their village priests and at the new Livingston Codes, which they

neither trusted nor understood. On top of this, the Indians saw foreigners taking over land, some of which the Indians had prior claims to. Since land to the Indian represented survival, their anger became even more intense.¹²

The War of the Mountain

In 1837 an Asian cholera epidemic hit Guatemala. Governor Galvez immediately took strong measures to control it, including establishing quarantines and dispatching medical teams throughout the country. Despite all efforts, however, the epidemic spread like wildfire; and the high death rate, along with food shortages resulting from several years of storm damaged crops, created panic in the rural Indian peasants.¹³ Believing their water had been poisoned to kill them off, a suspicion the few remaining priests probably encouraged, the Indians ran off the government medical personnel. Flaring tempers and overreactions by the authorities resulted in the burning of Indian villages and the forced dispersal of resident families.¹⁴

The peasant reaction to all this was the Mita revolt, or "War of the Mountain." The "mountain" was a reference to Guatemala's eastern mountains where the revolt began, and came to mean the mass of Indian peasants throughout Guatemala.¹⁵ The Mita revolt was a reactionary guerra de castas, a race war between the Indians and Hispanics, sparked by the cholera epidemic, but fueled by the concentrated buildup of anger in the "mountain." Mita, the

southeast corner of Guatemala which contains the provinces of Jalapa, Juliapa, and Santa Rosa, was the home of Rafael Carrera.¹⁶

Raphael Carrera, an illiterate mestizo, religious fanatic, and former federal army drummer boy, personified the Indian anger. Carrera, with the aid of the remaining village priests, assembled an army of montaneses (men from the "mountain"). The montaneses, fanatically loyal to their fellow Indian and leader, the charismatic Carrera, fought a Conservative-backed guerrilla campaign which culminated in the rebel occupation of Guatemala City on February 1, 1838. During the revolt, the three western Guatemala districts of Quetzaltenango, Totonicapan, and Solola seceded from the Central American Republic to form a sixth Central American state, Los Altos. Carrera consolidated his power and by 1839 had conquered Los Altos, returned it to Guatemalan control, and withdrawn Guatemala from the Central American Republic.¹⁷

On November 11, 1844, Carrera was elected President of Guatemala, a position he would hold until his death. Over the next 25 years, Carrera removed all of the Liberal reforms created during the short membership of Guatemala in the Central American Republic. Priests were permitted to return and former Church property was restored to them, disbanded ejidos were reestablished, and the Livingston Codes were abolished.¹⁸

Following Carrera's death on April 14th, 1865, the Liberals began a comeback. In 1872, military leader Justo Rufino Barrios was installed as President by the Liberals.¹⁹ Barrios, reelected by a constituent assembly in 1876, and again by a popular vote (of an electorate of less than 40,000) in 1880, was known as the "Great Reformer."²⁰

One of the main priorities of the new Liberal government was land reform. Barrios believed that increased exposure to the ladino way of life would accustom Indians to productive labor, so he abolished the Indian ejidos.²¹ The Indian communities were forced to divide the communal lands into individual plots, but many of the Indians failed to understand a requirement that they register as the new owners of land they and their ancestors before them had worked for centuries. As a result, their unregistered lands were sold to ladino plantation owners.²² Deprived of much of their subsistence base, many Indians were compelled to work as seasonal or permanent workers on the ladino plantations.²³ The irony was that the Liberals had introduced the land reform to do the greatest good for the masses, yet the end result was that the Indians were dispossessed of much of the limited lands they had before reform.²⁴

The new Liberal government also moved to reinstate the anti-clerical measures of the 1830's which had been repealed by Carrera.²⁵ Once again, religious orders and clerical clothing were abolished, and church land holdings were

confiscated.²⁶ Barrios was apparently attempting to separate church and state. This effort had two far-reaching effects: first, it removed the power base of the church, leaving the Indians to develop their faith independent of the church's guidance and control. During this period the cofradias, lay societies which conduct Indian religious ceremonies, thrived.²⁷ Second, the expropriation of church lands hurt the Indians who had farmed them, since the new ladino owners converted the fields to production of export crops rather than the beans and corn of the Indians.

To encourage the development of export crops, Indian land suitable for growing coffee was expropriated by the government and the Indian residents were forced to move to unoccupied lowlands. Barrios sought to increase coffee production as the chief export cash crop to replace cochineal and indigo, natural dyes which the English had synthesized.²⁸ To insure a sufficient labor force, Barrios also reinstated mandamiento and repartimiento, which further alienated the Indians, but this time there was no Rafael Carrer to focus that anger.²⁹

In sum, before his death in 1885, Barrios had committed Guatemala to a program of economic development based on Indian labor to produce export crops on ladino plantations.³⁰ The Liberals would remain in power until 1944.

The Dictators

During the administration of Estrada Cabrera, a virtual dictator from 1898 to 1920, expropriation of Indian lands continued. The United Fruit Company of Boston, which would become the focal point of a right wing coup d'etat in 1954, acquired this land to establish huge banana plantations.³¹ Cabrera was deposed in 1920 and the Army soon overthrew Carlos Herrera, the first popularly elected president in 50 years, shortly after his inauguration in 1921.³²

Herrera was replaced by General Jose Maria Orellana, who died in office in 1926. His successor, Lazaro Chacon, also died in office four years later. Elected in 1931 to succeed Lazaro Chacon, General Jorge Ubico was known for his honesty and progressiveness as a military administrator. A ruthless president once in power, however, Ubico executed over 100 political opponents.³³

In 1934, ostensibly based on a "fight against idleness," Ubico instituted the Vagrancy Law. Reviving the old Spanish custom of repartimiento, the new law required Indians to work up to 150 days per year on the coffee plantations, whether they owed money or not,³⁴ and to carry a "labor book" with entries to prove their compliance.³⁵

The Reformers

In 1944, in what is often referred to as the Guatemalan Revolution, a group of reformist military officers overthrew General Ubico and forced him into exile. A constituent

assembly wrote a new constitution, enacted in 1945, which extended the right to vote to illiterate males and literate females. Shortly thereafter, left-leaning moderate Juan Jose Arevalo, a philosophy professor, was elected President.³⁶ The emphasis of Arevalo's administration was moderate reform, including the abolishment of both repartimiento and the Vagrancy Law. In 1947, the Guatemalan Labor Code was revised, with the chief provisions being the right to unionize and strike, the setting of a minimum wage, the requirement for equal pay for equal work, and the creation of labor courts to settle disputes.³⁷

During Arevalo's term, the Catholic Bishop of Guatemala, Mariano Rossell y Arellano, saw an opportunity for the influence of the Church, long suppressed by the Liberals, to rise again. Bishop Rossell mobilized a group of orthodox lay Catholic missionaries called Catholic Action to compensate for the scarcity of priests in the rural areas. The purpose of Catholic Action was twofold: first, to destroy the unorthodox beliefs and rituals of the Indian *cofradias*, and second, to direct Indian activism away from radical politics. Rossell saw the rapid growth of worldwide communism in the late 1940's as a threat to moral and social order and felt the Indian was particularly susceptible to that threat. Said Bishop Rossell in 1949,

"The Indian population is a tame and long suffering lamb, but it is very easy to turn it into a cruel wolf, or a ravenous lion, or a poisonous snake."³⁸

Bishop Rossell, remembering the strength of the Indians under Rafael Carrera, had no desire to see the Communists harness that power.

In 1950, Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, a protege of Arevalo and one of the leaders of the 1944 overthrow of the Ubico regime, was elected to succeed Arevalo. Although supported by the communists (in addition to the peasants, students, organized labor), Arbenz was no communist and never appointed one to his cabinet or to a sub-cabinet post.³⁹ In the implementation of land reforms and the formation of labor unions, however, the Arbenz administration relied heavily on the organizational skills of the communists, who took the opportunity to permeate much of the government.⁴⁰

The primary objective of the Arbenz administration was land reform. His Law of Agrarian Reform organized a massive redistribution of large, untitled expanses of prime farm land from the ladino plantation owners to the peasants. Particularly hard hit was the United Fruit Company, which owned hundreds of thousands of acres in Guatemala, but only farmed about 15% of the total area, leaving the remainder fallow. Although Arbenz offered to pay double what United Fruit had declared as the value of the land (for tax purposes), United Fruit demanded what amounted to about 25 times the declared value.⁴¹

Fearful of proposed land reforms and shaken by the revolution, the large landowners joined together to oppose all aspects of social reform. The first attempt of the elite

class to organize politically after the 1944 revolution was the 1949 formation of the PUA (Partido Unificacion Anticomunista - The Party of Anti-communist Unification). During the Arbenz administration, however, the combination of Communist intimidation of landowners and shopkeepers, along with the lack of a positive program for non-communists who desired some of the Arbenz government's reforms, limited the effectiveness and membership of the PUA.⁴²

In 1951 the Guatemalan Communist Party was legalized, but soon changed its name to the Guatemalan Labor Party (Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajores - PGT) to be more acceptable politically. The PGT made the change to attract a large, rather than select, following, but by August 1953, their estimated membership was still just two to three thousand.⁴³

Labor organizations which did meet with remarkable success were two large unions, the urban Guatemalan Worker's Union (Confederacion General de Trabajores de Guatemaltecas - CGTG) with 100,000 members, and the rural Guatemalan Peasants Union (Confederacion Nacional de Campesinos Guatemaltecas - CNCG) with 250,000 members.⁴⁴

The rural peasants, primarily Indians, were not particularly interested in the communists. In fact, their union leadership had only one communist officer, though their Secretary General, Leonardo Castillo Flores, had strong communist ideas and ties. In the urban worker's union, on the other hand, all of the key leadership positions were held by PGT members.

The top priority of the 1953 PGT party program was the continuation of agrarian reform, yet the peasants did not strongly support the PGT.⁴⁵ Perhaps Catholic Action had been successful, or perhaps the Indians remembered the last attempt at agrarian reform in the 1870's which stripped their ancestors of many of their communal holdings. Whatever the reason, the communists failed to achieve the support of the rural peasants.

In spite of their association with communists, most of Arbenz's followers saw themselves as nationalists bringing about necessary social changes and economic reforms.⁴⁶ The United States thought otherwise. In the Cold War atmosphere of the early 1950's, which generated the Eisenhower administration's policy of "containment of communism," the Arbenz government was viewed as a communist threat to the Western Hemisphere.⁴⁷

In 1954, the U. S. Central Intelligence Agency sponsored a right-wing coup d'etat by an exiled, Guatemalan army officer, Col. Carlos Castillo Armas, who overthrew Arbenz and took control of the country on July 1st, 1954. Armas immediately launched a program to negate the reforms of the "revolutionary" governments of Arevalo and Arbenz. In the weeks following the coup, the 1945 Constitution was suspended, the requirement of a warrant for arrest was suspended, the right to a writ of habeas corpus, along with freedom of speech and of the press, was cancelled, all criticism of the government was forbidden, and the National

Committee for the Defense against Communism was formed and given unlimited power of arrest in order to rid the country of communists.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the 1945 Land Reform Law, which had forcibly transferred uncultivated lands of the elite ladino landowners and the American-owned United Fruit Company to the peasants, was repealed. As they regained their lost property, the elite began to seek revenge on the peasants who had taken advantage of the land reforms during the Arbenz administration.⁴⁹ At one point, the rage and violence unleashed on the Indian population became so intense that Castillo Armas had to tell the elite to stop, or there would be no one left to till their land.⁵⁰

In the first 133 years of Guatemalan independence, with the sole exception of the period of Rafael Carrera, control of Guatemala rested in the hands of the middle and upper class ladinos, even during the Revolution from 1944-1954. The potential power of the Indians had been clearly demonstrated during the War of the Mountain; but after Carrera's death, no one rose to reharness that power. The Catholic clergy tried, but after the 1870 Liberal reforms stripped the Church of its property and banished its priests, they were never able to exert the influence they had enjoyed during the colonial period and the Carrera administration.

The 1954 overthrow of the Arbenz government created the political division which still plaques Guatemala. The ladino

elite view it as a liberation from communism, while the peasants see it as an abortion of the reforms which followed General Ubico's overthrow in 1944.⁵¹ The involvement of the United States in the 1954 coup, never a well kept secret, has since been regarded by the military in Guatemala as a stain on the national honor, and by the leftist opposition as evidence of U. S. collaboration with repressive regimes. These perceptions, which remain thirty years later, limit the ability of the United States to influence either side to move toward a moderate, politically-centrist position.

Notes

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³ Richard F. Nyrop, ed., Guatemala: A Country Study (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 15.

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⁵ Ibid., p. vi.

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⁷ United States, The National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, Report (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, January, 1984), p. 17.

⁸ Karnes, p. 67.

⁹ Ingersoll, pp. 5-6.

¹⁰ Karnes, pp. 70, 74.

¹¹ Ingersoll, pp. 28-41.

¹² Ibid., p. 64.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 96-99.

¹⁴ Karnes, p. 81.

¹⁵ Ingersoll, pp. 355-356.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 47, 104, 272.

¹⁷ Karnes, p. 82, 87.

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The Oligarchy: 1954-1970

The Repression

Ever since the Guatemalan "revolution" was forcibly ended by the 1954 coup d'etat, the Guatemalan government, controlled by the army and supported by the right-wing political parties of the oligarchic elite, has systematically repressed the majority of the citizens.¹ The core of this repression is fear, which permits the most effective control of the remainder of the population (primarily the rural Mayan Indians).² The rationale for this repression is the need to prevent the Communists from taking control as they nearly did in the early 1950's, but in Guatemala, to be anti-Communist is not to seek merely the defeat but the total annihilation of adversaries. Over the last 30 years, the basic doctrine of the military governments has evolved from simply being anti-communist to being anti-democratic as well.³

An integral part of the repression in Guatemala since the mid-1960's has been the unofficial terrorism of death squads, which has supplemented the repression by the government. The death squads, operated by the right-wing political parties of the elite, frequently coordinated their activities with government forces. Mysterious deaths, which became a way of life in Guatemala, were virtually never investigated, much less solved. As a result, it is impossible to determine which group, the death squads or the

government, committed which killings, even when a killing was "claimed".

In general the targets of all these groups had one thing in common: they were capable of organizing, or suspected of participating in, dissent against the government.⁴ Among the chief targets in the rural areas were peasant leaders and priests who sympathized with the plight of the Maya Indians.⁵

In the urban areas, many of the original targets were middle-class professionals who had supported the governments of Presidents Arevalo and Arbenz between 1945 and 1954.⁶ By 1970, though, the list of targets had expanded to include students, intellectuals, union leaders, moderate politicians, and even policemen who seriously attempted to interfere in right wing activities. In short, anyone thought to be in any way sympathetic toward or connected with the insurgency or revolutionary politics had to fear for their lives.⁷

The Counter-Revolution

As he consolidated his power following his conservative victory in 1954, President Carlos Castillo Armas and the wealthy landowners founded the MDN (Movimento Democrático Nacional - National Democratic Movement). It was to be the official government political party. When Armas was assassinated by one of his own men three years later, a presidential election to choose a successor was held. The

eventual winner, General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, was elected after a number of MDN delegates voted for him rather than their own party's candidate, reportedly as a result of extensive bribery.

Incensed by the outcome of the election results, MDN member Mario Sandoval Alarcon took control of the party, purged the defectors, and changed the name to MLN (Movimento de Liberacion Nacional - National Liberation Movement). Sandoval, who has remained in control of the MLN since its founding, characterized the new MLN in 1958 as "the party of organized violence, molded in the image of the Spanish Falange."⁸

About the same time a powerful group of agro-exporters, businessmen, and industrialists formed CACIF (Chambers of Agriculture, Commerce, Industry, and Finance), a private committee to support their common interests collectively.⁹ This is the earliest evidence of a post-revolutionary organization by the elite.

On November 13, 1960, a group of nationalist army officers, angry at President Ydigoras for rampant corruption in the army and in his administration, and for allowing the United States to train Cuban exile groups in Guatemala, attempted a coup d'etat.¹⁰ Although initially successful, the coup failed to gain momentum and was rapidly put down by loyal forces. Two of the younger officers involved in the attempted overthrow, Lt. Marc Antonio Yon Sosa and 2nd Lt. Luis Augusto Turcios Lima, escaped when the overthrow

failed; Yon Sosa went to Honduras, and Turcios Lima to El Salvador.¹¹

After several months, Turcios Lima and Yon Sosa clandestinely returned to Guatemala City in search of renewed support for their nationalist movement. They eventually became associated with the PGT, the direct descendent of the original Guatemalan Communist Party which had been established in 1923, legalized in 1951, and declared illegal once again in 1954.¹² Although they didn't consider themselves to be Communists, Yon Sosa and Turcios Lima felt that an alliance with the PGT would be useful in their effort to organize another coup. Through the PGT, the insurgents received arms, training, and financing from Cuba; support which has apparently continued for the ensuing 25 years.¹³

In late 1961, about a year after the initial coup attempt, Yon Sosa and Turcios Lima gave up their hope of instigating another coup and moved to the countryside. There they formed the Revolutionary Movement Alejandro de Leon - November 13 (MR-13) in dual commemoration of the November 13th uprising and of a fellow rebel officer companion who had been captured and shot in its aftermath. The two former officers were well-suited to lead a guerrilla band. Yon Sosa, as an Army officer, had attended the U. S. Counterguerrilla Warfare School at Fort Gulick in Panama, while Turcios Lima was a graduate of the Ranger school at Fort Benning, Georgia.¹⁴ In February 1962, MR-13 began

insurgency operations against United Fruit Company property and small military garrisons in the eastern province of Izabal, but was no match for the Guatemalan Army and was swiftly defeated.¹⁵ The remnants of MR-13 returned to Guatemala City to hide while regrouping.

In September 1962, Turcios Lima, Yon Sosa, and Luis Trejos Esquivel, an MR-13 commander, secretly travelled to Cuba to meet with exiled former President Arbenz and Cuban Revolutionary leader Che Guevara. The MR-13 leaders returned to Guatemala City and, together with the PGT and the 12th of April Movement, a student urban guerrilla movement, formed an alliance called FAR (Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes - Rebel Armed Forces). Created to coordinate activities of member groups, FAR had a turbulent beginning due to personality conflicts and the divergent views on operational tactics of its members.¹⁶

In early 1963, President Ydigoras called for an open election for a successor. Prevented from succeeding himself by the Constitution, Ydigoras proposed to allow reformist former President Arevalo to declare his candidacy.

Fearful of another reformist movement similar to that of Arevalo's previous term, and desiring a firmer government against mass discontent, the elite prompted Ydigoras's War Minister, Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia, to oust Ydigoras. On March 30, 1963, before the election could be held, Peralta Azurdia, allegedly with the blessings of President John F. Kennedy, seized power in a coup d'etat.¹⁷ He

immediately suspended the 1945 constitution, dissolved the Congress, and cancelled all political rights of the citizens.¹⁸

As Peralta Azurdia seized control of the government, the MR-13 guerrilla fronts led by Turcios Lima and Yon Sosa, broke with FAR and returned to the eastern provinces of Izabal and Zacapa to continue guerrilla activity. In early 1965, the two leaders quarrelled over ideology and Turcios Lima took his Front out of MR-13 to operate independently.

In 1964, urban members of FAR began terrorist operations in Guatemala City for the first time. President Peralta Azurdia responded by unleashing the police in a counter-terror campaign in which many opposition leaders were assassinated or simply "disappeared."¹⁹

The Death Squads

In mid-1965, the right-wing MLN political party joined in the counterterrorist campaign, sponsoring death squads (pelotones de fusilamiento) which would later become collectively known as MANO (Movimento Anticomunista Nacional Organizado - National Organized Anti-Communist Movement) or "Mano Blanca" (White Hand).²⁰ The most notorious of the Guatemalan right-wing death squads, MANO didn't officially proclaim its existence until June 3, 1966, shortly before the inauguration of the new civilian president.

Symbolized by a white hand superimposed over a red circle on a black background, the MANO motto was "This is the hand

that will eradicate national renegades and traitors to their country."²¹ The five-fingered hand supposedly symbolized the five-man cellular structure adopted by the group. Led by an MLN ruffian named Raul Lorenzana, MANO originally financed its operations by levying a 1,000 quetzal²² "solicitation" on large landowners, particularly coffee growers. Those who refused frequently found themselves the victims of kidnappers who then demanded 75,000 quetzales ransom.²³ "Voluntary" contributions soon increased rapidly.

Mario Sandoval Alarcon, as head of MLN, has never denied his party's control of MANO, whose headquarters was located in the main police building in Guatemala City.²⁴ Engaging in the torture and killing of anyone considered at all left of center, MANO took particular notice of peasants suspected of sympathizing with the insurgents.

In order to distance himself officially from the MLN death squad activities, and to build a personal power base, outgoing President Peralta Azurdia formed the PID (Partido Institucional Democratico - Institutional Democratic Party).²⁵ The PID, which became the party of the military, has had a hand in the formation and operation of every government since its founding.²⁶ With the formation of the PID, the military shifted their position in their relationship with the elite from the junior partner to the senior partner. The military now drove the power process.²⁷

The 1966 Election

Under pressure from the United States to allow an election to restore at least the facade of a democratic process, Peralta Azurdia called for elections to be held in the spring of 1966. The National Police insured that Communist participation would be minimal at best, though. Prior to the election, thirty alleged communist leaders, including Victor Manuel Guttierrez and Leonardo Castillo Flores were arrested and subsequently disappeared. Although all were assumed to have been killed, their bodies were never found.²⁸

Victorious in this apparently free election was a moderate, Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro, the liberal law school dean of San Carlos University. Mendez Montenegro had become a candidate upon the death of his brother, the leading candidate who had died under suspicious circumstances officially pronounced a suicide. Mendez Montenegro attracted the votes of the students, reformists, insurgent leaders, and the Communist party, along with the middle class, all of whom wanted to prevent the PID and MLN candidates from controlling the presidency.²⁹ Prior to his inauguration, however, Mendez Montenegro was forced by the army leaders, as a condition for being permitted to take office, to agree to give the military a free hand in defense and internal police affairs.

Shortly after his inauguration, in an attempt to defuse the on-going insurgency in both Guatemala City and the rural

areas, Mendez Montenegro announced an amnesty to all insurgents who would surrender. Although the government showed good faith by releasing about 165 political prisoners (all of whom were later killed by death squads), the guerrillas rejected the amnesty offer.³⁰ Turcios Lima refused, declaring that since the Army had not stopped their violence, neither would the guerrillas. Yon Sosa, in a separate refusal, declared:

"Anyone who has Marxist ideas will not accept, even in his dreams, an amnesty. If we accept that, all the past crimes and mistakes will be forgotten. Moreover, we are not criminals, we have committed no crimes, therefore we do not ask for pardon."³¹

In September 1966, Turcios Lima was killed in a car accident in Guatemala City. One of his lieutenants, Cesar Montes, a former law student of President Mendez Montenegro, took control of Turcios Lima's group, the Edgar Ibarra Front.³² Montes claimed he respected the President, but he reaffirmed the refusal of amnesty, stating that he knew it was the Guatemalan Army, and not the President, who pulled the strings in the government.³³ After assuming control of the Edgar Ibarra Front, Cesar Montes rejoined Yon Sosa's group, the Alejandro de Leon Front, in the eastern provinces of Zacapa and Izabal in the fall of 1966.

Angered by the insurgents' refusal to cease fighting, President Mendez Montenegro announced that he would no longer tolerate any extremism. In November 1966, under the provisions of the Law of Public Order (Decree 9), which gave the president full power to maintain order, Mendez

Montenegro announced a "State of Siege". The most serious of four levels of civic disorder (after the States of Prevention, Alarm, and Public Calamity), this "State of Siege" was the legal basis for a counter-insurgency campaign concurrently launched in both Guatemala City and the rural eastern provinces of Izabal and Zacapa.³⁴ Under the Law of Public Order, Mendez Montenegro suspended individual rights for a (renewable) thirty day period. Additional provisions made possession of weapons a capital offense, suspended all political activities, placed all police under military authority, fully mobilized all military including reserves, established the judiciales (the urban secret police), and allowed for the appointment of comisionados militares (military commissioners).³⁵

Zacapa

In July 1966, Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio, with the aid of United States Special Forces advisors (Green Berets), had begun training several companies of soldiers in anti-insurgency techniques. After the State of Siege was announced, Arana Osorio, in addition, began to select, train, and equip the comisionados militares as paramilitary "irregular" forces for local defense.³⁶ These comisionados, who were essentially little more than vigilantes, were composed mainly of ladino owners of small farms.³⁷ Authorized to carry weapons and kill "subversives", the comisionados were not very discriminating in selecting

targets, who frequently were identified by MLN intelligence sources or the local ladino elite.³⁸

A third arm of the government's anti-communist effort, after the army and the comisionados, were the grupos de choque (paramilitary assault groups), essentially the same as the MANO death squads, organized to carry out reprisals against suspected leftists without involving the administration of the new civilian president, Mendez Montenegro.³⁹ Mendez Montenegro and the army apparently believed that "the fiction of a clandestine group operating without government sanction would preserve an illusion of institutional order."⁴⁰ One alleged tactic of the grupos de choque had been to buy the loyalty of former leftist guerrillas and convert them to hired killers. Arana Osorio later inadvertently supported that theory when he boasted that defecting guerrillas had helped his troops identify fellow insurgents attempting to pass through roadblocks in disguise.⁴¹ In a 1969 meeting of the Organization of American States, the Guatemalan Committee in Support of Human Rights would present testimony that the grupos de choque were formed at the urging of United States Military Advisory Group teams.⁴²

Under the command of Arana Osorio, over 4,000 peasants, along with several hundred soldiers and 28 Green Berets, were killed in counter-insurgency operations between November 1966, when the State of Siege began, and early 1968.⁴³ In what was perhaps one of the supreme ironies of

history, Arana Osorio's unit, which slaughtered so many Indians in the campaign, was named the Captain General Rafael Carrera Brigade. His leadership in the bloodbath which resulted from a counter-insurgency campaign directed against a few hundred guerrillas earned Arana Osorio the nicknamed "The Jackal Of Zacapa," but the insurgency in Zacapa and Izabal had been crushed.⁴⁴ Colonel Arana Osorio, along with his Zacapa subordinates, Colonels Laugerud and Lucas Garcia, all three of whom shared the same promocion (military academy class),⁴⁵ would later become president of Guatemala.⁴⁶

Cesar Montes and what was left of the Edgar Ibarra Front fled to Guatemala City, rejoining the FAR in early 1968.⁴⁷ Yon Sosa and the remnants of the Alejandro de Leon Front remained in the oriente (the east), operating sporadically over the next two years. Yon Sosa was killed in a shootout with a Mexican border patrol while attempting to cross from Guatemala into Mexico in 1970.⁴⁸

Arana Osorio followed the anti-insurgency campaign with a Civic Action program, building schools, hospitals, and roads, providing health care, and bringing public works projects to Zacapa in order to eliminate grievances used by insurgents to gain support. His message to the Indians was clear: submit and be treated well, resist and die.⁴⁹

The Insurgents and the Indians

Topographically, Guatemala consists of jungles and mountains, an ideal layout for guerrilla activity. The Indians who populate the countryside are mainly apolitical, though, and have little loyalty beyond their villages. Impoverished, they have little time for anything but attempting to scratch a living from their small plots of land. Nevertheless, the insurgents attempted to recruit the Indians to join their cause, possibly hoping to harness the power Rafael Carrera had over a century before.

In their attempts to win over the Indians to join the insurgency, the guerrillas failed to understand some basic points. Although the Indians have common ancestors, each village has its own costumbre, a unique set of rules, traditions, customs, and styles of dress. These differences which have evolved over the centuries, along with the language problems, have made impossible any attempt to organize the Indians into a single, unified movement.

Many Indians, wanting nothing to do with the insurgents, yet fearing their wrath, complied when the guerrillas demanded help. When the Indians did so, though, the Guatemalan government viewed them as collaborators; and Army patrols would sweep through villages where guerrillas had camped, randomly killing Indians as a warning.⁵⁰ The Indians, caught in the middle, suffered the vast majority of the casualties in the conflict.

Urban Terror

As the army battled the insurgents in the countryside, the right-wing death squads and the judiciales carried out a reign of terror in the urban areas. The death squads chose as targets the peasant leaders and priests who sympathized with the Indians and attempted to organize them.⁵¹ To coordinate their activities, MANO, along with two other right wing death squad organizations, NOA (Nueva Organizacion Anticomunista - New Anti-Communist Organization), and CADEG (Consejo Anticomunista de Guatemala - Anticommunist Council of Guatemala) temporarily merged in late 1967 into ODEADEC (Organization of Associations Against Communism), although they retained separate operational control of their death squads.⁵² ODEADEC seems to have been a right-wing counterpart to FAR, with coordination and planning functions.

CADEG had been created by rich landowners, who hired local toughs to protect their interests in the countryside by "taking care of troublemakers". Both CADEG and NOA, whose slogan was "See a Communist, kill a Communist,"⁵³ were reputed to have many retired, and some active, military officers in their leadership. The combined efforts of the members of ODEADEC were very effective in reducing terrorism to an all time low, but their excesses, and the involvement of the army, which had become obvious, distressed the public.⁵⁴

In the late 1960's, all trade unionism and labor organizations were being viewed by the right-wing as Communist front organizations.⁵⁵ At one point, ODEADEC issued a blanket warning to labor leaders, and other suspected Communists named on "hit lists", to leave the country or be executed.⁵⁶ Allegedly, presidential staffers and military intelligence officers participated in the compilation of these lists.⁵⁷

From November 1966 to early 1968, in the urban areas, over 2800 labor leaders, trade unionists, political activists, students, and intellectuals were tortured and killed,⁵⁸ many allegedly by MANO and NOA death squads.⁵⁹ In one particularly gruesome episode, a former Miss Guatemala, Rogelia Cruz Martinez, was repeatedly raped, and then tortured and killed, for her alleged leftist tendencies.⁶⁰

Even after the counter-insurgency campaign was concluded, assassinations, kidnappings, and general violence and unrest from both the radical left and the radical right continued throughout Mendez Montenegro's presidency.⁶¹ The death squads began to exact revenge on the families of the insurgent leaders. Yon Sosa's sister, who had never been a guerrilla, was murdered.⁶² The brother of FAR leader Cesar Montes was found tortured and dead three days after he had been arrested by men dressed as soldiers.⁶³

Meanwhile, frustrated by their lack of success in the countryside, the reunited members of FAR began perfecting the techniques of urban terrorism, conducting kidnappings

for ransom to raise money for supplies, and performing terrorist bombings and assassinations.⁶⁴ In a shootout at the U. S. Military Advisory Group (MILGRP) headquarters in January, 1968, presumably in retaliation for Green Beret assistance to the Guatemalan Army, FAR gunmen killed Special Forces Colonel John Webber, chief of the MILGRP, and Lieutenant Commander Ernest A. Munro, a U. S. Navy attache.⁶⁵

In a FAR kidnapping attempt seven months later, U. S. Ambassador John Gordon Mein became the first American Ambassador ever killed in the line of duty as he attempted to escape.⁶⁶ Ambassador Mein was apparently to have been held hostage as a trade for an imprisoned guerrilla leader sentenced to death by the government.⁶⁷ A month later, German Ambassador to Guatemala Karl Von Spreti was kidnapped in an unsuccessful attempt to force the government to pay a \$700,000 ransom and release 40 imprisoned FAR guerrillas. Ambassador Spreti was executed by the insurgents after the Guatemalan government refused their demands.⁶⁸

In 1968, MANO engineered the kidnapping of Bishop Casariego, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Guatemala. Intended to be blamed on the leftists, the purpose of the kidnapping was to generate a conservative backlash in the heavily Catholic country and precipitate a right-wing military coup against the civilian President, Mendez Montenegro.⁶⁹ MANO's responsibility for the kidnapping was discovered, however, and Mendez Montenegro took the

opportunity to fire the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Police, along with Colonel Arana Osorio, all three of whom were suspected of being involved, and then exiled them from the country.⁷⁰

Mendez Montenegro was able to complete his term of office, but the military remained the "power behind the throne." As the decade ended, the insurgency, defeated in Zacapa, fragmented by internal dissension, and unsuccessful in recruiting the Indians, had nevertheless escaped total elimination and continued isolated terrorist attacks. The right-wing responded with continued death squad assassinations, and the army prepared for the next election.

Notes

¹ Richard S. Newfarmer, ed., From Gunboats to Diplomacy: New U. S. Policies for Latin America (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 59.

² Jonathan L. Fried, Marvin E. Gettleman, Deborah T. Levenson, and Nancy Peckenham, eds., Guatemala in Rebellion: Unfinished History (New York: Grove Press, 1983), p. 119.

³ Wolf Grabendorf, Heinrich-W. Krumwiede, and Jorg Todt, eds., Political Change in Central America: Internal and External Dimensions (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), pp. 119, 122.

⁴ Stephen C. Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, Bitter Fruit (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1982), p. 251.

⁵ Michael Stohl and George A. Lopez, eds., The State as Terrorist (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 89.

⁶ Schlesinger, p. 246.

⁷ Norman A. LaCharite and Joan Rodman Wolfgang, Police Role of Internal Security Forces in Internal Defense (Kensington, Maryland: American Institutes for Research, 1972), p. 86.

⁸ Richard F. Nyrop, ed., Guatemala: A Country Study (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1984), pp. 30, 131, 163.

⁹ U. S., Cong., Senate, Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism, Marxism and Christianity in Revolutionary Central America, Hearing, 98th

Cong., 1st Sess., 18-19 October 1983 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 48.

¹⁰ Kenneth F. Johnson, Guatemala: From Terrorism to Terror, Conflict Studies, no. 23 (London: The Eastern Press, Ltd., 1972), p. 4.

¹¹ Schlesinger, pp. 239-240.

¹² Nyrop, p. 25.

¹³ United States, The National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, Report (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 25.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 207.

¹⁵ Bart E. O'Neill, William R. Heaton, and Donald J. Alberts, eds., Insurgency in the Modern World (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), p. 111; Johnson, p. 5.

¹⁶ Nyrop, p. 207.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁸ Don L. Etchison, The United States and Militarism in Central America (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975), p. 12.

¹⁹ Peter Calvert, Guatemalan Insurgency and American Security, Conflict Studies, No. 167 (London: Eastern Press, Ltd., 1984), p. 8.

²⁰ Nyrop, p. 163.

²¹ Eduardo Galeano, Guatemala: Occupied Country (New York: Modern Reader Paperbacks, 1967), p. 63.

²² One quetzal is officially the equivalent of one United States dollar.

²³ LaCharite, p. 86.

- 24 Galeano, p. 154.
- 25 Nyrop, pp. 31-32.
- 26 Ibid., p. 163.
- 27 Richard R. Fagen and Olga Pellicer, eds., The Future of Central America (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), pp. 188-189.
- 28 LaCharite, p. 81.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Nyrop, pp. 32-33, 212.
- 31 Etchison, pp. 14, 22.
- 32 Nyrop, p. 208.
- 33 Etchison, p. 14.
- 34 LaCharite, pp. 82-83.
- 35 Johnson, p. 8.
- 36 Nyrop, p. 208.
- 37 O'Neill, pp. 115-116.
- 38 Terry Mulgannon, "Guerrillas in Guatemala," TVI Journal, Winter 1985, p. 40.
- 39 Johnson, p. 12.
- 40 Fried, p. 119.
- 41 Louis de la Haba, "Guatemala: Maya and Modern," National Geographic, November 1974, p. 679.
- 42 Johnson, pp. 12, 15.
- 43 Etchison, p. 15.
- 44 Nyrop, p. 4.
- 45 The promocion is the class with which a young officer graduates from the Guatemalan military academy.

Class loyalty to, and from, one's peers is paramount in the Guatemalan army, surpassing even loyalty to the state. The centenario system, similiarly, insures a vertical bonding of officers between juniors and seniors by giving every officer a serial number as he graduates. Senior officers are expected to form a close bond with, and look out for, junior officers with the same final two serial numbers. For example, a general with the serial number 14 would sponsor a colonel with number 114 who would in turn sponsor a major with number 214, and so on down to a new 2nd lieutenant with number 914. These systems of horizontal and vertical bonding cement the loyalty of the young officer as he joins the officer corps, and maintain that loyalty throughout his career and into retirement.

⁴⁶ Nyrop, p. 133.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 208.

⁴⁸ Johnson p. 7.

⁴⁹ O'Neill, p. 116.

⁵⁰ David Asman, "Learning to Bury the Hatchet in Guatemala," The Wall Street Journal, 15 March 1985, p. 25, col. 1.

⁵¹ Stohl, p. 89.

⁵² LaCharite, p. 82.

⁵³ Galeano, pp. 63, 155.

⁵⁴ LaCharite, pp. 82, 86.

⁵⁵ Galeano, p. 43.

⁵⁶ LaCharite, p. 86.

- 57 Stohl, p. 89.
- 58 Calvert, p. 10.
- 59 Galeano, p. 9; Nyrop, p. 33.
- 60 Nyrop, p. 209.
- 61 Etchison, p. 16.
- 62 Nyrop, p. 209.
- 63 Galeano, p. 66.
- 64 Johnson, p. 7.
- 65 Etchison, p. 15.
- 66 Schlesinger, p. 248.
- 67 Etchison, p. 15.
- 68 Johnson, p. 7.
- 69 LaCharite, pp. 82, 86.
- 70 Calvert, p. 9.

The Generals as Presidents: The Insurgency Reborn

Arana Osorio

General Arana Osorio returned to Guatemala from exile in 1970 to run for the presidency on a platform of "Bread and Peace." The fear generated by the urban terrorism of both the left and right wing radicals during Arana Osorio's absence prompted the middle and upper classes, the vast majority of the voters, to elect him.¹

A renewed wave of violence and retaliation soon began from both the left-wing terrorists who opposed Arana and the radical right-wing who supported him.² The National Police took advantage of the situation to kill common criminals, particularly repeat offenders.³ Declaring a new State of Siege on November 12, 1970, Arana Osorio said, "If it is necessary to turn the country into a cemetery in order to pacify it, I will not hesitate to do so." Within 3 months, over 1600 suspected subversives had been arrested by the National Police and the army, while at least another 1,000 were killed by the death squads.⁴

About this time a new death squad appeared, calling itself Ojo por Ojo (Eye for an Eye).⁵ Operating in a coordinated effort with MANO, Ojo por Ojo announced that they would kill 15 leftists for every soldier or civilian killed by the leftists. Concentrating on students and professors, Ojo por Ojo virtually wiped out the faculty and students of the Law Department at the National University of

San Carlos in Guatemala City by either killing them or frightening them away.⁶

In 1972, a First Vice President of Congress, reputedly a leader of MANO, was assassinated at his daughter's birthday party in a Guatemala City restaurant, allegedly by the army. Apparently Arana Osorio felt that MANO, along with the other death squads, had finally become more of a nuisance than an aid.⁷ Shortly thereafter Arana Osorio broke from the MLN and formed his own political party, the CAO (Centro Aranista Organizacion - Central Aranista Organization).⁸ In 1977, the CAO would be renamed the CAN (Centro Autentico Nacional - National Authentic Center), announcing a platform of support for free market capitalism and anti-communism.⁹

In conjunction with the State of Siege, Arana Osorio began a rather modest land reform and civic action program for the rural Mayan Indians.¹⁰ Far from being purely altruistic or generous, Arana Osorio believed that building a few schools and health centers, along with starting a literacy campaign and distributing some small parcels of land, would pacify the Indians and convince them to refuse to help the insurgents.¹¹ He had used the same type of programs with some success in the Zacapa campaign in 1966. By early 1973, Arana claimed to have the country under control, but at the cost of somewhere between 3,000 and 15,000 lives - overwhelmingly leftists along with any peasants who got in the way.¹²

Laugerud

In the 1974 presidential election, three army generals, one a liberal, one a moderate, and the other a conservative, ran for office. The moderate candidate of the DCG (Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca - Guatemalan Christian Democracy) Party, General Jose Efraim Rios Montt, was leading in the vote tally when the counting was halted by the government. The next day the conservative candidate of a PID-MLN coalition, the FDP (Frente Democratico Popular - Popular Democratic Front), Brigadier General Kjell Eugenio Laugerud Garcia, was "declared" to be elected.¹³ Rios Montt was exiled under a threat of death. His school-teacher brother Julio was assassinated by a death squad, presumably as a punishment for the trouble Rios Montt had caused the conservative right-wing by his (nearly) successful campaign effort.¹⁴

Once in office, however, President Laugerud turned out to be a moderate of sorts. He reached an agreement with the moderate Popular Revolutionary (PR) Party and slowly began easing his policies toward the center of the political spectrum. Laugerud's moderating actions, including a tolerance of labor unions whose membership exploded from less than 28,000 in 1974 to over 80,000 members by 1976, generated a conservative reaction and renewed right-wing violence.¹⁵

In 1977, shortly after his inauguration, United States President Jimmy Carter attempted to intervene in the

violence by threatening to reduce Guatemala's military aid because of gross human rights violations.¹⁶ Carter's effort would fail, though, because his administration couldn't find a moderate candidate strong enough to displace the military, and couldn't convince the military regime to reform.

The military response to Carter's demands was to refuse further United States aid, but to also, paradoxically, permit the moderate DCG to enter a candidate in the 1978 presidential elections. Only three other parties were recognized for the 1978 election by the government-controlled electoral council, whose approval was necessary to propose a candidate legally. These three parties, the MLN, the PID, and the PR (Partido Revolucionario - Popular Revolution), were all right-wing oriented.

Encouraged by the acceptance of the DCG, other moderate parties tried to enter candidates. Right-wing death squads responded by assassinating two of the most popular moderate leaders, Alberto Fuentes Mohr and labor leader Manuel Colom Argueta.¹⁷ This action undoubtedly demoralized the left-wing moderates, destroying any idea they may have had that they could expect a truly free election, and probably gaining new adherents for the leftist insurgents. In essence, the charade of elections had actually reduced the chances for democracy, since progressive candidates who ran on a platform of reform were identifying themselves as targets for assassination.¹⁸

Lucas Garcia

In 1978, the United States Congress passed the Foreign Assistance and Related Programs Appropriations Act, cutting off military sales to Guatemala until they improved their human rights performance, although previously approved sales in the "pipeline" would continue to be delivered until 1980.¹⁹ The response from Guatemala was to rig the 1978 election to install General Romeo Lucas Garcia, the candidate of the "official," army-controlled PID, as President. Oddly enough, the bonafide winner of the election may well have been Mario Sandoval Alarcon, the long time leader of the far-right MLN party.²⁰ By 1978, however, the military had a firm control of the entire country and had no desire to turn it over to the MLN.²¹

Near the end of his term, President Laugerud had attempted to crack down on the burgeoning labor movement, but the labor unions and the left responded with massive demonstrations. Once inaugurated, President Lucas Garcia declared "unions are Communist," and right-wing death squads once again went into action. In 1980, for example, over 100 labor organizers and union members were assassinated, many at their places of employment. At the Guatemala City Coca Cola plant alone, at least 12 people were killed.²²

The Indians in the rural areas also felt the wrath of the new government. In May 1978, approximately 700 Indian men, women, and children gathered in the town square of Panzos, in the Altos Verapaz province in central Guatemala, to

protest the government's forceful expropriation of their lands.²³ Apparently, oil and mineral deposits had been discovered in the area and the local ladino elite, along with the military, had decided to take control as much of the land as possible in order to profit from the new discoveries. The new President, General Lucas Garcia, had himself been steadily acquiring land in this and other areas, a practice of military presidents begun by Guatemalan dictator General Jorge Ubico in the 1930's.

The government responded to this planned protest by sending in a large contingent of troops. Accounts of the melee that followed vary somewhat, but the general consensus is that an Indian protester struck a soldier who was harassing him. The troops reacted by opening fire on the crowd with automatic weapons, killing over 100 protesters and wounding or maiming at least 300 more. The Indians, armed only with the machetes they carried to work the fields, were shot, quite literally, like fish in a barrel.²⁴

The Panzos massacre may have been a reaction of fear on the part of the military regime generated by the upheaval underway in Nicaragua at the time. Another thought is that the ladino elite had decided to show the Indians "who was boss" after the relatively moderate policies of the Laugerud regime.²⁵ In the days after the massacre, an over-extended military made little effort to quell demonstrations protesting it. Six months later, though, when another protest began, the government was prepared to respond.²⁵

In October 1978, demonstrations over an announced bus fare increase erupted in Guatemala City. The government responded with mass arrests and officially condoned death-squad violence. A new right-wing terrorist organization, the ESA (Ejercito Secreto Anticomunista - Secret Anti-communist Army) appeared about this time. Specializing in the kidnapping and assassination of student leaders and intellectuals, the ESA virtually decimated the faculty and student body of San Carlos University²⁷

Over 1500 protesters were arrested and jailed during the demonstrations, while at least another 400 were wounded or killed.²⁸ In one incident, a student leader was gunned down on the steps of the National Palace by a death squad while on-looking police made no effort to intervene or apprehend the killers. Lucas Garcia explained, "The death squads kill criminals, but the ESA kills subversives."²⁹

Meanwhile, in the countryside, a war of reprisal was underway against the Maya Indians in retaliation for the Panzos protest. At one point, Indians were being tortured and killed at the rate of 250 a month. By the time Lucas Garcia was overthrown in March 1982, an estimated 5,000 Indians and leftists had been found tortured and dumped by the roads, in ravines, or in mass graves.³⁰

In the 1980 municipal elections, the DCG was still the only moderate political party permitted to enter candidates. Although many DCG candidates were elected, scores of them, along with many of their supporters, were subsequently

murdered by death squads.³¹ In a radio broadcast during the election, an official MLN spokesman had declared, "The MLN is the party of organized violence...there is nothing wrong with organized violence; it is vigor, and MLN is a vigorous movement."³² Apparently the unsuccessful vigorous candidates were not gracious losers.

The Insurgents United

In 1980, the Cuban government, which had been supporting leftist insurgents in Guatemala since 1960, brought the four insurgent groups currently operating in Guatemala together in Havana. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the formation of a common insurgent front, a concept which had been successfully tested in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

By 1982, the four insurgent groups had agreed to unite under the umbrella organization URNG (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca - The Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity), an alliance of diverse viewpoints with a common interest: the overthrow of the right-wing military-dominated government. The goal of the URNG is ostensibly to unite the member groups' efforts for a people's revolution, but the unity seems to be more for continued Cuban support than anything else.

The strongest of the URNG members, the EGP (Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres - The Guerrilla Army of the Poor), was formed in 1972 in the province of Quiche by remnants of Cesar Montes' Edgar Ibarra Front. Initially taken as only a

minor threat by the Army, the EGP lived and worked among the Indians, learning their different dialects and gaining their trust. Their most significant success came in recruiting some of the Indians, both as insurgents and as part of a support network.

The second group, in terms of strength, is ORPA (Organizacion Revolucionar del Pueblo en Armas - Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms). Founded in 1971, ORPA first began insurgency operations in 1979 in the western part of Guatemala's Pacific Coast. The only member of URNG that is not Marxist, ORPA is thought to be primarily composed of Indians.

The third member, the latest mutation of the original FAR, re-established itself in the northern province of the Peten in 1971 after nearly being eliminated in the late 1960's.

The fourth, and smallest, member of the URNG is the PGT-Nucleo (also known as the PGT-D, for dissident faction), an offshoot of the PGT which gave birth to the FAR in 1962 and has been splintering ever since.³³

The Insurgency Rekindled

In the aftermath of army and death squad violence in both the cities and the countryside, insurgent groups began to experience a rapid increase in recruits, and subsequently increased the severity and frequency of terrorist attacks. As a result, tourism, a significant part of the Guatemalan

economy, nearly ceased. At the same time, many foreign investors began to withdraw their capital investments from Guatemala while few were willing to make new ones. President Lucas Garcia was facing not only an insurgency, but also an economic crisis.

In 1981, in an effort to preempt the rural Indians from aiding the insurgents, President Lucas Garcia began his tierra arrasada, or scorched earth, policy to destroy or disperse any Indian villages considered susceptible to insurgent influence.³⁴ In conjunction with this policy, General Benedicto Lucas Garcia, the president's brother and Chief of Staff of the army, ordered the formation of the PAC (Patrulla Autodefensa Civil - Civil Self-Defense Patrol).

Intended as a rural militia to supplement the army, the PAC differed substantially from the earlier comisionados militares of the 1960's in that it recruited campesinos, primarily Indian peasants, who may have otherwise joined, or supported, the insurgents. The PAC recruits received virtually no training and were armed only with machetes or an occasional bolt-action carbine.³⁵ The motivation for a peasant to join was basically the opportunity to demonstrate loyalty, in order to prevent his village from being destroyed and himself and his family killed.³⁶

Rios Montt

On March 7, 1982, a regular presidential election was held to select a successor to Lucas Garcia. The PID

candidate, Brigadier General Angel Anibal Guevara was declared the winner and was confirmed by the Guatemalan Congress 9 days later. Before General Anibal could be inaugurated, however, a group of conservative junior officers deposed Lucas Garcia and installed General Jose Efraim Rios Montt as head of a military junta. The junior officers, supported by the MLN and the elite, were angered by the inability of the army to control insurgents who, having successfully recruited Indians, were potentially capable of involving half the population in open rebellion. The officers wanted to shift to a United States-style counterinsurgency strategy which would include civic action, psychological operations, and advanced American weapons, but realized the U. S. would not be willing help unless the human rights issue was resolved. They knew this was unlikely under Lucas Garcia or his tapado successor.³⁷

Rios Montt, a moderate, defrauded winner of the 1974 presidential election, and "born-again" Christian fundamentalist, was a rather bizarre candidate for the MLN to support. Perhaps he was a compromise candidate of the different power groups involved in the coup d'etat. At any rate, Rios Montt lost little time in consolidating power and implementing changes. Within a few weeks, Rios Montt had deposed the other two members of the junta and declared himself President.

Rios Montt declared publicly that he would not tolerate violations of the law, and publicly warned both the left-

wing insurgents and the right-wing death squads to cease their activities. Within 10 days, the violence in Guatemala came to a standstill as dozens of senior police and security officials were arrested and the judiciales abolished.³⁸

Rios Montt also closed down the U. S.-built telecommunications network bunker in the National Palace, which had allegedly been used in support of the death squads since its construction in the mid 1960's.³⁹ Amnesty International claims to hold evidence that this telecommunications facility has been used by a presidential agency in the National Palace to control death squad activities since the incipient form of MANO appeared in 1965.⁴⁰ (The main purpose of the facility since its inception, according to Amnesty International, has been the ready access to military intelligence files dating back to 1954, and located in the National Palace.)⁴¹

Beans and Bullets

In May, 1982 Rios Montt announced an amnesty would be in effect during the month of June for all insurgents who surrendered. When the amnesty met with little success, Rios Montt launched his Victory Plan 82 which included the "2F" program, fusiles y frijoles ("beans and bullets"). The new program, which held both promise and threat to the Indian villages, consisted of a greatly expanded PAC, along with a "fortified village" project to physically separate the peasants from the guerrillas.⁴² Peasants were promised

community aid and food as a reward for cooperation in the counter-insurgency effort. In addition, Rios Montt created a place for an Indian representative on his Council of State, where Indian problems could be discussed with government officials. This opening of the government to participation by the Indians for the first time since the death of Rafael Carrera was significant, but the Catholic Indians still mistrusted the Protestant President.

The 2F program, fusiles y frijoles, translates literally to "rifles and beans", but was referred to as "beans and bullets" to accurately capture the flavor of the Spanish phrase, intended to be catchy, and therefore easier for the peasants to remember and identify with. "Beans and bullets," aimed at winning the corazones y cabezas (hearts and minds) of the peasants, focused primarily on the Indians in villages not yet "tainted" by the insurgents.

Concurrently, however, Rios Montt is alleged to have begun the implementation of a secret National Plan for Security and Development, an orchestrated campaign of terror drawn up by the military and approved by Rios Montt to bring the rural insurgency under control.⁴³ Calling for a drastic escalation of rural repression to eliminate the insurgents' support base, the National Plan employed the random killing of peasants in insurgent operation areas to prevent future collaboration. In insurgent areas, those peasants who survived the counterinsurgency operations were given the choice of relocating outside the area in a "fortified

village," or being branded as a subversive (and killed). The Indians, who would have preferred to be left alone, either accepted resettlement or fled to the hills. Developed by the former army Chief of Staff, General Benedicto Lucas Garcia,⁴⁴ the National Plan admitted that the Guatemalan army was not having much success in coping with the renewed insurgency, and sought to create free-fire zones, much as the United States had done in Vietnam 20 years earlier.⁴⁵

In the execution of the National Plan, the Rios Montt administration is said to have condoned selective assassinations of community leaders, and in some cases entire communities, suspected of collaboration.⁴⁶ In each major town, the government organized a committee consisting of the military commander, the police chief, and three influential citizens of known loyalty to compile lists of suspected subversives.⁴⁷ Presumably, MLN death squads, in addition to the army and security forces, carried out the killings. Despite its ups and downs with the military governments, the MLN remained the political organization of the elite, who believed fear was the key to control of Guatemala. Regarding the MLN's nickname as "the party of organized violence", the 1982 MLN Vice Presidential candidate Lionel Sisniega Otero once said "Color organized is a painting, sound organized is a melody, (but) violence organized is strength."⁴⁸

The "beans and bullets" tactic was ultimately successful in controlling the Indian peasant population. Referring to

the "beans" portion of the program, an EGP strategist admitted "food is a powerful gospel."⁴⁹ The MLN did not agree with Rios Montt's support for the peasants who participated in his "beans and bullets" policy, though. In late 1982, they referred to him as "El Pavo" (the turkey) since he was not expected to survive past Christmas.⁵⁰ Shortly before Christmas, however, Rios Montt publicly declared that the "beans and bullets" program had been a success and announced that the next phase of his national reconstruction would be Strength Plan 83 and the "3T's" program, techo, tortilla, y trabajo (housing, food, work).⁴⁹

Strength Plan 83

Strength Plan 83, inaugurated in March 1983, stressed the decentralization of the military command structure. The nine former Military Districts were divided up into twenty three new Military Zones, one for each province. The Military Zone commanders were given control of all army assets, police, and PACs within their zones. This decentralization was intended to eliminate corruption and improve the efficiency of operations, but the resulting rapid increase in the number of staff and operational billets created a shortage of junior officers and, ultimately, their resentment. Due to generous promotion policies, of 900 army officers, 240 (27%) were colonels and generals. The junior officers were angry at the increased load on them, and not their better-paid superiors.

Under Strength Plan 83, the Military Zone commanders shifted operational strategy from large unit operations to continuous small patrols of 10-30 men, with large task forces of 1,000 to 1,200 men in areas of resistance, to keep the insurgents on the defensive. Although the counterinsurgency operations were violent, they were effective in controlling (but not stopping), the insurgency. From an estimated strength of 6,000 men in 1981,⁵² by the end of 1983 the insurgents were down to just 2,500 men.⁵³ The rural peasants took the brunt of the violence, though. From 1978, when the insurgency rekindled, until 1983, between 50 and 70 thousand people were killed, primarily Indians in the western highlands of the provinces of Huehuetenango and Quiche.⁵⁴

The expanded PAC, which was renamed the Civil Self-Defense Corps, or CAC, eventually numbered over 400,000 members.⁵⁵ All males between 15 and 60 were required to spend every third day patrolling and to participate in occasional sweeping operations to locate insurgent camps or movements.⁵⁶ These CAC patrols, intended to flush out insurgents and relay their positions to the regular army, took heavy casualties in contacts with insurgents. The peasants, as a group, also suffered huge losses in lives, livestock, crops, houses, and villages at the hands of the army during Rios Montt's counterinsurgency efforts.⁵⁷

Under Strength Plan 83, the insurgency was once again brought under control, but not eliminated. Remnants of the

insurgent groups returned to the hills or the cities to regroup, launching only periodic terrorist attacks. Angered by the continuing violence and the inability of Rios Montt's policies to completely wipe out the insurgency, General Oscar Humberto Mejia Victores seized power on August 8, 1983, apparently with U. S. approval. Mejia had agreed to support Honduras against a Nicaraguan attack, should one occur, a pledge of support Rios Montt was not willing to make.⁵⁸ U. S. concern for the continuing violence and junior officer discontent in the army probably also played a role.

After assuming power, Mejia's main emphasis was a continuation of the "fortified villages" program, reminiscent of the strategic village programs employed in the 1960's by the United States and South Vietnam in their combined effort to control the Viet Cong..

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The Vietnam Experience

The Agroville

Because of the many similarities in the counterinsurgency programs employed, it is useful to examine the experience of the United States in South Vietnam in order to compare it with the Guatemalan experience in the 1980's. In the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) in the early 1960's, five separate counterinsurgency programs were designed and implemented with varying degrees of success. All of the different programs had essentially the same purpose: to deny the Viet Nam Cong Sam, Vietnamese Communists insurgents commonly known as the "Viet Cong," the support, willing or otherwise, of the rural Vietnamese peasants.

The first program tried by the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem was a resurrected French Indochina scheme called the fortified village cluster. This was quickly abandoned in favor of the agroville plan, an attempt to transplant the successful British counterinsurgency program employed in Malaya in the early 1950's.¹

The agrovilles, or "rural towns", in the Malay application were compounds surrounded by barbed wire and under police control. This strategy, under Lt. General Sir Harold Briggs, had been a success.² A British advisor to the government of South Vietnam (GVN), Sir Robert Thompson, had proposed the system as a means of controlling the insurgency in South Vietnam. The Diem administration agreed.³

The agroville program, as implemented in South Vietnam, was intended to emphasize the social and economic advantages of consolidating widely dispersed peasant huts into a central location for security,⁴ but failed for two basic reasons.

First, the insurgency in South Vietnam was of a distinctly different character than the one in Malaya had been. The insurgents in Malaya were Chinese, easily distinguishable from the local peasants in the Malay agrovilles. In Vietnam, the insurgents and peasants all looked the same. Also, availability of food in Malaya was nearly non-existent outside of the agrovilles, while in Vietnam, food grows virtually everywhere. In addition, the Chinese insurgents in Malaya were attempting to operate in a hostile environment with no sanctuary, while the Viet Cong could rest and recuperate in Cambodia, Laos, or North Vietnam.⁵

The second basic reason for the failure of the agroville program was the resistance of the Vietnamese peasants to any change in their traditional way of life.⁶ In order to understand their resistance, one must understand the significant difference between a hamlet and a village in South Vietnamese culture.

A hamlet (ap) consisted of a geographical area with communal lands administered by the hamlet leaders, who parceled out the lands to the residents of the hamlet. The peasants working these lands had a hereditary relationship

with the hamlet frequently stretching back over two thousand years. The homes of the peasants were spread across each hamlet, with each family's hut built next to the fields which they tended.⁷ Within his own hamlet, the peasant had an established identity, but to leave the hamlet was like stepping into another world, where the peasant became just another nameless face.⁸

The village (xa), on the other hand, was the primary administrative unit of the central government and consisted of a cluster of huts and buildings.⁹ The villages, responsible for one or more hamlets and located within them, were created by the Viet Minh shortly after the end of World War II. Ngo Dinh Diem continued their use when he assumed the presidency of South Vietnam in 1955.¹⁰

The agrovilles, based on the village, rather than the traditional hamlet, were not accepted by the peasants, primarily because they removed the peasants from their lands. Illustrating the importance of land to the Vietnamese peasant in Fire in the Lake, Frances Fitzgerald wrote,

"Land had been the basis of the social contract - the transmission belt of life that carried the generations of the family from the past into the future. To leave the land was...to lose their place in the universe and suffer a permanent, collective death."¹¹

Fitzgerald's description of the importance of land to the Vietnamese peasant could have easily been written to describe the importance of land to the Mayan Indians in Guatemala.

Once concentrated in a village, frequently located five or more miles from their fields, the peasants soon lost interest in daily walking several hours each way to tend to their crops.¹² Sir Robert apparently didn't realize that the peasants' huts were spread out across the hamlets, and that forcing them to concentrate in villages which were frequently far from their fields effectively took their land, and thus their identities, away from them.¹³

The Staley-Taylor Plan

As the agroville experiment failed and insurgent activity in Vietnam increased in early 1961, President John F. Kennedy, alarmed by the communist threat in Cuba, sought an accurate assessment of the situation in Vietnam. By the end of the year, he had sent three fact-finding missions to Vietnam: Vice President Johnson in April, Professor Eugene Staley of Stanford Research Institute from May to July; and General Maxwell Taylor, along with economist Walt Rostow, in September.

Professor Staley, apparently with the strong influence of Ngo Dinh Nhu, President Diem's brother and closest advisor, returned to the United States with the "Staley Plan". The Staley Plan recommended U.S. assistance with a military program emphasizing village militias, an expanded national guard, and jungle training for all security forces, along with an economic program emphasizing a renewed agroville program.¹³

During his trip shortly thereafter, General Taylor, who as President Kennedy's special military advisor was developing the theory of "special warfare"¹⁴, found that the Staley Plan would only work if the South Vietnamese government could concurrently win the "hearts and minds" of the rural peasants.¹⁵

Oddly enough, the civilian Staley mission had returned with primarily military recommendations, while General Taylor returned with what were essentially political and economic recommendations.¹⁶ The two missions' findings were synthesized by the Kennedy administration into the Staley-Taylor Plan of 1961, the principal points of which were:

(1) to create a no man's land at the 17th parallel and on the Laotian and Cambodian borders by relocating villages and defoliating the jungle,

(2) to create a series of 16,000 fortified villages, and

(3) upon the completion of (1) and (2), launch a military offensive to wipe out Viet Cong resistance.

Designed to achieve the pacification of the Republic of Vietnam by the end of 1962, the Staley-Taylor Plan was presented to the Diem government by the Kennedy administration in the form of a demand.¹⁷ Further aid to South Vietnam was made conditional to Diem's cooperation in the implementation of the Staley Plan.¹⁸

The Strategic Hamlet Program

On February 3rd, 1962, President Diem, acquiescing to the Americans and recognizing the failure of the agroville program, announced the new, military-oriented Strategic Hamlet Program.¹⁹ The basis of this new counterinsurgency program was the proposed series of fortified villages outlined in the Staley-Taylor Plan.²⁰ The peasants and their property, from the traditional, indefensible hamlets, were to be concentrated in these new Strategic Hamlets, in order to separate the peasant "sheep" from the insurgent "wolves".²¹

To assist the Diem government, the Military Assistance Advisors Group (MAAG) was upgraded to the Military Assistance Advisory Command, Vietnam (MACV). MACV inserted British and American advisors into virtually every part of the South Vietnamese bureaucracy to insist on, and supervise, the adoption of the provisions of the Staley-Taylor Plan.²²

The new Strategic Hamlets were designed to be fortified clusters of huts with a school and a well, protected by a perimeter defense of guard towers, barbed wire, bamboo stakes, minefields, and moats.²³ Once settled within the protective hamlets, the residents were to be won over through civic action programs.²⁴

Diem surely recognized the semantic significance of the use of the word "hamlet" as representing the focus of Vietnamese peasant culture which stresses the unity of the

group.²⁵ To encourage that unity to establish new hamlet identities, Diem formed Strategic Hamlet advisory councils, an artificial replacement for the traditional hamlet leadership.²⁶

As recommended by the Staley-Taylor Plan, the Strategic Hamlet Program called for 16,000 Strategic Hamlets to be built. When President Diem and his brother Nhu were assassinated in a coup d'etat in November, 1963, over 9,000 of the hamlets had been reported as completed.²⁷

The leader of the new government, Major General Duong Van "Big" Minh, impressed by the success of Israel's kibbutzes and Malaya's fortified villages, declared that he would continue the Strategic Hamlet Program.²⁸ Two months later, during a January, 1964 reappraisal of the program, less than 20% of the 9,000 hamlets were found to be "viable", with many consisting of little more than a few huts surrounded by a couple of strands of barbed wire.²⁹

Apparently the provincial governors, in order to please their masters in Saigon, had emphasized quantity over quality in the construction of the strategic hamlets, thus falsifying the statistics.³⁰ In the attempt to please the Americans with a rapid implementation of the program, the governors had undermined the entire program, which was soon abandoned.³¹

In March, 1964, after another military shakeup of the government, the new Prime Minister, Major General Nguyen Khanh, resurrected the unpopular Strategic Hamlet Program,

but renamed it the New Life Hamlet Program.³² The program was overtaken by events, however, as the new Johnson administration began to lean heavily toward assistance in the form of military advisors and weapons. By 1966, just over 500 of the originally planned 16,000 strategic villages remained.³³

The Revolutionary Development Program

In 1966, yet another government, under Prime Minister and Brigadier General Nguyen Cao Ky, inaugurated the Revolutionary Development Program. Under the new plan, cadre teams of 59 armed advisors worked in already militarily-secured areas to win the hearts and minds of the peasants while re-establishing governmental control. Rather than trying to once again relocate the peasants, the Revolutionary Development teams worked in previously established settlements to build support for the government by befriending the peasants while constructing defenses.³⁴ Villages secured under the Revolutionary Development program were called "Really New Life Hamlets" (Ap Doi Moi).³⁵

In a typical encounter, in theory, a cadre of team members would conduct a checklist of 110 tasks, beginning with the rooting out of Viet Cong and concluding with supervision of local elections.³⁶ Interim tasks included a hamlet census, issuance of identity cards, establishment of schools and medical services, and agricultural advice and assistance.

Prime Minister Ky's intention was to build peasant confidence in the government and motivate them to fight the Viet Cong to protect their homes and villages.³⁷ In attempting to implement the program, however, the Revolutionary Development teams encountered the same corruption and lack of cooperation and coordination endemic in the South Vietnamese government.

Ironically, many of the team members were killed by the Viet Cong, who recognized the threat of the program which the GVN failed to support properly. By the end of the first year of operations, fully one quarter of the cadre members, either through fear or frustration, had deserted.³⁸ Few, if any, Really New Life Hamlets were ever fully completed.

Another part of Ky's Revolutionary Development plan were the Chieu Hoi, or "open arms", villages constructed for former Viet Cong who, convinced by a government campaign to surrender, were resettled as civilians after a short "indoctrination." The Chieu Hoi villages plan failed, unfortunately, because the former Viet Cong were never fully accepted by the South Vietnamese Army, which was unwilling to treat former enemies well.³⁹ In addition, Chieu Hoi inhabitants all lived in constant fear, in their poorly protected villages, of retribution from their former comrades.⁴⁰

The strategic villages, under their various names, were intended to be a solid front against the Viet Cong, but they ended up as isolated islands⁴¹, attractive targets to both

the Viet Cong and corrupt government officials for their stores of food, weapons, and medical supplies.⁴² As defense analyst Herman Kahn noted:

"(In Vietnam as in most situations)...the two most important factors in winning the hearts and minds are (1) looking like a winner, and (2) providing security, or at least making it less dangerous to be on your side than on the enemies'."⁴³

All of the strategic village programs had failed on both counts.

Civilian Security Forces

In addition to the various strategic village programs, three important parts of the rural pacification effort in Vietnam in the early 1960s were the civilian security forces known as the Regional Force, the Popular Force, and the Civil Irregular Defense Groups.

The Regional Force, an outgrowth of the Civil Guard (Bao An) established in 1955, was a national paramilitary police force organized to provide security at the provincial level. The Regional Force gathered information, later participated in the civic action programs of General Ky's Revolutionary Development program, and worked to further the confidence of the rural population in the central government.⁴⁴

The Popular Force, on the other hand, was more of a "home guard", similar to an American volunteer fire department, comprised of farmers and merchants who went into action only when the Viet Cong threatened their village.⁴⁵ An outgrowth of the Self-Defense Corps (Dan Ve) established in 1956, the

Popular Force helped the regional authorities in the villages to maintain public order and security.⁴⁶ Although the Popular Force provided some defense, their effectiveness was limited due to lack of weapons. The government refused to arm the Popular Force properly for fear that loss of Vietnamese Army (ARVN) control of weapons would be dangerous, both as a source of banditry, and as a potential source of weapons for the enemy.⁴⁷

The Civil Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG), formed in 1961 to win the loyalty of the Montagnard tribesmen in the Vietnamese highlands, were militia units originally trained and directed by small squads (6-8 men) of U. S. Special Forces troops (Green Berets). Although possessing a deep-seated historical hatred of the lowland Vietnamese, the Montagnards trusted their American advisors, and by June of 1962 had been formed into 36 Montagnard Strike Companies to counter the Viet Cong threat in the highlands. In May 1964, when the Saigon government insisted on bringing the Montagnard CIDGs under South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) control, the Montagnards deserted en masse, frequently after killing the ARVN troops, but not harming their American friends.⁴⁸

The CORDS Program

Before the attempt by the GVN to assume control, the success of the CIDG led to the development by MACV of the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) theory.⁴⁹ Tested but never fully implemented, the CORDS

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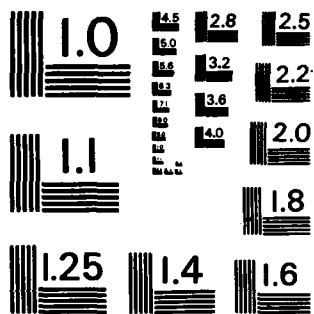
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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
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theory was apparently based on the French concept of quadrillage, the pacification of small squares of the country at a time.⁵⁰

The CORDS theory proposed small team harassment tactics, destruction of subversive villages, and the use of the strategic village to both control and reeducate the population. A CORDS program following a massive military action was postulated to be particularly effective.⁵¹

To provide the forces to fulfill the CORDS program, MACV formed Combined Action Companies (CAC) composed of Popular Forces with U. S. Marine advisors.⁵² The basic unit of the CAC, the Combined Action Platoon (CAP), consisted of a squad of 14 Marines led by a sergeant, who lived and worked with a platoon of 34 Popular Force members. Operating at the hamlet level, the CAPs were successful at driving out the Viet Cong, but took heavy casualties. This static defense, along with the CORDS program, did not fit into the overall MACV strategy as the war progressed, however, and both were abandoned by 1967.⁵³

All of the counterinsurgency programs tried in South Vietnam ultimately failed, generally because they were not fully implemented and supported. The following chapter will discuss the current counterinsurgency program in Guatemala and will draw on the Vietnam experience of the United States for comparisons.

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Rebuilding Guatemala

"Unless (the army) now deals with the socioeconomic roots of the rebellion, its victory will be fleeting. Guatemala is a time bomb."
Guatemalan Bishop Juan Girardi (1985)¹

Mejias's Challenge

Having closely examined the failure of the strategic hamlet programs in South Vietnam in the 1960's, let us look at the current counterinsurgency program in Guatemala. Under President Rios Montt's Victory Plan 82 and Strength Plan 83, the chronic insurgency had once again been put down, but the continuing violence had left tens of thousands dead, hundreds of thousands displaced as internal refugees, and had driven another fifty thousand across the border into Mexico. Once General Mejia took over, however, death squad violence in the urban areas, which had continued under Rios Montt after a short lull, dropped off from 500 per month in 1981 to less than 100 per month in 1984.² Apparently, General Mejia ended the tacit support the death squads had enjoyed during the implementation of the National Plan.

The Indians were disillusioned by the failure of the guerrillas, who had promised them a better life in return for their support, but the Indians' anger was aimed at the army for the violence it had unleashed on them while battling the insurgents.³ The counterinsurgency policies of Lucas Garcia and Rios Montt had been a virtual ethnocide, destroying the traditional Mayan villages and killing many of their people.⁴ The challenge for Mejia was to continue to

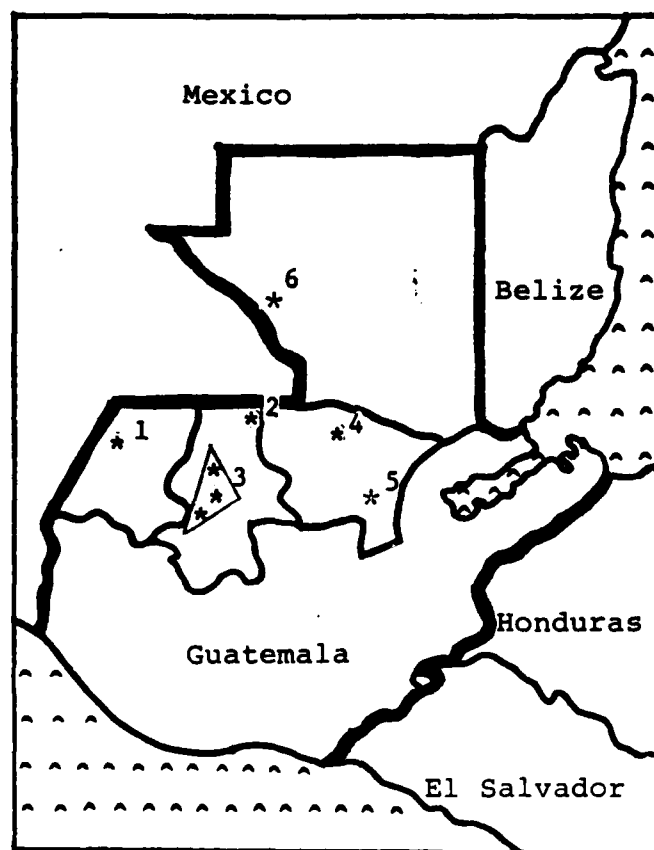
contain the insurgency while rebuilding the ravaged Guatemalan economy and resettling the refugees, both those within Guatemala and those across the border in Mexico. By far, the most difficult and necessary task was the resettling of refugees. In the counterinsurgency campaigns between 1978-1983, over 400 Indian villages had been destroyed in the western Guatemalan highlands and the Peten.⁵

To achieve this resettlement, Mejia and his staff created the polos de desarrollo y servicios (poles of development and service) program, a counterinsurgency and resettlement plan designed to achieve integrated rural redevelopment and rebuilding in the areas most affected by the previous violence.⁶ The development pole program consisted of three "pillars": model villages, an expanded PAC called the Civil Defense Force (CDF) to protect them, and a military controlled inter-agency authority called the Inter-Institutional Coordinating System (IICS).⁷

The Development Poles and Model Villages

The original development pole program planned six poles, each containing between 1 and 10 model villages, in the provinces bordering Mexico, where the insurgent and refugee problems were the most severe. The poles were to be built in Chacaj, Huehuetenango; Playa Grande and the Ixil Triangle, Quiche; Chisec and Senahu, Alta Verapaz; and Yanahi in the Peten.⁸ (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Development Poles



- 1 Chacaj, Huehuetenango
- 2 Playa Grande, El Quiche'
- 3 Ixil Triangle, El Quiche'
- 4 Chisec, Alta Verapaz
- 5 Senahu, Alta Verapaz
- 6 Yanahi, El Peten

(Source: Central American Report-53)

One of the major issues facing the program was land reform: how to distribute land in the new villages to the peasants. Insurgent commander Cesar Montes of the FAR had recognized the complexity of the land reform issue over 15 years earlier in 1967 when he said:

"...you cannot simply turn over great tracts of land to the people...nor can you collectivize land where there is a long tradition of small property owners(.)...A program of national land reform (must consist of) many different regional programs, each fitting the distinct needs and peculiarities of a particular region of the country."⁹

The development poles, under the supervision of the IICS, were to modernize agriculture, diversify the products and markets, create an interdependency between the model villages and the rest of the country, and thus make the model villages self-sustaining communities of the displaced persons from insurgent-related fighting. The original plan called for construction of homes, schools, health centers, and access roads in the model villages, followed by public works projects such as electrification and water and sewer systems.

The government drew up a Model Village Implementation Plan, a 27-item checklist of activities starting with a census and proceeding through design and construction of her village. The projected implementation time for each village was to be 8 months, but by December 1984, 24 villages had been completed, most in just 2 months.¹⁰ This rapid completion schedule suggests the same problems faced by the

Revolutionary Development Program proponents in South Vietnam in 1966. Rather than completing the substance of the plan, a mere facade of completion is claimed and adopted. The recipients of the plan's benefits, the rural Indians and refugees, soon see that the promises of a better life are empty promises, and a meaningful program appears to have failed, when, in reality, it was never really implemented.

The government of Guatemala claims the villages are intended to end civilian support of the rebels through rigid control of the rural isolated Indians, to whom they will extend modern services,¹¹ but many of the services are limited or non-existent in the "completed" villages. Critics charge that the model villages are strategic hamlets, reminiscent of the population control methods attempted in South Vietnam and discussed in Chapter 6. One critic calls them concentration camps consisting of women, children, and old people crammed into huts and guarded by heavily armed army troops.¹² Another critic charges that the model villages are a tool of ethnogenocide (the destruction of Indian cultures, traditions, and religion), removing the land, community and autonomy of the Mayan Indians in the name of military control.¹³ These charges are similar to the complaints over the destruction of the villages in South Vietnam. The Mejia government claims the model villages are not strategic hamlets since they were built not for strategic purposes, but to provide "security and development" for the Indians. The new roads built to provide

access to the villages, however, have opened up areas of the country previously inaccessible to army vehicles.¹⁴

The United Nations Committee on Human Rights (UNCHR) Special Rapporteur to Guatemala, Viscount Lord Colville of Culross, has said in one of his reports that it is too early to determine the nature of the model villages, but that they have slowed the flow of people to the cities, a problem which has been exacerbating urban unemployment and overcrowding.¹⁵

The Reagan administration originally planned to contribute one million dollars to the polos de desarrollo program, but suspended that aid when critics charged that the model villages were for military control. For fiscal year 1986, though, the Reagan administration has requested ten million dollars in foreign aid to Guatemala to finance road building, medical equipment, helicopters and spare parts.¹⁶ Since the polos de desarrollo program began, United States aid money granted to the Guatemalan government's National Reconstruction Committee has been channeled to the model villages. The National Reconstruction Committee (NRC), created to coordinate relief efforts after a terribly destructive earthquake struck Guatemala in 1976, has remained in existence to coordinate programs as designated by the military governments. Much of the authority of the NRC has been subordinated to the army's Division of Civil Affairs and Community Development, responsible for the model villages. In addition to U. S. funds channelled by the NRC to the model villages, several million dollars worth of

U. S.-supplied commodities donated to the World Food Program have been used in food-for-work programs in the model villages.¹⁷

On a recent visit to the Guatemalan highlands, anthropologists Chris Krueger and Kjell Enge visited a number of model villages. Unlike Lord Colville's report, which felt conditions varied "somewhat,"¹⁸ Krueger and Enge noted that conditions varied widely, from the relatively abundant personal freedom and economic potential in Chisec, to virtual imprisonment in Saraxoch and Acamal, where residents' civil rights are suspended without trial or sentence. Their general observations are that the model villages are a strategic measure that entails development in some areas but not in others. The economic crisis is said to have had a great impact on the development in that lack of money prevents proper completion of the program. They noted across the board shortages in food supply, availability of arable land, health care, wage-earning opportunities, housing, and education.¹⁹ Krueger and Enge pointed out that nearly half the money being spent in the villages is going for electricity (29%) and roads (19%), the latter useful primarily to the army, and the former of dubious value considering the areas of shortages.²⁰ Unlike the planned settlements in South Vietnam, however, the model villages of Guatemala are well protected by the Civil Defense Forces and the army.

The Civil Defense Force

The Staley Plan for the pacification of South Vietnam called for a civilian militia to defend the Strategic Hamlets. The lightly armed, poorly trained Popular Forces, as we have seen, were not able to defend the mere facades of security that the Strategic Hamlets turned out to be. On the other hand, when General Mejia took over as Chief of State in Guatemala (he has always made it a point to not be referred to as "President"), he recognized the potential capability of former President Rios Montt's Civil Self-Defense Corps to help restore order in the rural western highlands.

The second pillar of General Mejia's Redevelopment Program was the Civil Defense Force (CDF), an improved, expanded version of The Civil Self-Defense Corps. General Mejia instructed the army to train the peasants in the CDF to protect their new homes in the model villages. Legally autonomous from the army, the CDFs were considered to be civic organizations and were armed with only a limited number of obsolete carbines. The CDFs, which frequently contained former soldiers within their ranks,²¹ had two main areas of emphasis by the summer of 1985: first, to control the entrances to the rural villages and towns; and second, to monitor vehicle and population movements and make regular reports to the army.²²

To coordinate local development and train the CDFs, the army created Civic Action Companies (CACs), specifically

assigned to Military Zone (MZ) commanders for model village duty. Operating much like the Combined Action Companies in South Vietnam in the 1960's and under the immediate supervision of the MZ S-5 (civil affairs and psychological operations officer), the Guatemalan CACs stationed rifle platoons near model villages to assist in village public works projects, CDF training, and defense. Although the Mejia government maintains that CDF participation has always been voluntary for the villagers, Krueger and Enge disagree, pointing out that failure to join the CDF brands one as a sympathizer, or worse yet, as a subversive.²³

The United Nations Committee on Human Rights (UNCHR) Colville Commission, on the other hand, noted the compulsory military requirements of many other countries, and mentioned the success of the CDFs in keeping the peace which ultimately allows the villagers to live and work. The Colville Commission, which conducted its research during a fall, 1984 trip to Guatemala, felt that local variations of the CDFs, rather than the program itself, were responsible for any infringement on personal liberties.²⁴

The Guatemalan army says the success of the CDF in achieving security in the model villages is proof of the benefits and positive goals of the CDF, and demonstrates that "defense, productive work, and democratic ideals are attainable goals for all the people together with the army."²⁵ One obvious effect of the CDF is the change in tactics by the insurgents who remain in Guatemala. Insurgent

activities in the past two years have degenerated to little more than isolated terrorist attacks.²⁶

Although there have been occasional problems with CDF leaders abusing their authority in order to extort money, steal land, and settle personal feuds,²⁷ the government has shown a responsible attitude by admitting to the existence of such problems and making a meaningful effort to solve them. Shortly after the program began, the army issued a comprehensive Code of Conduct for the CDF, a rare circumstance in third world armed forces.²⁸

Noting difficulties inherent in integrating a new civic program into traditional cultures, the government is improving CDF training and supervision, and acknowledges that reorganization of the CDF may be necessary as reconstruction continues.²⁹ With the inauguration of a civilian president planned for January 1986, the Mejia administration may choose to change the CDF from the official status of a "voluntary" civic organization to that of a military reserve. This change would reduce the ability of a future civilian government to dissolve the CDF, and at the same time, would solidify the military's ability to seize control of the country should they feel it necessary.

The Inter-Institutional Coordination System

The Inter-Institutional Coordination System (IICS) was created by General Mejia shortly after he assumed office to coordinate available resources toward national

reconstruction efforts.³⁰ The IICS was charged with addressing four key areas: security (both military and police), public services (electricity, water, roads), social services (health, education, housing), and productivity (land allocation, credit, marketing). To carry out its objectives, the IICS was given the authority to direct the resources of the public sector institutions, while coordinating the activities of private sector entities, toward priorities set by the IICS. To back up that authority, the Minister of Defense has been given overall command of the system, and the army's Director of Civilian Affairs and Community Development has been appointed executive director. To date, the IICS has placed its main emphasis on the first two key areas, security and public services (which are of primary concern to the army) and has downplayed emphasis on the last two key areas, social services and productivity, (which benefit primarily the villages). Although these priorities have been set at least partly due to budget constraints, Krueger and Enge charge that the prioritization is an indication that the IICS is merely a front for military control.³¹

Refugees in Mexico

One of the major problems the Mejia government has faced is the more than fifty thousand Guatemalan Indians who fled the Lucas Garcia and Rios Montt counterinsurgency violence by crossing the border into Mexico. The Guatemalan

government has attempted to court these refugees with promises of resettlement in model villages if they return, but many of them still fear the violence they fled.³² The Mexican government has set up a refugee aid commission, COMAR, to deal with the Guatemalan refugees, who are primarily in the Mexican state of Chiapas which borders Guatemala to the west.

Mexico is willing to grant asylum to the refugees, but has insisted on Mexico's right to relocate them where they may be a productive asset, rather than a hindrance.³³ Since Chiapas has a shortage of cropland, COMAR is taking a practical, hard-line stance: the refugees may stay, but only on Mexico's terms.³⁴ So far, eighteen thousand of the refugees have been resettled in the steamy lowlands of the Mexican Yucatan states of Campeche and Quintana Roo, northeast of Guatemala.

Even though they share a common Mayan heritage with the local Mexican peasants, the refugees have been carefully placed in sparsely populated areas so that their new communities may grow without encroaching on Mexican communities.³⁵ Although the government of Guatemala has expressed a desire to have the refugees return, the Colville Commission found that the refugees in the border camps were relatively uninformed of the situation in Guatemala. The Colville Commission reported that it considered the relocation of the Guatemalan refugees to Campeche and Quintana Roo a good idea if done with the Indians' voluntary

consent.³⁶ In essence, the refugees have just two choices: return to Guatemala for resettlement in model villages, or be resettled to the northeast in Mexican-planned communities.

Elections

Just as Rios Montt had done in March 1982, General Mejia promised early in his administration to turn the government over to an elected civilian as soon as possible. In July 1984, an election was held to select a constitutional assembly to draft a new constitution. When the document was completed earlier this year, a presidential election was scheduled to be held November 3, 1985 with the winner to be inaugurated January 14th, 1986. The army seeks to hand over the presidency to a civilian in order to convince the United States that Guatemala is a democracy worthy of increased foreign aid money. The military is also seeking to get away from having to contend with inflation and the stagnant economy.³⁷ The army is willing to step down in order to restore at least the appearance of a democratic government, because the army knows it will retain the actual power.³⁸

Although the relentless anti-communist fervor of the upper class over the last twenty years has virtually eliminated the political center,³⁹ the moderate Christian Democrat candidate, Vinicio Cerezo, is considered to be one of the three front runners in the upcoming presidential election with a good chance of being elected. Cerezo,

however, understands that land reform, the most critical domestic issue in Guatemala, is not a realistic expectation even if he is elected and allowed to assume office.

Resigning himself to a political reality earlier this year, Cerezo said,

"I cannot advocate agrarian reform because it would not be tolerated by the military. My government would not be one of social reforms ...but one of transition toward democracy."⁴⁰

The election, if it is held, will probably be a reasonably free one. The Colville Commission noted in their report that the cedula de vecindad, the universal identity card used to register voters, will avert impersonation and fraud.⁴¹ Since there is no el tapado ("the chosen one" - an official, military-backed candidate), as there has been ever since General Arana Osorio was elected in 1970, the military probably won't try to rig the election. To demonstrate the current regime's desire for a truly free election, Foreign Minister Fernando Andrade Diaz-Duran has invited concerned foreign governments to send election observers. Diaz-Duran claims that American, Venezuelan, and Spanish respondents will attend and observe the elections.⁴²

The wild card in this election will be the Mayan Indians. After centuries of passivity, they are being forcibly dragged into contemporary Guatemala, primarily through the model villages. Should they choose to participate fully in the elections, and not be prevented from doing so through either fear or fraud, their collective votes could be a decisive force since they comprise fully one half of the country's population.

The Economy

The most pressing issue immediately facing the new government will be the Guatemalan economy. Since the Liberal reforms of the 1870's, the Guatemalan economy has functioned on two basic levels, export crops and subsistence farming. As the elite have converted more and more land to export crops over the past century, domestic food production has dropped drastically.⁴³

In the late 1970's, the world price for coffee, which represented 60% of the Guatemala's agricultural foreign exchange, declined dramatically, leading to an overall negative economic growth in Guatemala from 1980 to the present. This economic reversal has forced a reduction in imports, including the subsistence diet of beans and corn which the Indians depend on.⁴⁴ Faced with lower incomes from their exports, the plantation owners cut wages for the Indian workers who were caught in a squeeze as prices climbed for the imported food they survive on.

The insurgency, which was originally caused by an unjust social system, was rekindled as this economic crisis took hold.⁴⁵ Although the government has once again contained the insurgency, the continuing economic crisis and its statistics are grim. Inflation is currently 60% while growth is negligible.⁴⁶ Half of the Guatemalan labor force is either under-employed or un-employed.⁴⁷

Guatemala has a foreign debt of \$2.3 billion which requires an outlay of over one third of her export earnings

just to cover the interest, and is facing a deficit in 1985 of \$64 million more.⁴⁸ The real victim of this crisis is the rural Indian peasant, whose source of food is becoming increasingly expensive and inadequate. Unless the government can adequately provide for the them, the Indian peasant population will become fertile ground for renewed insurgent recruiting efforts.

Notes

¹ Piero Gleijeses, "The Guatemalan Silence," The New Republic, 10 June 1985, pp. 20-23.

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³ Gleijeses, p. 23.

⁴ Jonathan L. Fried, et al., Guatemala in Rebellion: Unfinished History (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1983), p. 240.

⁵ Chris Krueger and Kjell Enge, Security and Development Conditions in the Guatemalan Highlands. (Washington, D. C.: The Washington Office on Latin America, 1985), p. 1.

⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

⁹ Bart E. O'Neill, William R. Heaton, and Donald J. Alberts, eds., Insurgency in the Modern World (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), p. 123.

¹⁰ Krueger, pp. 28-30.

¹¹ Loren Jenkins, "Guatemala Builds Strategic Hamlets," The Washington Post, 20 December 1984, p. A21.

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- 29 Guatemala, Self-Defense Civil Patrols, pp. 18-19.
- 30 Guatemala, Polos de Desarrollo: Editorial del Ejercito, p. 13.
- 31 Krueger, pp. 53-55.
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- 35 Orme, p. A25.
- 36 United Nations, p. i.
- 37 Robert J. McCartney, "Troubled Guatemala Moves Toward Vote," The Washington Post, 24 July 1985, p. A21.
- 38 Loren Jenkins, "Guatemala Gears Up for Uncertain Vote," The Washington Post, 26 December 1984, p. A32.
- 39 James R. Greene and Brent Scowcroft, Western Interests and U. S. Policy Options in the Caribbean Basin: Report of the Atlantic Council's Working Group on the Caribbean Basin (Boston: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, Publishers, 1984), p. 205.
- 40 Gleijeses, pp. 21-23.
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⁴³ Richard S. Newfarmer, ed., From Gunboats to Diplomacy: New U. S. Policies for Latin America (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 54-55.

⁴⁴ United States, The National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, Report (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, January, 1984), p. 10.

⁴⁵ White, p. 3.

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⁴⁷ Jenkins, "Number of Killings Drops in Guatemala," p. A31.

⁴⁸ Jenkins, "Guatemala Gears Up for Uncertain Vote," p. A31.

The Kissinger Commission

"The political crisis that afflicts our region has internal roots, of old injustices and lost hopes, which are jumbled together with the intervention of foreign interests. There will be no peace ...while the infernal game of hegemonic interests continues in our region."¹

Alberto Luis Monge, President of Costa Rica

The Crisis in Central America

The preceeding quote came from a speech by Dr. Alberto Luis Monge, President of Costa Rica, to the Central American Conference on Commerce and Development in May of 1982. Dr. Monge went on to call the economic crisis facing Central America "a war for survival of our nations" and urged the governments of the Central American countries to work together to solve their problems, free from outside domination.

In his speech, Dr. Monge graphically demonstrated the difficulty facing the United States in constructing foreign policy for Guatemala and other Central American countries. Although the United States has been heavily involved in Central American affairs for over one hundred years, the Central American people still resent the presence of a "Big Brother" telling them what to do. They want and need U. S. economic assistance, but they don't want the Americans, or anyone else, to tell them how to run their governments. To deal effectively and knowledgeably with the issues involved in the current crisis in Central America, President Reagan created the National Bipartisan Commission on Central

America in 1983 to provide him with a comprehensive appraisal of the region.

The Kissinger Commission

The National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, better known as the "Kissinger Commission" after its chairman, Dr. Henry Kissinger, was initially suggested by the late Senator Henry Jackson. Founded to be a source of balanced advice for the development of a comprehensive, long-term foreign policy for Central America, the Kissinger commission reported its findings to the President in January 1984.

The Kissinger Commission reported that Central America, as a region, was in the midst of an acute economic and political crisis. The roots of the crisis varied from country to country, but the catalyst for all of them was the worldwide economic recession of the late 1970's, when commodity prices plummeted as energy costs soared. This economic reversal, following a period of relative growth and prosperity in the 1960's, drove interest rates up, forcing Latin American countries to reduce imports, including basic foodstuffs which the peasants relied on for subsistence.² The human misery generated by the reduction in an already insufficient standard of living for the peasants was fertile ground for outside interests to exploit.³ The Soviet Union, through their Cuban surrogates, provided support to insurgencies throughout Central America in the form of

weapons and training in Cuba. This support was manifested in the Nicaraguan revolution (which finally succeeded in 1979), the El Salvadoran insurgency, and the renewed Guatemalan insurgency.

The Kissinger commission advised that the United States must respond fully and rapidly to the crisis in Central America, reporting that any short term expense would be less than the long term costs of not acting.⁴ The Commission sees the United States as having two primary challenges in the region: the economic challenge discussed above, and the political challenge of supporting the trend toward democratic governments becoming the rule, rather than the exception, in Central America.

In responding to these two challenges, the Kissinger Commission suggested that the United States be guided by three principles: the fostering of democratic self-determination, support for social and economic development which benefits everyone, and regional security cooperation.⁵ The Commission sees the greatest potential benefit of U. S. participation in Central America to be the barrier it would present to hostile powers (the Soviets and surrogates) seeking to exploit the unrest in the region in pursuit of expansion.⁶

The Kissinger Commission calls for a two stage effort beginning with a short term Emergency Stabilization Program of economic aid and trade assistance. The second stage would be a long term Reconstruction and Development Program to

improve the conditions of the poor while developing strong democratic institutions, eliminating violence, and developing strong, diversified economies not as susceptible to variances in the world markets.⁷ The Kissinger Commission noted that, historically, successful U. S. policies in Latin America, such as the Monroe Doctrine, the Good Neighbor Policy and the Alliance for Progress, have been coherent in their policies toward the individual countries.⁸ It is important that the U. S. consider this idea again. U. S. foreign policy in Central America in the 1980s and 1990s must consist of a set of comprehensive, individual policies tailored for each country.

The Kissinger Commission suggested a long list of reforms and aid, including an accelerated agricultural development program with long-term low-interest loans, along with agrarian reform to get land into the hands of the peasants who need it for subsistence farming.⁹ In addition, the Kissinger Commission proposed a Human Development program of emergency food aid, substantial assistance for legal training and an upgrading of judicial systems, housing construction, and educational aid. The educational program calls for ten thousand U. S. government-sponsored scholarships to bring Central American students to the U. S. for schooling, along with aid to Central American universities, and a Peace Corps-style literacy corps to deal with the high percentage of illiteracy endemic in the region.¹⁰ Finally, the Kissinger Commission proposed a

collection of security agreements among the Central American countries to limit arms acquisitions, preserve the sanctity of borders and sovereignty, and to make a commitment to democracy and human rights.¹¹

The Kissinger Commission noted that, once conditions which required reform have generated popular support for an insurgency, subsequent reforms alone are not sufficient to halt the insurgency.¹² This observation is particularly true in Guatemala, where the model villages and development poles must continue to give the reform process time to correct hundreds of years of injustice.

Discussion of Findings

In From Gunboats to Diplomacy, Richard K. Newfarmer agrees with the findings of the Kissinger Commission: that the challenges to the United States are the economic crisis and the change from military governments to democracies.¹³ In the foreword to Newfarmer's book, U. S. Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) charges that U. S. policy in the past has been reactive and short term, a situation which has not been conducive to the health and well-being of long-term American interests. Newfarmer concurs with Senator Byrd, noting that the U. S. has become identified with repressive rulers who have been supported for their anti-communist postures, sustaining their dominance but reducing U. S. stature as guardians of democracy.¹⁴ Both Newfarmer and Senator Byrd neglect to mention that events which began forty years ago generated that support.

The "Cold War" and the concurrent McCarthyism generated the paranoia in the United States which was the root cause of continued American support for anti-communist military dictators in Central America after World War II (as President Roosevelt was alleged to have said about Nicaraguan dictator Somoza, "He may be a son-of-a-bitch, but he's our son-of-a-bitch.") Over the next twenty years, the "missile gap", the Cuban revolution, the Bay of Pigs disaster, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the American experience in Vietnam all contributed to a continuance of that paranoia.¹⁵

Newfarmer insists that future U. S. policies must have consistent human rights programs, and further suggests that diplomacy would be preferable to military involvement. He thinks the U. S. should act the role of the mediator in Central America, and that the economic strength of the U. S. is the best long-term guarantee for Central American stability in the region.¹⁶ Two of the authors whose work appears in Newfarmer's book feel the U. S. should go further. James N. Kurth says leftist governments are only a threat to the U. S. if they are pushed into the arms of the Soviets,¹⁷ as the U. S. has been accused of doing in the case of Nicaragua. Robert H. Trudeau, says the United States should learn to live with revolutionary regimes, just as it learned to live with left-wing and right-wing dictatorships in the past.¹⁸

In The Third Option, Theodore Shackley, a former C.I.A. Intelligence Officer, suggests that the United States exercise a "third option," a flexible response between the extremes of diplomacy and military intervention. Shackley sees his "third option," which would include guerrilla warfare, counterinsurgency techniques, and covert action, as making the crucial difference in achieving foreign policy goals in Central America. He does stress that "third option" decisions should be made by the U. S. civilian leadership, though, not the American military.¹⁹ Regardless of the decision-maker qualification, Shackley's theory doesn't address the root causes of the insurgencies in Central America, only the responses to them. His opinions are significant, though, because they reflect the attitude towards insurgency that American policy makers have historically followed.

Langhorne A. Motley, the former Assistant Secretary of State for InterAmerican Affairs, told a Congressional subcommittee in January 1985 that Americans expect their government to stand firmly on the principle of defense of national interests. Motley continued that in the application of this principle, Americans further expect their government to stand firmly by their friends, while exercising a consistent leadership backed by power, resources, and imagination. Motley went on to point out that the U. S. must avoid two traps in the application of that leadership: single issue politics, which will bog them down, and

conducting policy through the media. He suggests Americans should look at foreign policy over the span of all issues and over the long-term.²⁰

An good example of one of Motley's single-issue traps is the U. S. human rights policy, which moved the U. S. to cut off foreign aid to Guatemala in 1978. In doing so, the U. S. lost whatever influence it had with the military leadership and the upper class, while strengthening the resolve of the insurgents, who saw the U. S. action as a loss of will (much as the North Vietnamese had interpreted the U. S. withdrawal from South Vietnam in the early 1970's). As a result, the insurgency rekindled, and the resulting army backlash actually increased the repression the U. S. had sought to stop.

The Atlantic Council's Working Group, noting the success of the Guatemalan government's counterinsurgency program without U. S. assistance, feels that the United States should support the expansion of the democratic process in Guatemala on a long-term basis with economic, rather than military, assistance.²¹ Krueger and Enge agree with this idea, and further recommend that the U. S. provide Guatemala with high levels of humanitarian aid (food, clothing, housing, medicines) and developmental aid (seeds, fertilizer, food) but suggest that any such aid be delayed until a civilian administration is in office and in control of the country. Krueger and Enge go on to say that the U. S. should withhold any military aid until the Guatemalan army

dismisses from the army's general staff any senior officers who have condoned human rights violations.²²

Although their suggestions are sincere, Krueger and Enge lack a realistic grasp of the power of the military in Guatemalan politics. The Guatemalan army's officer corps, with its national pride and Latin machismo attitude, will never submit to the United States' or an elected civilian government's demands for removal of officers. The army, the controlling power group in Guatemala for twenty years, long ago institutionalized control of the country. Although allowing elections to take place, the army has insured that it will maintain its power and control through the structure of the Military Zones, which control each province, and the IICS, which controls the operation of all public sector (government) agencies.

Referring to the development poles, Krueger and Enge suggest that developmental assistance should be conditional on non-military control of the model villages and non-coercion of the peasants to live in them and join the C7Fs,²³ but the lives of the people they seek to protect have been completely and irrevocably changed by twenty years of insurgent and counterinsurgent activity. As anthropologists, Krueger and Enge are distressed by the destruction of the traditional Mayan culture, but until the roots of the insurgency are dealt with, control of the population is vital. If the Guatemalan army does not monitor the activities and movements of the highlands peasants, the

insurgents will recruit them, through persuasion or force,
for support.

Notes

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³ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

⁶ Ibid., p. 39.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 46-50.

⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 57-58.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 70-80.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 117.

¹² Ibid., pp. 87-88.

¹³ Richard S. Newfarmer, ed., From Gunboats to Diplomacy: New U. S. Policies for Latin America (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. ix-x.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. vii, xiii.

¹⁵ Howard J. Genet, "Strategy in Latin American Revolutionary Politics," (Master's Thesis, University of Florida, 1983), p. 54.

¹⁶ Newfarmer, pp. xx-xxii.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁹ Theodore Shackley, The Third Option: An American View of Counterinsurgency Operations (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1981), pp. 17-18, 24-25, 48.

²⁰ U. S. Cong., House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, U. S. Policy on Latin America-1985, Hearing, 99th Cong., 1st sess., 29 January 1985 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 42.

²¹ James R. Greene and Brent Scowcroft, Western Interests and U. S. Policy Options in the Caribbean Basin: Report of the Atlantic Council's Working Group on the Caribbean Basin (Boston: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, Publishers, Inc., 1984), p. 232.

²² Chris Krueger and Kjell Enge, Security and Development in the Guatemalan Highlands (Washington, D. C.: Washington Office on Latin America, 1985), pp. 66-67.

²³ Ibid.

Conclusions

It is rare that an army is stronger than the state it serves,¹ but in Guatemala this is the case. As we have discussed, even the election of a civilian government will not change the focus of power, only the focus of responsibility and attention in the international arena. Accepting these axioms is the necessary first stage of a coherent United States foreign policy for Guatemala.

We have seen that the problems and their roots in Guatemala did not appear overnight, and have discussed the idea that these problems will require time to work out. U. S. foreign policy must reflect a willingness to accept the status quo temporarily, while working toward desired reforms. The United States cannot realistically expect to dictate to the Guatemalan government what it may and may not do. President Carter attempted that tactic in 1977 and was rebuffed handily. Even when handled diplomatically, the fiercely independent Guatemalan army will be cooperative to U. S. wishes only if the U. S. continues to provide aid and assistance.²

The U. S. must carry out a series of actions if it wants to see the Guatemalan government continue on the long road to democracy. First, the Kissinger Commission's recommendation for immediate economic aid must be implemented to relieve the suffering of the rural Guatemalan peasants. Although food shortages are easing due to renewed

crop production, equipment lost during the counterinsurgency campaign can't be replaced due to cash shortages.³ The peasants require not only food to sustain them until they can complete several harvest cycles, but also need tools and equipment to farm efficiently what limited land they have returned to production. Regardless of the nature of the individuals controlling distribution of this aid, whether they are military or civilian, the U. S. must insist on providing a small, but effective, supervisory mechanism to insure a fair and complete issue. The key factor here is urgency, though. The peasants have been hungry for over five years.

The next most important priority is the implementation of the health, housing, and educational portions of the Kissinger Commission's recommendations. The Guatemalan government has provided a good basis for these programs in the model villages, but has not been able to complete or continue the programs due to economic constraints. Failure to continue the programs will result in deterioration of the facilities that exist, as occurred in each of the iterations of the Vietnam Strategic Hamlets. The model village program may very well be successful idea, but if it is allowed to become a "failure" it will not be salvageable regardless of its potential. The Guatemalan army has been successful thus far in convincing many of the peasants to come out of the mountains and be resettled. Should the model villages fail, future attempts to bring them back will be exponentially

more difficult and could lead to the repression and violence experienced in the early 1980's.

The third priority should be the development of a long term redevelopment plan for Guatemala, as a part of an overall Central American Redevelopment Plan. The overall plan must address each country's needs individually, since they each have unique resources and problems. A vital part of this priority must be significant economic aid, particularly in the refinancing of the huge debts which the Central American governments accumulated during the recent recession. The United States, in its role as a world and hemispheric leader, must take the initiative to deal realistically with the debt crisis. Insistence on austerity plans will only undermine the already fragile civilian governments, but patience will permit these governments to slowly gain credibility and strength, while dealing with their economic problems.

Throughout the implementation of these three priorities, the United States must continue to work diplomatically toward desired reforms, particularly human rights, recognizing that the long term goals will require time to achieve. The historic involvement, and intervention, of the United States in Guatemala has resulted in a moral duty to assist a friend in need. The political payoff will be the success of a democratically-elected civilian government to take office, remain in control, and begin to establish the personal freedoms and human rights the United States supports.

The Guatemalan army has consistently requested military aid in the form of equipment, essentially denied since the 1978 Congressional Foreign Aid embargo on Guatemala due to the human rights issue. At the present the army desires primarily helicopters and spare parts. The Guatemalan army does not really need this equipment, having successfully contained the insurgency without it, but limited aid of this sort may be necessary to placate the army and assure it of American friendship. Once again, acceptance of political realities, and moderate attempts to placate them, will pay dividends in the long run.

Notes

¹ "Armies of the Warsaw Pact Northern Tier," Survival, July-August 1981, pp. 174-182

² Piero Gleijeses, "The Guatemalan Silence," The New Republic, 10 June 1985, p. 23.

³ Chris Krueger and Kjell Enge, Security and Development in the Guatemalan Highlands (Washington, D. C.: Washington Office on Latin America, 1985), p. 20.

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