



Cultural Survival Inc.

and

Anthropology Resource Center

# VOICES OF THE SURVIVORS

The Massacre at Finca San Francisco, Guatemala

10

September 1983

Cultural Survival is a non-profit organization founded in 1972. It is concerned with the fate of ethnic minorities and indigenous people throughout the world. Some of these groups face physical extinction, for they are seen as impediments to 'development' or 'progress'. For others the destruction is more subtle. If they are not annihilated or swallowed up by the governing majority, they are often decimated by newly introduced diseases and denied their self-determination. They normally are deprived of their lands and their means of livelihood and forced to adapt to a dominant society, whose language they may not speak, without possessing the educational, technical, or other skills necessary to make such an adaptation. They therefore are likely to experience permanent poverty, political marginality and cultural alienation.

Cultural Survival is thus concerned with human rights issues related to economic development. The organization searches for alternative solutions and works to put those solutions into effect. This involves documenting the destructive aspects of certain types of development and describing alternative, culturally sensitive development projects. Publications, such as the Newsletter and the Special Reports, as well as this Occasional Paper series, are designed to satisfy this need. All papers are intended for a general public as well as for specialized readers, in the hope that the reports will provide basic information as well as research documents for professional work.

Cultural Survival's quarterly Newsletter, first published in 1976, documents urgent problems facing ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples throughout the world, and publicizes violent infringements of human rights as well as more subtle but equally disruptive processes. Newsletter articles, however, are necessarily brief.

In 1979, Cultural Survival began to publish Special Reports. These broad reports range from studies of the situation of ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples in a single area to analyses of general problems facing such groups.

The Occasional Paper series fills the need for specialized monographs which exceed acceptable Newsletter length yet are more sharply focused than Special Reports. Specifically, each paper concentrates on an urgent situation precipitated by policies or activities adversely affecting ethnic minorities. Planned to influence policy as well as inform readers, Occasional Papers accepted for publication will be printed immediately and sold at cost.

Cultural Survival will publish, as either Occasional Papers or Special Reports, the results of staff research, non-staff investigations sponsored by Cultural Survival, and evaluations of projects supported by Cultural Survival. In addition, other authors are invited to submit either manuscripts or inquiries concerning manuscripts. The latter should include an outline, synopsis, or table of contents. Manuscripts submitted for publication in either the Special Report or Occasional Paper series will be refereed by the Editorial Board. Manuscripts or inquiries should be sent to:

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**VOICES OF THE SURVIVORS**

**The Massacre at Finca San Francisco, Guatemala**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report contains documentation of the massacre at Finca San Francisco, in the department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, which was carried out by the Guatemalan army on 17 July 1982. The testimony of Guatemalan Indians living in refugee camps in southern Mexico was collected by a team of priests under the direction of anthropologist Ricardo Falla, S.J. The original report--published in Spanish by the Justice and Peace Commission of Guatemala and the Christian Solidarity Committee of the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico--was released in Mexico in October 1982.

The English version of the report was translated and edited by Julie Hodson, Silvana Castaneda, Jim Moressey, Theodore Macdonald, Constance Talbot, Richard Chase Smith, and Shelton H. Davis. In addition, Shelton Davis provided the introduction and Ricardo Falla the conclusion. The manuscript was typed by Anne Beardsley and Judith Antonelli.

Jason Clay  
Series Editor

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## GLOSSARY

- agencia*--in this text refers to the building which housed the village cooperative.
- auxiliatura*--principle village-level official.
- caballeria*--measure of land equivalent to 101.4 acres.
- campesino*--peasant farmer.
- chingado*--curse meaning bastard or son-of-a-bitch.
- compadre*--friend or companion.
- compañero*--friend, co-worker or neighbor.
- cuerda*--unit of land measure equal to 435 square meters.
- ejido*--communal lands granted to peasant communities in Mexico
- finca*--large rural farm or cattle ranch.
- ladino*--a non-Indian person.
- legua*--the distance travelled on foot in 1 hour, approximately 5.5 km.
- mancomun*--collective land ownership, either legal or traditional.
- marimba*--a large musical instrument like a xylophone.
- milpa*--a small plot of land, usually planted with corn.
- nixtamale*--the ground corn used to make tortillas.
- patron*--the owner of a large ranching or cattle estate.
- pinto*--"spotted," used to describe the army's camouflage clothing.
- quetzal*--the unit of Guatemalan currency, 1Q=1US\$
- vara*--.836 meters

## PREFACE

In recent decades the number of refugees throughout the world has risen dramatically.

By observing media coverage of one refugee crisis after another, many people have come to believe that the world's 12-15 million refugees had fled "political turmoil, war, or famine," or are merely seeking "improved educational and economic opportunities" outside their own countries. However, the actual definition of a refugee, according to the 1951 Geneva Convention, is any person who,

...owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country....

Yet in spite of this rigid definition, no organizations undertake regular and systematic investigations of the root causes of refugee flight.

Both governments and the media tend to ignore the testimony of key eyewitnesses of refugee crises--the refugees themselves--preferring to report statements by government officials, well-removed from the scenes of terror and violence.

This report, documenting a massacre of Indians in northwest Guatemala on 17 July 1982, is one attempt to fill the informational gap.

Using the survivors of the massacre and their neighbors as informants, this report represents an effort to accurately document and analyze a type of tragedy that occurs all too frequently throughout much of the world. It is hoped that this report will serve as a model for further documentation of human rights abuses, and for interpretations of refugee flight.

In this case, testimony from Guatemalan refugees certifies that Indians were the victims of Guatemalan army violence, not guerrilla attacks as has been commonly believed.

The survivors of this tragedy are unique only in that their story will reach an international audience. Refugees from Afghanistan, Cambodia, El Salvador, Ethiopia and Uganda (to name but a few countries) have experienced similar persecution. All have suffered because of their ethnic heritage, fleeing isolated, rural areas far removed from journalists or other international observers. We are only made aware of these conflicts when these displaced peoples begin to cross international boundaries.

Though considered, for political reasons, temporary residents in their countries of asylum, refugees' stay there can last for decades.

Reports like the following, which provide us with an understanding of the gross violations of human rights leading to the flight of refugees will permit us to develop cautious and humane repatriation programs. Perhaps, eventually, 12-15 million refugees will want to return home.

Jason W Clay  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
August 29, 1983

## INTRODUCTION

The massacre that took place at Finca San Francisco in Nentón, Huehuetenango on July 17, 1982 was one of the most savage incidents in the recent pacification campaign against the large rural and indigenous population of Guatemala. As the Guatemalan anthropologist Ricardo Falla, S.J., points out, the killing of 300 men, women, and children at Finca San Francisco was the "principal detonator" of the exodus of more than 9,000 people out of the relatively isolated towns of northern Huehuetenango and into the makeshift refugee camps of southern Mexico. News of the carnage produced by the Guatemalan army at San Francisco spread rapidly and led to the abandonment of the surrounding villages of San José Yulaurel, Bulej, Yalambojoch, Yalanhuitz, and Yalcastán. Other army actions against the civilian population took place in Santa Cruz Barillas and the Ixcán region to the east; in the higher altitude towns of San Mateo Ixtatán, San Sebastian Coatán, San Miguel Acatán, Santa Eulalia, San Pedro Soloma, and San Juan Ixcoy to the south; and in the lowlands towns of Santa Ana Huista and San Antonio Huista to the south and west. "Black July," as it came to be known in the refugee camps of southern Mexico, sent a clear message to the people of northern Huehuetenango: The Ríos Montt government, which had only assumed power four months before, was willing to exterminate the Indian population in order to wipe out what was perceived to be a growing "guerrilla threat."

Yet, if one reads the impressive corpus of testimony from the survivors of the San Francisco massacre contained in this report, there is no positive evidence that the Indian population of northern Huehuetenango either greatly sympathized with or massively participated in the guerrilla movement. One of the informants who is told by his interviewer that "Ríos Montt claims his army is fighting subversion and guerrillas," responds:

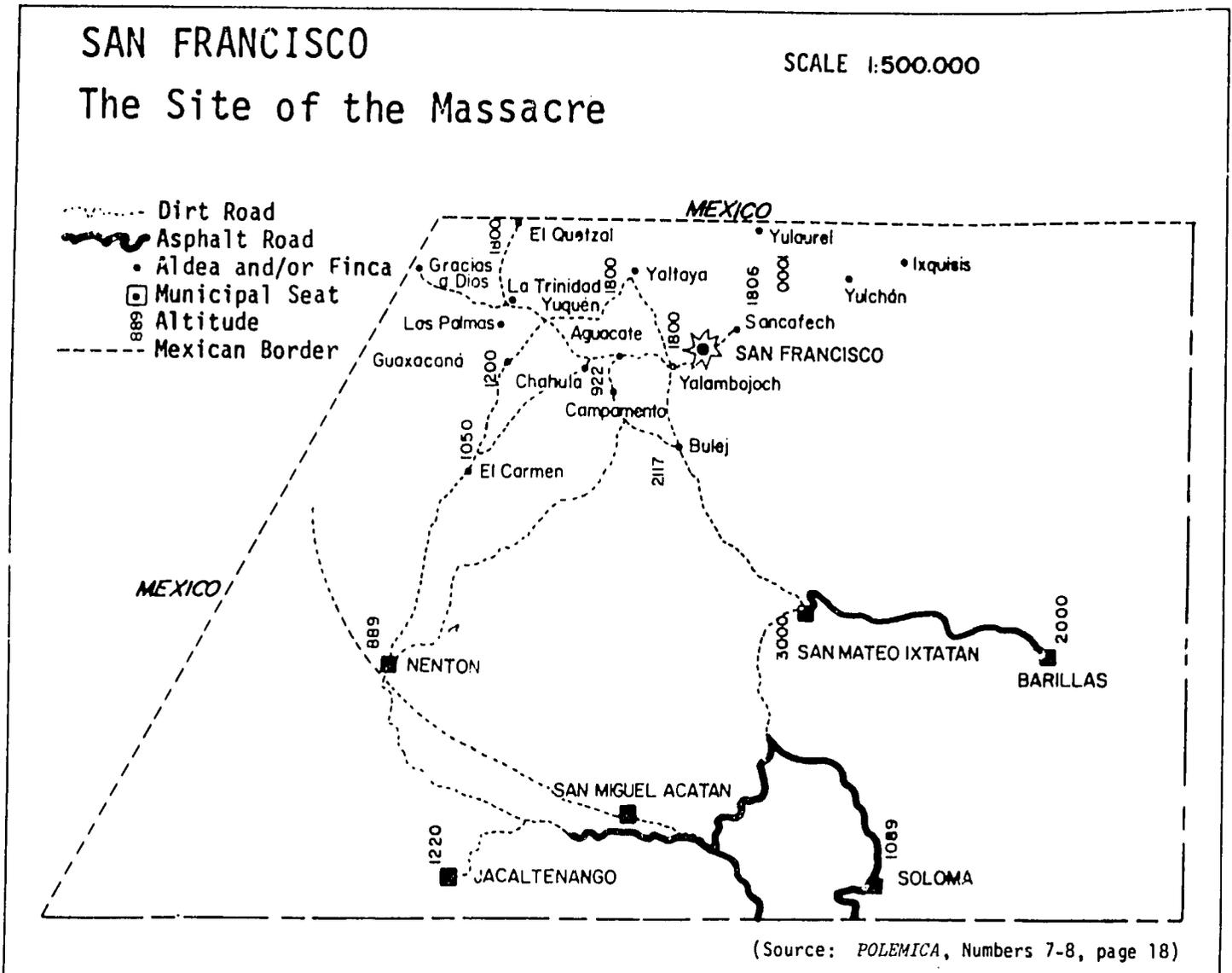
Well, we are not subversives and guerrillas. They may have found some arms where they've gone, but think of the thousands of people they have killed--poor people owning only machetes and shovels. (page 84)

The interviewer then asks, "Did they find arms in your village?" and the survivor says:

Of course not. In our village? If you searched our houses, you would not have found any. They killed us with machetes. They killed men, women, and children, the poor little children. They say the small children are guerrillas, so they kill them. Even old people 70 and 80 years old. They kill the very old and the very young. (page 84)

If these people were not guerrillas, why did the Guatemalan Army come to Finca San Francisco to slaughter the inhabitants? Part of the answer to this important question lies in the recent agrarian history of northern Huehuetenango.

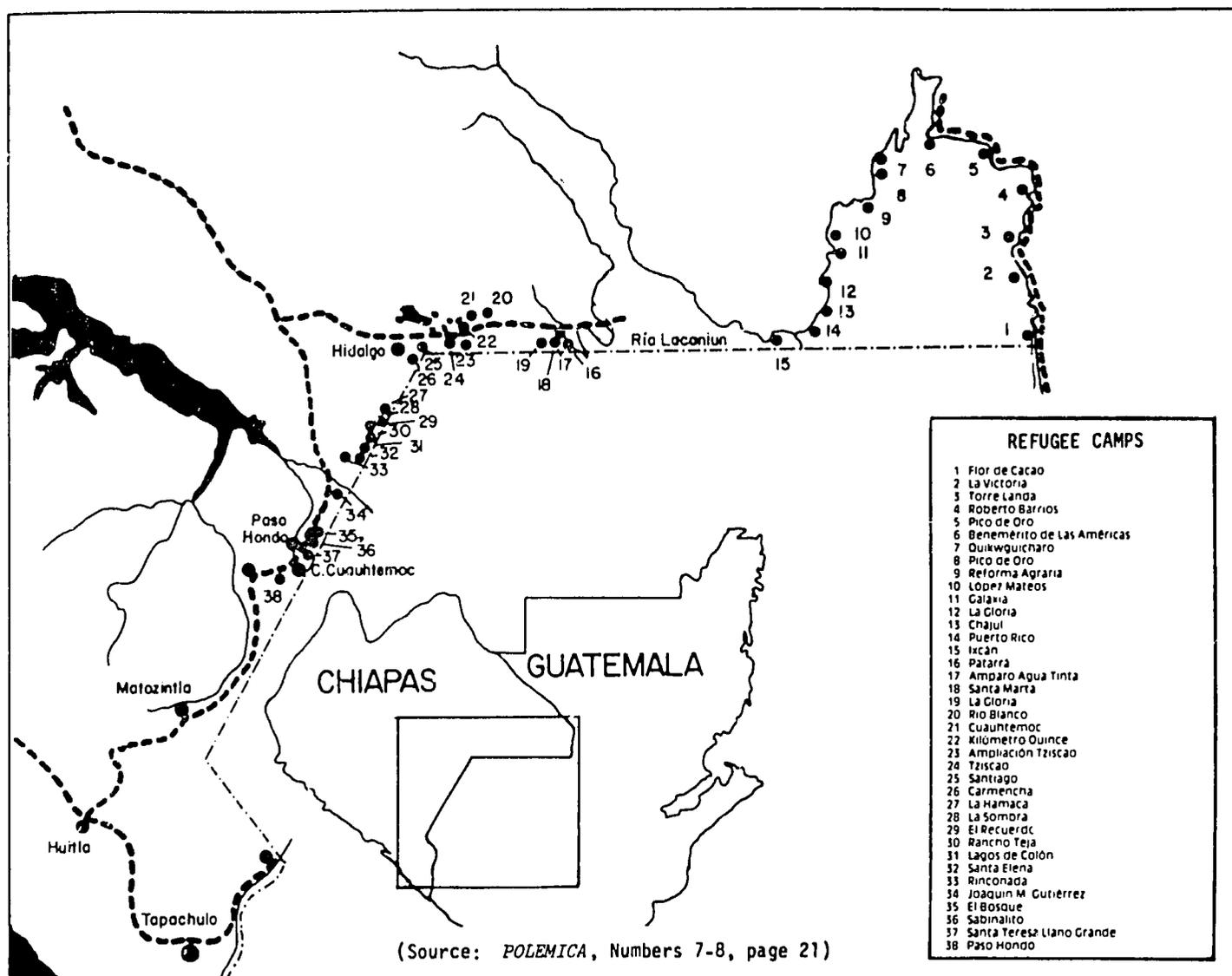
At the end of the 19th century, the Chuj-speaking Indians who inhabited the township of San Benito l'entón were converted from independent farmers to sharecroppers and peons on large, *ladino*-owned cattle ranches and farms. In the early 1950s, many descendants of these people began to break out of this system of rural



servitude by organizing peasant leagues and expropriating unused lands under the Arbenz government's agrarian reform program. A number of Indians from the neighboring towns of San Miguel Acatán and San Mateo Ixtatán also began to rent and purchase lands in the Nentón area during this period. Many new Indian landholders began to transport corn from the lowland areas bordering the Mexican frontier to the surrounding highland Indian townships. By the mid-1950s, a dynamic corn-marketing system existed in northern Huehuetenango as a result of entrepreneurial activities on the part of Indian farmers and corn merchants.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, North American priests and sisters from the Maryknoll Order established a program of religious conversion in the Indian townships of northern Huehuetenango. Although the Maryknollers initiated their missionary work in Huehuetenango in 1943, they did not have a significant effect

<sup>1</sup> Much of my understanding of the agrarian history of northern Huehuetenango comes from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the area between 1967 and 1973. See: Shelton H. Davis, Land of Our Ancestors: A Study of Land Tenure and Inheritance in the Highlands of Guatemala. Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, Department of Social Relations, June 1970.



on the religious values and social outlook of the Indian population until the mid-1950s. Supported by large sums of money and personnel from the United States, and backed up by the Church hierarchy and national government, the Maryknollers successfully contested the secular power of local Mayan religious leaders and converted thousands of Indians to a more orthodox form of Roman Catholicism.<sup>2</sup>

By the early 1960s, the Maryknollers had a secure foothold in most of the Indian townships of Huehuetenango, and they started to turn their attention to rural development, educational, and other social change activities. The Maryknollers created an impressive network of local parochial schools, health clinics, credit cooperatives, and agricultural assistance and leadership training programs. They also trained hundreds of native catechists, who promoted the building of small

<sup>2</sup> The traditional religious system in this area is described in Oliver la Farge, Santa Eulalia: The Religion of a Cuchumatán Indian Town. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947. On the work of Maryknoll in Huehuetenango, see: Leigh A. Fuller S.J., Catholic Missionary Work and National Development in Guatemala, 1943-1968: The Maryknoll Experience. M.A. thesis, New York University, Department of Politics, 1970.

village chapels and carried the reformist social message of the missionaries to the most isolated Indian communities in the department.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1960s, the Maryknollers, along with other foreign missionaries, began to realize that more daring solutions would have to be found for the extreme poverty and pressing agrarian problems of Guatemala's large indigenous population. Between 1950 and 1964, the population of Huehuetenango, which was 95 percent Indian, increased from 200,000 to 288,000 people. During the same period, the average size of farms decreased from 18.5 to 14.8 acres. Most of the people in Huehuetenango were subsistence farmers, who supplemented their meager family incomes with salaries (about 85 cents per day in the mid 1960s) obtained from seasonal labor migration. The missionaries established agricultural and credit cooperatives in most of the highland Indian townships, but population growth eroded the already small Indian land base and increased the numbers of Indians migrating each year to the coffee and cotton plantations of the Pacific Coast.<sup>4</sup>

When successive military governments refused to initiate comprehensive land reform programs, a number of missionaries began to look toward colonization projects in the underpopulated Ixcán region as a solution to Guatemala's worsening agrarian situation. For decades, Guatemalan planners had looked upon the Ixcán, or Zona Reina as it is called, as an area for potential agricultural development. Throughout most of the present century, however, the Ixcán remained underpopulated and essentially outside of the national economy.

During the 1960s, a number of priests in highland Indian parishes began to convince enterprising Indian farmers to join new colonization projects being developed in the Ixcán region, rather than migrate as seasonal laborers to the coastal plantations. The missionaries assisted the new Indian colonists in clearing the forest for cultivation, building schools and churches, establishing cooperatives, and soliciting land titles from the government. By the early 1970s, dozens of cooperative farming settlements sprang up in the northern lowlands of Huehuetenango and El Quiché, as well as in the Petén region. The missionaries hoped that these new farming settlements, along with a growing network of agricultural and credit cooperatives in the western and central highlands, would serve as the basis of a powerful, grassroots, rural development movement in Guatemala.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, this rural development movement took shape at the same time that the Guatemalan army was undergoing fundamental changes. Throughout the 1960s

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<sup>3</sup> An autobiographical account of Maryknoll rural development work during this period can be found in Thomas and Marjorie Melville, Whose Heaven, Whose Earth? New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

<sup>4</sup> A general description of the socio-economic situation of Guatemala's Indian population during this period is contained in Inter-American Committee on Agricultural Development, Guatemala: Land Tenure and Socio-Economic Development of the Agricultural Sector. Washington: Pan American Union, 1965.

<sup>5</sup> The rationale behind these church-sponsored colonization projects is described in Thomas and Marjorie Melville, Guatemala: The Politics of Land Ownership. New York: The Free Press, 1971. Chapter 14. See also: James Arthur Moressey, A Missionary: Directed Resettlement Project Among the Highland Maya of Western Guatemala. Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, Department of Anthropology, 1978.

and 1970s, the military assumed a much greater institutional role in the political and economic development of the country. Three of the most important factors in this process of increasing militarization of Guatemalan society were the establishment of local military commissioners as a national spy network; the introduction of a civic-action program in the countryside; and the carrying out of a counter-insurgency program in the eastern part of the country in which nearly 10,000 peasants were believed to have been killed.<sup>6</sup>

The U.S. played an important role in the modernization of the Guatemalan Army. Between 1960 and 1970, the U.S. provided the Guatemalan government with over 20 million dollars in military assistance. It also promoted the notion of civic-action among Guatemalan army officers, provided strategic support to early counter-insurgency efforts, and helped to integrate the Guatemalan army into a regional military organization called the Central American Defense Council. When relations between the U.S. and Guatemala soured in the late 1970s, Israel increasingly provided the Guatemalan military with training and arms.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1970s, the Guatemalan army also took a greater interest in non-military activities, including the opening up of the resource-rich, northern part of the country. In the northern lowlands, the military provided liberal land concessions to the International Nickel Company of Canada for a multi-million dollar mining and smelter complex on the shores of Lake Izabal, and to Ashland Oil, Texaco, Amoco, Hispanoil, and Elf Aquitaine for oil explorations in the Petén.

Several generals obtained immense amounts of land in the northern frontier zone, where they established large cattle ranches and farms. The government also began a major highway and hydroelectric construction program in this area, with assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank. These infrastructural programs formed part of a larger plan of the Guatemalan military to turn the entire northern zone into a vast cattle-ranching, petroleum, mining, and timber frontier. By carrying out this frontier development program, the Guatemalan military hoped to consolidate its own political and economic power.<sup>8</sup>

From the beginning, conflicts arose between these government-sponsored development projects and the church-initiated farming settlements previously established in the northern zone. One of the first areas to experience these conflicts was the Ixil region in northern El Quiché. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the reformist Catholic Action movement dominated local politics in the Ixil region. Under the guidance of a group of development-oriented Spanish priests, a number

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<sup>6</sup> An excellent description of the modernization of the Guatemalan army is contained in Richard N. Adams, Crucifixion by Power: Essays in Guatemalan National Social Structure, 1944-1966. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970. Chapter 4. See also: Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, "El proceso de militarización en el estado guatemalteco" in Polemica (Costa Rica), September-October 1981.

<sup>7</sup> See: Brian Jenkins and Ceasar D. Sereseres, "U.S. Military Assistance and the Guatemalan Armed Forces" in Armed Forces and Society. Chicago. Vol.3:4, 1977, pp.575-594.

<sup>8</sup> See: "The Great Guatemalan Land Grab" in Latin America Economic Report, London, 26 January 1979; and, Alan Riding, "Guatemala opening new lands, but best goes to rich", New York Times, 5 April 1979.

of catechists affiliated with Catholic Action began to organize credit cooperatives and peasant leagues and joined church-sponsored colonization projects in the lowland areas of northern El Quiché. In the 1974 elections, these Ixil Catholic converts voted for the opposition Christian Democratic Party and took control of several local mayoral posts.

In March 1976, just a month after the earthquake that struck Guatemala, the army conducted a major counter-insurgency campaign in northern El Quiché. Using the presence of a small guerrilla organization as an excuse, the army set up bases in the town of San Juan Cotzal and the Ixcán region, and it began to attack members of the Catholic Action and cooperative movements. Between February 1976 and the end of 1977, 68 cooperative members "disappeared" in the Ixcán region, 40 in Chajul, 28 in Cotzal, and 32 in Nebaj.<sup>9</sup>

In November 1976, Father Bill Woods, a Maryknoll priest from Texas who was the founder of the church-sponsored colonization projects in the Ixcán region of Huehuetenango, died in a mysterious airplane crash. Prior to the crash, Woods had been protesting the harassment and disappearances of local coop members in the Ixcán. He was also very active in earthquake reconstruction activities, and he made it clear to his friends that he thought the northern lowlands should be developed by small farmers rather than by the generals and multinational companies.

According to one report, Wood's dream was that there would someday be a string of cooperatives, like the ones he had created in the Ixcán, stretching from Huehuetenango to the Petén. His greatest fear, this report claimed, was that the "military would try to bust the coop with the excuse of routing out revolutionaries" in the Ixcán.<sup>10</sup>

Following the earthquake, the Guatemalan army also began to conduct more frequent military operations in Alta Verapaz and the Petén. There were numerous land disputes in this area between peasant settlers, to whom the government had promised land titles, and the petroleum companies and cattle ranchers, who were making claims to the same land. The serious nature of these agrarian conflicts came to world attention in May 1978 when a Special Forces Unit of the Guatemalan Army killed over 100 Kekchi-speaking Indians from the town of Panzós in Alta Verapaz who were protesting the refusal of the government to give them documents for their lands.<sup>11</sup>

Many people hoped that the Panzós massacre would focus international attention on the northern zone, and bring an end to military actions against the indigenous population. As it was, Panzós was only the beginning of a long line of army massacres against the Indian communities of Guatemala. These massacres increased in both frequency and brutality in the final months of the Lucas García regime (from about November 1981 until March 1982), and especially during the first six to nine months after the Ríos Montt coup. More than any other factor, these army massacres explain the mass exodus of Indians from the western and central highlands and

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<sup>9</sup> See: Shelton H. Davis, "State violence and agrarian crisis in Guatemala: the roots of the Indian peasant rebellion" in Martin Diskin (editor), Trouble in Our Backyard - The U.S. and Central America in the 80s. New York: Pantheon, in press.

<sup>10</sup> Ron Chernow, "The strange death of Bill Woods: Did he fly too far in the zone of the Generals?" in Mother Jones, May 1979.

<sup>11</sup> Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, "The massacre at Panzós and capitalist development in Guatemala" in Monthly Review, December 1979.

northern lowlands of Guatemala and into the refugee camps of southern Mexico, an exodus which began in the late spring and early summer of 1981 and reached more than 30,000 people by the end of 1982.<sup>12</sup>

The growing body of testimony now available from these refugees contains similar explanations for the army's violence against the peasant population. In June 1981, for example, a group of 800 families, numbering approximately 3,500 people, escaped into Mexico after the Secret Anti-Communist Army (ESA) and the Mobile Military Police (PMA) burned a string of cooperative farming settlements along the Usumacinta River in the Petén. Most of these settlements were established in the late 1960s when the government was interested in populating the area in order to avoid territorial claims by the Mexican government. Despite the harsh conditions, many of these cooperatives thrived, and by the late 1970s some were successful commercial enterprises.<sup>13</sup>

In the late 1970s, right-wing death squads and government security forces began to terrorize these cooperatives because they were alleged to serve as a support base for small guerrilla bands in the area. Yet, most of the people who survived these attacks and escaped into Mexico disclaim any association with the guerrilla organizations.

In an account obtained in 1981, Reginaldo Aguilar, one of the founders of the El Arbolito Cooperative in the Petén, told how he was taken to a torture center in the jungle and questioned about his supposed affiliation with the guerrillas:

Once we were there, they began to ask a lot of questions. They took me for a guerrilla leader. I was telling them that I didn't have time to get mixed up in politics, because I work from 7 A.M. to 9 P.M., and there was no time to get involved in an organization or to be talking about politics, and this was the reason that I didn't know anything. But they insisted that I tell them where guerrillas were hiding and when I had joined the organization. If I told the truth, they said, they would let me go; if I didn't, they would kill me.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The documentation of massive and systematic government atrocities against non-combatant, indigenous populations is overwhelming. See: Amnesty International, Guatemala: A Government Program of Political Murder. London, February 1981. And: Guatemala: Massive Extrajudicial Executions in Rural Areas Under the Government of General Efraín Ríos Montt. London, July 1982; Americas Watch, Human Rights in Guatemala: No Neutrals Allowed. New York, November 1982, and Creating a Desolation and Calling it Peace: Supplement to the Report on Human Rights in Guatemala. New York, May 1983; and, Survival International, Witnesses to Genocide: The Present Situation of Indians in Guatemala. London, January 1983.

<sup>13</sup> See: Nancy Peckenham, "Land Settlement in Peten" in Latin American Perspectives, Vol.7:25-26, 1980; and Artimus Millet, The Agricultural Colonization of the West Central Petén, Guatemala: A Case Study of Frontier Settlement by Cooperatives. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1974.

<sup>14</sup> This and other quotations from Reginaldo Aguilar are taken from a mimeo document, Testimonies from Peasants of El Petén, translated and distributed by the Latin American Task Force, Detroit, 1981, pp.7-10.

Aguilar stated that his fellow cooperative members--eight of whom were brought with him to the torture center--were also not guerrillas:

The reality is that the other cooperativists who were with me, all of us are *campesinos* who work the the land. I felt sad because those of us who were captive really dedicated ourselves to our work, and we weren't hurting anyone. If I thought that any one of them was doing things 'out of order,' yes, well, but really, it's not like that.

Aguilar claimed that the real reason why the cooperatives along the Usumacinta were attacked was because they were succeeding as small-scale peasant enterprises. After relating how his own cooperative grew from 2 families in 1967 to 81 families at the time of its abandonment, he stated:

We grew corn, beans, rice. We built our houses communally. We built a health center, a room for meetings, a little school, two houses to train health promoters and a communal kitchen for gatherings. We had three launches with two motors and an electric plant that functioned from 6 to 9 P.M. and for two hours during the day for refrigeration in the communal store. We weren't rich, but the little bit we had, we had achieved with many years of work and sacrifice. The work in the jungle is very hard. Now we have had to abandon all that was our life, and even our own country, because of the persecution and killings that the soldiers carry out. They attack us as if we were at war.

The Guatemalan army carried out a series of attacks against similar cooperatives in the Ixcán region of northern El Quiché. The cooperatives in this area had been the object of harassment from the army since 1975. A full-scale military offensive however, did not begin until the weeks just prior to and following the March 1982 military coup. During this period, more than 2,000 soldiers stationed at the Playa Grande Army Base began to carry out military operations, with helicopter support, against almost all of the cooperatives in the Ixcán region.

Between February and April 1982, attacks took place against the cooperatives of Santo Tomas Ixcán, Xalbal de la Resurrección, Tierra Nueva del Norte, La Unión, La Resurrección, Centro Galilea, Nuevo Progreso, Santa María Tzeja, and Santa María Dolores. One of the worst incidents occurred in the La Unión Cooperative where the army killed 300 people, including all of the directors of the cooperative. Eighty children were orphaned in this attack.<sup>15</sup>

By May 1982, more than 3,000 people from this area had escaped into refugee camps on the Mexican side of the border. Ricardo Chavira, a North American journalist, found the survivors of the Ixcán massacres traumatized by the scope and

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<sup>15</sup> The massacres that took place in the Ixcán region between February and April 1982 are described in a document presented by the International Commission of the Guatemalan Justice and Peace Committee to the U.N. Human Rights Division in Geneva on 3 July 1982. Excerpts from the document, as well as the Committee's cover letter to the U.N., are reprinted in Noticias de Guatemala, (Costa Rica), 15 August 1982.

brutality of the army's violence. One survivor told him, "I guess the government does not want any more Indian race."<sup>16</sup>

Chavira was interested in knowing what these refugees thought of the Rfos Montt government. "Look," a young man told him,

we gave the new government a chance. This man Rfos Montt says he is a Christian. But, in truth, we saw no difference. Our brothers were still disappearing...Later, we would find them in their underwear-- dead and burned, stakes driven into their mouths or ears. For that reason, on April 1, we crossed the mountains to this place.

Another refugee said:

In my ignorance sometimes I think why doesn't the government say, 'Get out and go to some other place'. We gladly would go so that we could live and work in peace...And those who didn't move, well, then you could easily see who was who. If we were guerrillas, what would we be doing here? We would be in the mountains fighting.

Finally, we have the testimony from the survivors of the massacre at *Finca* San Francisco in Huehuetenango. Like other areas in the northern part of the country, the region around Nentón witnessed fundamental social changes in recent years. In the 1960s, numerous peasants in the area purchased public lands from the government and, like the people of San Francisco, established fairly successful agricultural cooperatives. Later, however, the government formulated its own plans for the development of this area. These plans included the building of access roads into isolated villages and the promotion of a major irrigation scheme in a drier region along the Mexican frontier. One of the country's largest plantation owners had already purchased land in Nentón in anticipation of a major agricultural boom. There were also rumors that oil had been discovered in the area and that the government would soon be giving out concessions to foreign companies for its development.<sup>17</sup>

In the late 1970s, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), one of the newly formed guerrilla organizations, established a military front in northern Huehuetenango. The national army also constructed a regional military headquarters in the departmental capital, as well as smaller support bases in the towns of Jacaltenango and Barillas. During the summer of 1981, the EGP conducted a number of "armed propaganda" meetings

<sup>16</sup> This and other quotations from the Ixcán survivors are cited in Ricardo Chavira, "Guatemalan refugees: they talk of death" in San Diego Union, 5 May 1982.

<sup>17</sup> Government plans for the agricultural development of the area around Nentón were described to me by a North American priest who conducted a social survey in the township a couple of years before the San Francisco massacre; according to this informant, local residents feared that the government's proposed irrigation scheme would jeopardize their land and water rights. Promotion of irrigation development by the government's newly created Direction for Renewable Natural Resources (DIRENARE) had already caused serious social conflicts over water rights in other areas, such as Asunción Meta in the Department of Jalapa. Much of the support for these irrigation projects came from international lending institutions. See, for example, the joint IDB, World Bank, USAID document, General Report on the Agricultural and Rural Development of Guatemala, Washington, 1976.

in the Indian townships of northern Huehuetenango. The national army responded to these incidents by raiding key villages; one of these was the village of Coyá in San Miguel Acatán where the army killed more than 150 people in July 1981.<sup>18</sup>

In the fall of 1981, the EGP took control of the only road leading into northern Huehuetenango and began to bomb municipal buildings, bridges, and power lines. Much of the region's *ladino* population came under attack or escaped to other parts of the country during this period. Some of the Indian population in Huehuetenango may have sympathized with the EGP and provided it with food and strategic assistance. The vast majority of the Indian population, however, seemed confused by the escalating violence.<sup>19</sup>

The Guatemalan army tried to take advantage of this confusion by organizing the Indian population into civilian defense patrols for its own protection. This process of village military organization began in late 1981 and continued throughout the first months of 1982. Most of the Indian communities which were organized in such a fashion, however, did not trust the national army. Thus, when the people refused to join the civil patrols, the army responded by massacring entire Indian villages. In June 1982, the Guatemalan army, moving out of the bases in Jacaltenango and Barillas, began a long march which resulted in the massacre of over 300 people at *Finca* San Francisco and the slaughter and uprooting of thousands of people in surrounding villages.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> One of the rare journalistic accounts of the EGP's Ernesto "Che" Guevara Front in Huehuetenango is contained in a series of first-hand reports by the journalist Mario Menendez that appeared in the Mexican journal Por Esto in July and August 1981. For survivor accounts of the Coyá massacre, see: Indigenous Peoples Network Documentation Group, The Forced Migration of Mayan Peoples: A Report on the Situation of Kanjobal Refugees in Southern Florida, March 1983.

<sup>19</sup> Much of my understanding of the reaction of local residents to EGP activities in Huehuetenango comes from discussions with a North American anthropologist who visited the region in April 1983 and conducted interviews with Indian and ladino residents. For a somewhat different assessment of popular response to the guerrilla movement in the northern Huehuetenango region, see the interesting interview, "El Pueblo Hace Guerrilla: Huehuetenango" in Noticias de Guatemala (Costa Rica), 20 October 1981, pp.4-7.

<sup>20</sup> For early reports on the Guatemalan military's 1982 offensive against the indigenous communities of northern Huehuetenango, see Alan Riding's New York Times articles "Guatemalan refugees flood Mexico", 18 August 1982, and "Guatemalans tell of murder of 300", 12 October 1982. Richard J. Meislin, another New York Times reporter, visited the area in December 1982 and found no less than 18 civilian patrols along the road between Huehuetenango and San Mateo Ixtatán. Dozens of interviews with villagers, church workers, government officials and soldiers revealed that "dramatic changes" had taken place in the area. "The convulsions of a guerrilla war," Meislin reported, "have been replaced by new concerns and new disruptions of [the Indian population's] traditional way of life." See: Richard J. Meislin, "Uneasy peace comes to rural Guatemala, but disquiet lingers" in New York Times, 22 December 1982.

The survivors of the San Francisco massacre explain the army's actions in terms that are similar to those of refugees fleeing violence in other parts of northern Guatemala. One of the informants, for example, is asked why he thinks the government is killing people and whether there is any difference between Lucas García and Ríos Montt. The informant responds:

It's all the same. They are all like that. Lucas too. On his way to the Ixcán once he almost killed all the people there. He's out, and now with Ríos Montt the same thing keeps happening. We don't know why they are killing us; we are here living quietly and then the army comes. The rich pay the government to kill people. They want to keep all the land in Guatemala for themselves. They want to get rid of the poor so only the rich will remain in this country. We believe that is why they are killing us. (See page 84)

Another survivor explains the army's actions by describing the history of land purchases and commercial agriculture in the area around Finca San Francisco. "We went to Yulaurel to live," the informant says,

about five years ago, but we kept our houses in San Francisco. People from San Francisco had houses in Yulaurel, too, because they worked there with us. We planted coffee, bananas, and sugar cane, and everyone worked together. We were all united and very much in accord. (See page 32)

The informant then says in response to the question of why the army killed his kin and neighbors:

We have always been farmers. We planted many coffee and fruit trees. Every year there was a harvest. Sometimes we obtained 12 to 15 sacks of coffee. But the government did not want things that way, and so they began to kill us. We were improving our work skills, but that is not what they want and so they are killing us. That is how they shut us up. (See page 32)

Over and over again refugees argue that the Guatemalan army has been massacring Indian villagers because they are successful farmers, rather than guerrilla sympathizers. This theory shows an astute sociological and historical awareness on the part of the survivors of these massacres. A number of previous studies have demonstrated that a rural, indigenous resistance movement predates the eruption of an urban-inspired guerrilla movement in the western and central highlands of Guatemala. While the roots of this ethnic resistance movement lie in the social and economic transformations that accompanied the rise of coffee production at the end of the 19th century, the movement itself did not begin to take organizational shape until the past decade or two.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See: Shelton H. Davis, "The social roots of political violence in Guatemala" in Cultural Survival Quarterly, Spring 1983; and Shelton H. Davis and Julie Hodson, Witnesses to Political Violence in Guatemala: The Suppression of a Rural Development Movement. Boston: Oxfam America, 1982. For an account of the form that this indigenous resistance movement took in another part of Huehuetenango, see: Douglas E. Brintnall, Revolt Against the Dead: The Modernization of a Mayan Community in the Highlands of Guatemala. New York: Gordon & Breach, 1979.

This ethnic resistance movement threatened Guatemala's elites because it questioned the notion that the indigenous population should naturally serve as a reserve labor force for the country's agro-export economy. It also posed a threat to the political and economic designs of the Guatemalan military which envisioned the opening up of the resource-rich, northern lowlands as part of its own personal and institutional aggrandizement, rather than as a means of resolving the country's pressing agrarian problems. Hence, when the Guatemalan military began to respond to the threat posed by popular mobilization in the post-earthquake period, it decided not only to wipe out a small guerrilla movement that was reaching out to the Indian population, but also to suppress a more broad-based, indigenous, rural development movement.<sup>22</sup>

The Guatemalan military has defined its mission to be the destruction of the guerrilla movement and the reorganization of the Indian society in order to insure that an independent, democratic, and vocal rural development movement never again emerges in the Guatemalan countryside. The outlines of this program are already contained in the highly publicized "beans and rifles" program that Rfos Montt announced in July 1982. Formally called the "Plan of Action and Assistance to the Altiplano" (PAAC), this program includes three stages: a survival stage where food, housing, and work is provided to Indian refugees in "model villages" or "strategic hamlets"; a pre-development stage where the displaced people are relocated to their home villages and security measures are coordinated "in order to establish the bases for development"; and, a development stage where supporting state institutions carry out specific program tasks. As part of its "beans and rifles" program the government has also organized thousands of villagers into "civilian-defense" patrols, nominated all village and town mayors, and revitalized a highly propagandistic national literacy campaign.<sup>23</sup>

Whether or not the Guatemalan military will be successful in carrying out this program of rural pacification and reorganization will depend in large measure upon how much military and economic aid it receives from the United States. While the U.S. Congress has taken a relatively strong stance against the Reagan Administration's attempts to provide military aid to Guatemala, its position on economic aid is ambiguous. The fiscal year 1984 budget, for example, contains a \$64 million request for economic aid to Guatemala. As of December 1982, there were also 6 loan requests from the Guatemalan government, totalling over \$170 million, to the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. Many of these loans are for the

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<sup>22</sup> The relationship between political repression and the popular mobilization following the earthquake is argued in Roger Plant, Guatemala: Unnatural Disaster. London: Latin American Bureau, 1978. Plant is particularly good on the rise and demise of the urban trade union movement in the post-earthquake period, which is the other side of the repression of the rural development program.

<sup>23</sup> For a general description of the government's "Plan of Action and Assistance to Conflict Areas" (PAAC) or "beans and rifles" program, see: "Bringing Peace to the Altiplano" in Central America Report, 20 August 1982. A description of how U.S. missionaries helped to organize this program in the Ixil Triangle is contained in my article, "Guatemala: The Evangelical Holy War in El Quiché" in The Global Reporter. Boston: Anthropology Resource Center, March 1983. George Black's "Israeli Connection: Not Just Guns for Guatemala," in NACLA Report on the Americas, May-June 1983, pp. 43-45, provides insight into the role of Israeli technicians and ideas in the reorganization of Guatemalan society.

financing of infrastructural projects in Indian areas, including the building of roads and the establishment of a \$30 million rural telecommunications system.<sup>24</sup>

One of the reasons why the U.S. Congress has tended to look upon these economic aid requests with favor is because the Reagan Administration has presented the military government as bringing "social peace" to rural areas and speaking to the pressing social and economic needs of the indigenous population. In August 1982, just two weeks after the San Francisco massacre, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Stephen W. Bosworth testified before the House Subcommittee on International Development Institutions and Finance concerning the Inter-American Development Bank's rural telecommunications loan. In his testimony Mr. Bosworth claimed that the most fundamental difference between the Rfos Montt government and its predecessors was the Guatemalan military's commitment to a broad-based civic action program. "In direct contrast to the previous government's exclusive emphasis on military action against guerrillas," he said:

This government is committed to rural development. Even as overall government expenditures are being reduced, programs to develop the social infrastructure of the highlands are being expanded. Just two weeks ago, the government announced a \$5 million program to provide minimum shelter in support of a food for work program to people displaced through political strife.<sup>25</sup>

When questioned whether these programs met the "basic needs" criteria of foreign aid legislation, or whether they fell into the category of "security" measures, Mr. Bosworth was candid about State Department and Guatemalan military thinking on the matter. "There has been," he said:

a very substantial change in the perception of Guatemala to the Indians over the past few years. For a long time, the rest of the society tended to regard the Indians as being basically apolitical and apart from the normal day-to-day Guatemalan political and economic life. For a variety of reasons, including population pressures, food shortages, pressures on land, etc., it was apparent that the Indians were no longer apolitical and that they were susceptible to the appeals of the guerrillas.

Mr. Bosworth then went on to note:

One of the most disturbing indexes of the past couple of years as one has followed the development of the Guatemalan insurgency has been the increased inroads made by the insurgency among the Indian popu-

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<sup>24</sup> Some of the implications of U.S. economic assistance to Guatemala are discussed in my article, "The Social Consequences of 'Development' Aid in Guatemala" in Cultural Survival Quarterly, Vol. 7:1, Spring 1983, pp.33-35.

<sup>25</sup> The Bosworth testimony is contained in U.S. Congress, Inter-American Development Bank Loan to Guatemala, 97th Congress, Second Session, House Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, Subcommittee on Government Printing Office, 1982, p. 12.

lation. Now the previous government's response to those inroads was basically a military response. This government, as I am trying to indicate, sees the need for a two-pronged response, not simple reliance on military activity, but also a need to bring essential economic and social services to these Indian populations and to integrate them into the Guatemalan society and the Guatemalan economy.<sup>26</sup>

These statements of the survivors of the massacre of San Francisco provide evidence that the image of the Guatemalan military government presented by the Reagan Administration is grossly distorted. The survivors testify from personal experience to the seriousness of human rights violations being committed by the military government against the large indigenous population of Guatemala. Their voices must be included in the great debate over Central American policy, and their dilemma demands an appropriate international response.

The military coup that brought General Oscar Humberto Mejía Victores to power in August 1983 reflects a continuity rather than a fundamental change in the Guatemalan military's relationship to the country's large indigenous population. General Mejía served as the assistant Minister of Defense under Lucas García and the Minister of Defense under Ríos Montt. He directed the summer 1982 counterinsurgency offensive; helped to design the "beans and rifles" program; and was undoubtedly aware of scores of army massacres against indigenous communities, including that which took place at Finca San Francisco. He also ordered at least four incursions by Guatemalan soldiers into Indian refugee camps in southern Mexico during 1982 and 1983. A major reason for the highly publicized controversy between General Mejía and Representative Clarence Long was the general's refusal to consider or investigate shocking and widespread human rights violations against Indians.<sup>27</sup>

The statements by the survivors of the San Francisco massacre take on special significance in the wake of the recent military coup. They present firsthand evidence that the image of the Guatemalan military presented by the Reagan Administration is grossly distorted. The survivors testify from personal experience to the seriousness of human rights violations being committed by the Guatemalan military against the country's 4-million Indian people. The voices of the indigenous people must be included in the great debate over Central American policy, and their dilemma demands an appropriate international response.

Shelton H. Davis

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<sup>26</sup>U.S. Congress, op.cit., pp.22 and 23.

<sup>27</sup>Philip Taubman, "U.S. Wary on Coup Implications; Says It Hopes for Democratic Rule," New York Times, 9 August 1983, p.A11.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 1

*Interview with eyewitness No. 1*<sup>1</sup>

I will tell you what happened to us in San Francisco. The army came at about 11 A.M., and asked for two head of cattle to eat. The people wanted to give them their animals, so they brought them to the soldiers.

A soldier said, "If these belong to you, you can give them to us; but if the animals belong to the owner of the *finca*,\* we do not want them."

We replied that we are not shameless people; we are hardworking *campesinos*.\* We are not like abandoned people. We have our hands to work with and with them get what we need. All of us know how to take care of our families. We have our own goods which we can give away. We have things because we work. Finally, we gave them the cattle and they slaughtered them.

The soldiers told us to call our families, saying they were going to share their food with us. We would not bring our families to them. So the soldiers gathered everybody, then took the women and children to the church. They put us, the men, in the courthouse.

When they had finished eating, the soldiers divided themselves into two groups. About 70 or 80 of them went to search our homes and take our belongings. Even though we are *campesinos*, we manage to get the things that we need in this world. We always have a little money in the house. But they took that, as well as radios, cassette recorders, watches, and clothes.

They grabbed all our papers. They also took about 10,000 *quetzales*\* from our community cooperative, and 10,000 more from our houses. They robbed us of everything we had. They stole my wristwatch, 20 *quetzales* from my wallet, and even my nail clipper. They left us with nothing.

They did not say what they were going to do with us. Who could have known what was on their minds? We were beginning to realize, but how could we have escaped? They had us surrounded.

When they finished robbing us, they took all the women away in groups of 20, leaving the little children behind. The women were put in empty houses and shot, or killed with grenades. Then the houses were set on fire. Any women still alive after the bombing and shooting were burned to ashes along with the houses. Then the soldiers turned to the children--10, 12, 15-year olds, some only 7, 8, 10, 12 months. They carried 8 and 10-month olds tenderly in their arms to a house. There, they beat them. They cut out the intestines of the poor little children. Even after that, the

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<sup>1</sup> This is Document 4 of the original report. Neither the date nor the place of the interview is noted.

\* A *finca* is a large, rural farming or cattle estate.

\* A *campesino* is a peasant farmer.

\* *Quetzal* is the unit of Guatemalan money, approximately equal to one US dollar.

children kept crying. The soldiers piled them up inside a house and finished killing them.

Then they started on us. First soldiers dragged out the old men and killed them with knives, like animals. The old men cried out. What crime had they committed? When the soldiers finished with the old people, they tied up the men of working age in groups of ten. They threw them on the ground, shot each of them at least four times, and piled all the bodies in the church.

There were only 20 or 25 of us still trapped in the courthouse. The soldiers then set fire to it but, because of the heat, they had moved to one side. Suddenly it was as if God inspired one of us to open a window. One *compañero*\* climbed out, and saw that the soldiers were on the other side of the courthouse. About six were able to flee. But others who tried to escape through the window were caught and killed. Finally it occurred to me to get out too. There were bursts of gunfire, but by the grace of God I got away. That is how we saved ourselves; everything else was lost. What crime had we committed? Sure, we are *campesinos*, but we are hard workers.

We had to leave our animals there. Some of us had 15 or 20 head, besides the work animals. Everything was destroyed by the army. All our neighbors and our families were killed. Thanks to God and our brothers here in Mexico, the government has given us a place to stay. Our Mexican brothers give us places to live and also some clothes because we are men and children of God. We came with nothing, not a hat, sandals or a pair of pants.

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\* *Compañero* refers to a friend, coworker, or neighbor.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 2

*Interview with eyewitness No. 2*<sup>1</sup>

I1, I2: *Interviewers*

R1, R2, RX : *Refugees interviewed*<sup>2</sup>

I1: Would you tell the whole story?

R1: Alright. On Saturday the 17th of July those men came at about 11:00 in the morning. We did not know the army was coming. We did not hear anything. The soldiers were in Bulej for two days, but there were no deaths there. Things were quiet, so we were not worried. On Saturday, the army came closer. At 5:00 A.M., they were in Yalambojoch. They stayed there quietly for a while, and then came to San Francisco, at exactly 11:00 A.M.

I1: The army came on foot?

R1: They were traveling by foot. There were really a lot! About six colonels and 600 foot soldiers. We were upset, but did not know what to do. When they arrived, a helicopter began flying very low, in circles.

A soldier said, "Those patrols who have raised the flag must come forward and identify themselves."<sup>3</sup>

"Alright," we said.

The helicopter landed in a nearby field, and men got out. They had boxes of food with them. We were watching them. Their faces were like those of crazed men.

I1: How were they dressed?

R1: In *pinto*,\* completely in *pinto*. The shoes, the gun, the hats, all *pinto*. Four men inside the helicopter were talking. One may have been the pilot, I don't know. They finished talking and we hauled their cargo out of the helicopter. We did not know what was happening...

The soldiers were pulling on a rope...and a man. He was dressed like them.

I1: What do you mean by "pulling on a rope"?

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<sup>1</sup> This is Document 5 of the original report. The interview was taped in a school at La Gloria, Chiapas, 4 September 1982.

<sup>2</sup> R1 is the eyewitness to the massacre. R2 is a witness who escaped from the village before the killings. RX are two different people--both are 45 years old--from the village of Yulaurel.

<sup>3</sup> The army called for the formation of the civil patrols.

\* *Pinto* literally means "spotted"; it is used to describe camouflage-style clothing.

R1: He was tied up.

R2: The man who was tied up was a guerrilla.

R1: I wonder where they caught him? Maybe in Barillas.

I2: The army originally came from Barillas?

R1: Yes.

I1: And the person who was tied up came on foot also?

R1: Yes, he was walking with the soldiers. He was tied with a soldier's belt, like a dog. I was watching as the soldiers finally persuaded him to point out another man. The soldiers went and brought the man forward. But this man was not involved in anything; he was innocent. We villagers are ordinary people. The soldiers tied up the man who had been pointed out, and slashed his face with something.

In our own language we told each other, "They are going to finish him off. Now we are screwed."

"Bring us those things," the soldier said.

We carried all the boxes, which were very heavy. The *cabrón*\* returned to the helicopter. When we arrived at the courthouse, things were already happening. Francisco Páez García, the administrator of the *finca*, was standing there. He said, "Now, my *compañeros*, this is it. There is nothing we can do. It is too late. Now there will be some weeping. See for yourselves what is happening." The colonel already held a gun on Francisco.

Then we carried some things into the hallway of the school house. The soldiers said, "O.K., finish putting that over there. Get in there. Nobody outside. Get inside."

What could we do? Our houses were far away. The center of town was filling up with people. Finally we were taken into the courthouse, and the door was closed.

Francisco said, "Bring us two head of cattle from your own herd." Then, two boys each brought a bull from their herd to the soldiers.

The soldiers shouted, "Bring more boys here!" The boys came, and the courthouse filled up.

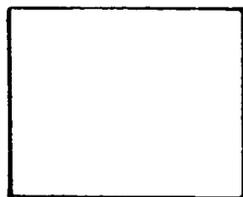
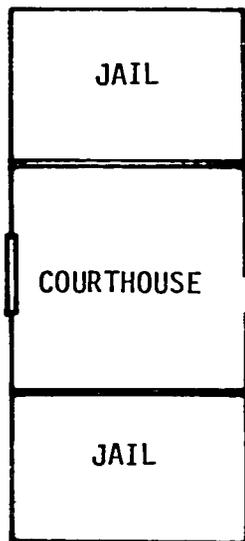
Then, the soldiers went and brought all the women and children out of their houses. They were put inside the church. It was full of women. We were watching, but there was nothing we could do. There was already a guard there.

One man brought his work animal, carrying a load of firewood. "Leave the animal and its cargo there. Get inside!" the soldiers said.

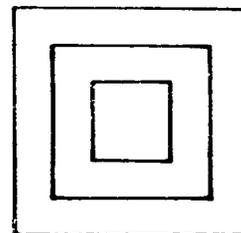
I1: What did you think they were going to do?

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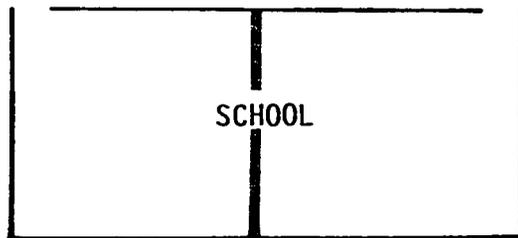
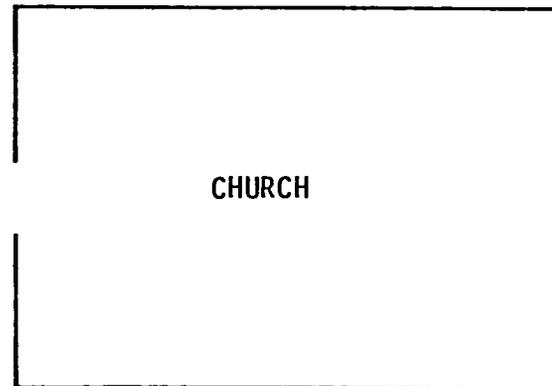
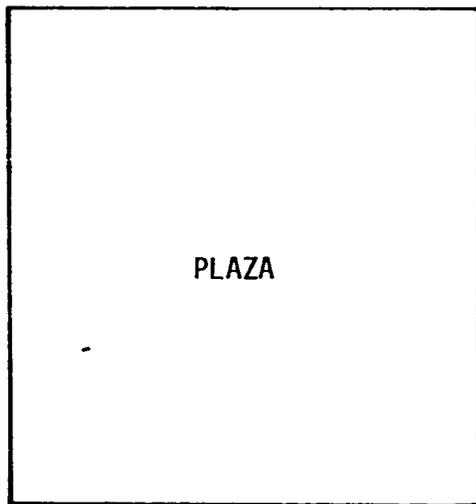
\* *Cabrón* is a curse, meaning "son-of-a-bitch" or "bastard".



ROAD TO  
FINCA LAS PALMAS  
AND AGUACATE



PREHISPANIC  
TEMPLE



## THE CENTER OF SAN FRANCISCO

Drawn From The Description Of The Survivors

ROAD TO  
FINCA SANCAPECH

R1: We were all inside just waiting. Maybe we were not thinking anything, just, "Now we are finished..."

R2: Some people were praying, pleading with God.

R1: They said, "Now it is time to pray to God! We have to remember our commitment to God. If we have to suffer this punishment, there is nothing else to do."

I1: Who said this?

R1: The catechists.

### The Massacre Begins

R1: We were there waiting and praying to God. Three old people arrived walking with canes. The children were inside crying. At noon, everyone--including the old people--was inside.

Around 1 o'clock in the afternoon there were gunshots. The soldiers began to shoot the women in the church. There was a lot of noise, and the children were crying and crying. The soldiers stopped shooting, and took the remaining women out of the church. They took groups of women to different places. Each group was killed. Maybe not with bullets, just machetes. We could not see this. They finished killing in the houses and then they set them on fire. I saw some little children, maybe three years old. They could hardly walk yet. Soldiers grabbed them by the legs, and smashed their heads against a hard board.

They beat the hell out of them. They killed two boys with knives. Those *cabrones* cut one child's stomach like this (makes a gesture across his stomach), and tossed it away. By two in the afternoon it was over.

We men were still shut up inside the courthouse. Then after more than an hour, the soldiers killed a cow. Some were fixing food, peeling the hides. They had not killed the other cow yet. The boys who brought the cows were sent inside the courthouse. Then, at about 3 P.M., the soldiers began to attack the men. They took them out of the courthouse. There were gunshots outside. How those bullets destroy a person! The soldiers had begun. And it went on and on.

Everyone...! The soldiers were killing them all. We hid and did not look. We heard only the sound of their guns.

They killed them in the patio of the courthouse, and threw their bodies in the church. The soldiers tied the men's hands like this (the informant makes a gesture). Each soldier had a gun. They killed three old men with a blunt machete, here (points to his throat), like you kill a sheep. The old men cried out.

I1: And you were inside?

R1: We were inside the courthouse watching. All of us were there. I have to tell you what I saw, it does not matter anymore. Everything was death, already. The people were dying, dying. I was trapped like a fish in a net, with 15 or 16 other men and poor young boys. Four men went out through the window, but only three survived the bullets. The fourth died in the hospital in Comitán. The other three are alive.

Then the government soldiers were raging mad. How they shot at those boys! It was 5 P.M. and the man who was tied up tried to leave. When he fell in the corridor, they came to haul him away. They dragged him by the leg like a dead dog, and shot him in the patio of the courthouse.

"Someone else come out!" one shouted. That soldier was already very angry. You could see that he was enraged.

"Me, sir?" said Francisco who was sitting there.

"You, come out," the soldier said.

"Yes, sir," he said. Poor Francisco.

I1: Francisco who?

R1: Francisco Paíz García, the administrator, who was with the colonel before, went out too. They did not shoot him. I was listening. I think the poor man was left there...

"You men come out," the soldiers said.

"But, sir, I am the *comisionado militar*,<sup>4</sup>" one of the men said.

"It doesn't matter if you're the *comisionado militar* or shit," said a soldier. So, right there, they killed him, in the middle of the courthouse (imitates the sounds of gunshots). He cried out. I was sitting right there on a bench. He did not die right away, and I saw how he was suffering. Then there were more shots.

"Another one of you come out!" the soldiers yelled. The father of the man who had just died went out. The old man. There were more bullets, and then he and his son were together again.

"More of you men come out!"

"But, sir, I am the *auxiliatura*.\*"

"It doesn't matter if you're the *auxiliatura* or shit." They killed him behind the table, with the three town policemen. Six people were killed in the courthouse. They took men out. Many boys were huddled together in the corner. They did not want to die. Now there were only a few; I think only seven were left.

I told them, "It will not last much longer, boys, and now that we have suffered this punishment, we will go to the cemetery already pardoned."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Each town of Guatemala has a local military representative appointed by the national government.

\* *Auxiliatura* refers to a town official.

<sup>5</sup> The informant tells the boys who are still alive that because of the suffering they have endured and the punishment they are soon to receive, all will be pardoned when they die. This is a voice of spiritual comfort. The boys respond by throwing themselves on the floor, huddled together.



The clothes and ribs of a victim of the San Francisco massacre - 1/83.

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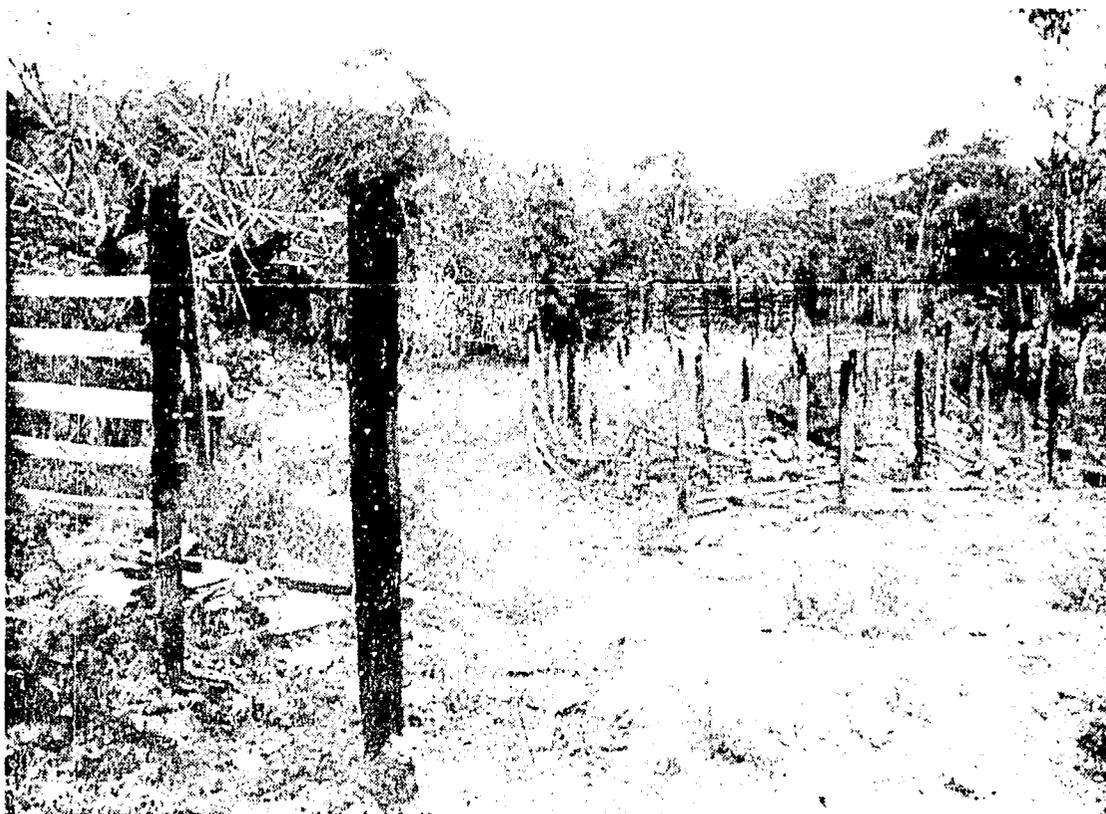
Then I got to thinking. Who knows where the idea came from. I lay face down on the floor. "They will kill me," I said. It was about 6:30 P.M. and it was getting dark. I thought that the monster was going to shoot. What! They threw the grenade into the corner. Tas! ting! went the grenade. "Aaay," cried the men. Then another. Three! With the fourth grenade, blood began to drip. How it spilled to the floor. The blood was from the grenade. Then the fifth. Yes, but it didn't explode. It stayed without exploding. The blood soaked all over me. But thanks to God, the shot didn't hit. Finally, the rifle came in again. Boom, boom, boom, boom. So they killed everyone.

"Go on, leave them here in the courthouse. All of them. They'll stay here." So the soldiers came in to pile up the corpses more closely together. The *cabrones!* They grabbed me and piled me on top of the bodies. I was...alive.

I1: Were you wounded?

R1: I wasn't wounded. They didn't realize I was alive. They looted...but it was getting dark, maybe they even saw my face. My head was covered in blood. "That's it," I said. "Oh, God," I said to myself, "What should I do? They've closed the door. It's done." I was thinking, "It'll be worse, tomorrow they'll burn the courthouse. I won't survive the fire. What can I do?"

The soldiers were standing together outside the courthouse. They were starting a fire and listening to the tape recorders that they stole from San Francisco. So many things they stole: money, clothes, recorders...more than 20 thousand quetzales. They took everything.



Burned houses in San Francisco (1/83) above and below the courthouse (1/83).  
The army sent people from a neighboring village to push in the buildings on top  
of the bodies.

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### Escape From the Village

R1: At 7:30 P.M., when I escaped, it was already dark. I saw that the window in the back of the courthouse was open, and I thought, "God help me. We're going to try it. *Compañeros, compañeros*, let me go free to the fields. Give me luck. You are already free. Let me go! I am going to the fields."

I1: Who did you say this to?

R1: I spoke with the dead. With all my heart, I prayed to them and then I got up. I took off my boots and fled through the window. I looked, and saw guards on either side of the corners. "With the help of God," I said. The soldiers were singing. I left by crawling along the ground like a snake. I was just pulling myself along by my hands. I looked and saw soldiers standing around in several places, but they did not see me. Others left after me...The soldiers discovered one of them. The *cabrones* shot him, and he cried out as he fell. I hid under the leaves of the *ixte* tree until 11:00 A.M., and then I began walking again. I arrived in Yulaurel during the night. But my children are nowhere to be seen; they are gone. There are only soldiers now.

When I arrived in Yulaurel the people had all left because they were frightened. I caught up with them in Santa Marta. But when we arrived in Yulaurel, San José at 5:00 A.M. no one was there.

I1: Were you alone?

R1: I was with another *compañero*. I met him in the night on the road. We went together to San José.

I1: How did he escape?

R1: He left through the window at about 5:00 P.M. and we came here together.

I got to Santa Marta at about 10 in the morning. What shock I was in! Like a dunce. Nothing was clear, not even who I was. I was not sad, I was not thinking about anything. I had not eaten, I had no clothes. Nothing!

I1: What did the people of Santa Marta say when they saw you?

R1: They said nothing, only "A terrible shame, I wonder what happened. Here is a place for you to stay." They said, "Here is a room for you. Let the poor man rest."

I was covered in blood, as if I had killed an animal. My whole head and face were covered. That is how I came. My heart is in such pain for the deaths that I have witnessed, the deaths of my brothers, my friends, my *compañeros*. We were all brothers. That is why my heart is crying all the time. All for nothing! The soldiers did not say, "This is your crime, and here is the proof." Nobody had done anything. Who knows why this happened? They did not accuse anyone of any crimes. They just killed them, that was all.

I1: Did you hear the name of the colonel?

R1: We did not hear his name.

R2: He lives in Barillas. Those people live in Barillas; they came to kill our families.

I1: And how is it that you survived?

R2: I am alive because of a cow. I was on patrol that day. The soldiers said that only the civil patrol members had permission to leave and round up the cows. I left. Thanks to God, they gave me permission to go and look for the cow, and right then we left.

I1: Did you bring them the cow, or did you leave right away?

R2: My *compañeros* brought them the cow. Three of them brought the cow to the soldiers. The poor men were shot as soon as they arrived.

I1: You did not return?

R2: No...I went to the mountains right away.

I1: And your wife?

R2: My wife remained at our house. There the soldiers killed her and all my relatives. I have eleven relatives, and they killed all of them in my house.

I2: How many people in all died in San Francisco?

R1: We figure that 352 people died, including all of our children and babies.<sup>6</sup> We have counted 352, because another died here at the hospital in Comitán. Otherwise there would be 351.

I2: And how many were saved? How many are...here?

R1: I do not know. We have not counted. But we are making a list.

I1: Everyone from San Francisco who survived is in La Gloria or Santa Marta?

R1: Yes. There are some people here from San Francisco, and some from San José, too. We are all from San Francisco, really, but some people live in San José now. It is all the same.<sup>7</sup>

I1: The soldiers took your wife and small children into the church also?

R1: Yes. Everyone.

R2: Yes.

R1: Not one woman or child escaped from San Francisco; none of them did. There are no more women.

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<sup>6</sup> There is a contradiction here between informant's statement (352 people killed) and actual number of people on the list (302 people).

<sup>7</sup> People from San Francisco and those from Yulaurel consider themselves to be of the same group. Originally all were from San Francisco, but when some people obtained neighboring land from the National Institute of Agrarian Transformation (INTA) in San José Yulaurel, they built houses there. They still see themselves as one community.

I1: Where did they kill your wife, in the church or in the house?

R1: In the house.

RX: Some died in the church.

R1: I think very few died in the church.

I2: And what did they do with the women before they killed them?

R1: I do not know. There was not much noise from gunfire. I think they killed them with knives. The soldiers were carrying machetes and knives. They had everything.

RX: Some women's heads were cut off. They beheaded them with machetes.

I1: Did they rape the women?

R1: Oh, always. That we all know. That is understood. They held some women and killed them later. They also killed women in Yaltoya.

I1: How did they kill the people in Yaltoya?

R2: They met them in the road.

I1: Were these people from San Francisco?

R2: No, they were from Yalambojoch.

R1: Francisco was leading the people on the road when they arrived at Yalambojoch. They were still walking in the middle of the road below Bulej, in an area called Mirabel de Bulej. That is where they killed Francisco. They forced a stick through his body. They gave him no food or water, not even a bit of fruit. No one gave him anything. The leader of the soldiers from Yalambojoch said, "Now you will never survive."<sup>8</sup>

I2: What did they do with the boy they had brought with them, the one who was tied up with rope? Did they kill him in San Francisco?

R1: Yes, his name was Pascual Ramos Gomez. Then, in Bulej, three more men were killed, including Francisco Paíz García.

I1: Who is the owner of the Finca San Francisco?

R1: He is from Guatemala City. His name is Victor Manuel Bolaños. At one time he was a colonel. I do not know what he does now.

I1: Was he the one who brought the army?

R1: I do not know. No one can say for certain. We do not think about that anymore. It is done. I saw the helicopter. Suddenly a man arrived with the army, but it was not Bolaños. Nor did he come in the helicopter. We know him well, and it wasn't him. The soldiers came with their commanding officer.

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<sup>8</sup> Here the chief of operations is mentioned as being responsible for the assassination of the person who, according to the community hierarchy, occupied the position of most responsibility--the administrator of the *finca*.

Burning of the Houses and Cadavers

I1: How many houses were there in San Francisco?

R2: There are about 65 houses.

R1: That could be. Sometimes two or three families with their children live in one house with all their relatives.

I2: But the soldiers burned all of San Francisco?

R1: They burned about 40 or 45 houses.

I1: What day did this happen? On Saturday?

R1: Yes, on Saturday.

I1: Did anyone perhaps go there on Sunday, to see how everything was? Did anyone from Yulaurel go?

R1: No one. How could one do something like that? We would be frightened for the rest of our lives.

I2: But you know that they burned 45 houses?

R1: Yes.

I2: Did you see the area afterwards? Or did you see this while the army was still there, before you left?

RX: We went to see it twice. My house was not burning when I left that night. I thought I would go and see if I could get some of my things--my plate, my cup, my jacket. When I arrived, my house had been burned to the ground.

I1: And those of you who returned twice, when did you go?

R1: On the 25th of July, we went to see the houses. It was so sad, the way the dead were piled inside. The hair was burned off all the women; their clothes, their weavings, everything was gone. Some bodies had been thrown in the streets; others had no heads. Some had been shot. The soldiers had not burned one street with houses on it, and people were piled inside them. That is, the women were in the houses, but there was nothing we could do because we were all terribly frightened. We were looking around when the helicopter arrived again, flying low over the houses that had already burned.

We feel so much pain. The way they killed our people! How could the government order the soldiers to kill women and children who have committed no crimes? If they were looking for subversives, tell me, how many weapons did they find on the children? How many guns did the women turn in? This is why we are angry. How can this happen? The government is crazy. They are sending their army to kill people who have done no wrong. I do not understand....

## The Guerrillas

R1: People from Bulej and from other places had been stealing the cattle. We wanted to stop the robbers; we agreed with the *patrón*\* about that. Up until the end, we bought salt for the cattle and made fences; they were getting out somehow. We had been working in that area peacefully. We no longer had permission, but we were working near Yulaurel. And when the man came, we paid him rent. We thought everything was alright. But then those *cabrones* came, and there was trouble.

I2: People from Bulej were coming to San Francisco to steal cattle?

R1: Yes, before, when the guerrillas passed through.

RX: The guerrillas came last year (1981) and burned the big house and stole some cattle.

I1: Which house did they burn?

RX: The big house which belonged to the *patrón*, here in San Francisco.

I2: Who do the people say are the ones who burned the big house?

R1: The men were like an army. They carried arms.

I2: Like the army, but not the army of the government?

R1: I do not know. I am not sure who they were. Everybody left, including the women. "Now we are going to die. They are burning the house," they said. The *auxiliatura* was left tied up inside the courthouse; we did not watch.

I1: The *auxiliatura*?

R1: Yes, they tied him up; and the administrator, too.

I1: Did they kill anyone?

R1: No, they did not kill anyone.

I1: That is different then, right?

R1: Yes, why would we lie? They did not kill anyone. No one. That is what they did when they passed through. Some people say that they killed a man in Chacula... what was his name? The administrator, that was him.

I1: When did they kill him?

R1: The same men who came through and set fire to San Francisco killed him last year in Chacula.

I1: About what month was it? Do you remember?

R1: They burned the house on the 15th of December.

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\* *Patrón* refers to the owner of a large ranching or farming estate.

I1: Were the people who did that from Bulej?

R1: I do not know.

I2: Were the people who stole the cattle from Bulej?

RX: Yes.

R1: People from San Mateo came to rob cattle from the *finca*; this happened before Christmas Eve had passed. They came because the owner was gone. They say the owners are looking for those men, to kill them. I do not know...twenty or thirty men went by every day. The cows were gone; they took them for meat. Finally, we thought, "Shouldn't we shoot them so that something is left for the owner?" That is what we were thinking. Then they were gone; they stopped stealing. We had been taking care of those animals and giving them water.<sup>9</sup>

### The Finca

I1: About how many animals did the owner have on the *finca* before the people began to come through?

R1: 400 head of cattle. There are not 400 anymore; now there must be about 300... We stole nothing for ourselves. We did eat meat, but we bought it from others. We have our honor. Stealing? That we could not do.

I1: How large is the Finca San Francisco?

R1: It is a big village.

I1: How large is it?

RX: It is 30 *caballerías*.<sup>\*</sup> The *finca* borders on San José, Yalambojoch, Sabinal de San Mateo and Yulaurel.

I1: But Yulaurel is not part of the *finca*?

RX: No.

RX: The *patrón* was working with us there. We are in accord with him.

R1: He has served as our lawyer.

RX: He was helping us to obtain titles for our lands from the National Institute of Agrarian Transformation (INTA). We are very much in accord with the *patrón*.

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<sup>9</sup> This is perhaps the main reason for the massacre, i.e., that the *finca* and its 400 head of cattle had been practically abandoned by the owner (as in Yulaurel) and so they were a source of provisions of meat for the guerrillas. The massacre destroyed the bridge between this source and the guerrillas. Thus one can understand why the army insists, upon their arrival in San Francisco, that the two cows they demand actually come from the villagers and not the *finca*'s herd. The intention to protect the property of the *patrón* is also clearly indicated in this massacre. There is also the possibility that thievery was occurring here, which the people from San Francisco put a stop to themselves. The witness is not clear on this point.

\* A *caballería* is a measure of land equivalent to 101.4 acres.

RX: The *patrones* of San Francisco.

RX: We are from San Francisco also, but we have been living in San José for about five years.

RX: We grew up in San Francisco, but then we moved to San José.

RX: We were all in agreement, since we were neighbors. We had obtained a little land from the INTA, so we were not suffering as much here. Then, we divided the land between us. Half of the people stayed in San Francisco and the other half came to Yulaurel. Perhaps it was for this reason that they wanted to kill everyone who remained in San Francisco...

### Witness From Yulaurel

I1: When did you men leave Yulaurel? How did you hear of what happened in San Francisco?

RX: From my *compadre*.\*

RX: They came at night, maybe about 10:30 P.M., and by about 4 A.M. we were on our way. We heard that they were killing everyone in San Francisco, and that frightened us. We were so fortunate; what help would we have? Why wouldn't they shoot us too? So, we left. We got ready quickly. Some people carried their things, but others were too frightened to even take anything. We were really afraid that we were about to be killed. Like everyone, we were feeling the pain. It is just that we are not troublemakers in this area. We were getting together some supplies like butter, sweets and other things to give to the soldiers.

You see, we were thinking that if this was the army of the government then we were in accord with it, so we were ready to prepare food for the soldiers to eat. But, then we heard that they had killed everyone, including the women and babies, so we took refuge here in Santa Marta. Thank God, they have given us a place to stay. Thanks to them, we are alive today. If they had not given us a place to stay, where else could we have sought refuge?

### The Civil Patrols

I1: How did they form the patrols in San Francisco? You said that you were in the patrol. How did they choose the members? For example, they did not make the *finca* owner a patrol member, right?

R2: No, they did not make him a patrol member. I was out on patrol with my *compañeros* when the army came. The soldiers were enraged! Very angry! When they arrived at the courthouse, the helicopter came, and they brought us to the football field. Then the helicopter came down, they unloaded all their food, and we carried it to the school, where we left it. They were angry, and did not want us to go inside. We put the things in the school, and then they ordered us inside. Then I left, because I was a patrol member.

I1: But how many weeks had you been a member of the patrol?

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\* *Compadre* is a godfather, friend or companion.

R2: That was our first day!

I2: In other words, the army formed the patrol when it arrived?

R2: Yes, and they were very angry! They had no respect for us.

I2: Did they force you to form the patrol?

R2: Yes.

I1: Everyone? The *comisionado militar* and the *auxiliatura* also?

R1: Yes. No one was excused, not even them. Not even the representative of the *finca*. Who knows why. Maybe they were crazy. A soldier was standing there looking at a man who had just been killed. The poor man was already dead, then the soldier attacked him again, like this (makes a gesture across his stomach). That is how he opened him up and took out his heart. I saw it, but I sat down, I could not look anymore. I do not know if they ate it or took it with them.

I2: They cut out his heart?

R1: Yes, they cut out his heart! I could see them well at first, and they were acting like crazed men. I don't know if they ate it or took it away in their bag; I felt angry and sat down! The *cabrón* was like an animal. That is how the soldiers were.

I1: Were those soldiers *ladinos*\* or Indians?

R1: They were Indians.

RX: They were Indians from San Miguel.

R1: Pure Indians.

RX: They were from Soloma, or Santa Eulalia.

I1: They were from Soloma?

R1: They spoke that dialect, yes!

I1: But they do not speak your dialect?

R1: No. It was the San Miguel dialect. They must be from San Sebastian [Coatán]... Jacaltenango, or Todos Santos, I do not know what dialect they have. Those *cabrones* were all mixed together. They were so angry.

I1: You heard the shooting?

RX: All of the shooting, yes.

RX: He lives in San Francisco. He only came [to Yulaurel] to work.

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\* A *ladino* is a non-Indian person.

R1: Yes, since the land is already paid for. But now, all of our documents in San Francisco have been burned, our receipts, everything.

RX: We are united, the communities of Yulaurel and San Francisco, all of us.

RX: We held everything in *mancomún*.\*

"What Crime Have We Committed?"

RX: Before, we all had a house in San Francisco. We went to Yulaurel to live about five years ago, but we kept our houses in San Francisco. People from San Francisco had houses in Yulaurel too, because they worked there with us.

We planted coffee, bananas, and sugar cane, and everyone worked together. We were all united and very much in accord. We cannot figure out why the army wanted to kill us.

Thank God, we had been left alone until now. Maybe we were deceived. We are ignorant, we don't know. How are we to know why those *chingados*\* are killing us poor people? What crime could the old people have committed? The soldiers do not think first: "We too will be judged before God." They do not recognize that they are also children of God, like us.

We have refuge here, but there are many things that worry us. We need food, and money, just enough to survive and maintain our families...We cannot leave to look for food. We do not have any money to buy sugar, salt or beans. We just want to eat. What can we do? These are the reasons for our sorrow. What are we going to do? We are grateful that we can continue to have refuge here and hope that we will be able to stay. But we do not know what will happen later. We think about that.

We have always been farmers. We planted many coffee and fruit trees. Every year there was a harvest. Sometimes we obtained 12 to 15 sacks of coffee. But the government did not want things that way, and so they began to kill us. We were improving our work skills, but that is not what they want and so they are killing us. That is how they shut us up.

We hoped that the government would give us credits to help us with our work. It would have been good, they could have helped us. With our true feelings and thought our real strength and courage, we have been struggling with our work. And look what has happened to us. We were tending our *milpas*\* and our beans. That is why we are so sad right now, because now we have lost our work. What if we did not work? They would say we were thieves or vagrants. Maybe this is what they were thinking. This is not true. We are hard workers.

Now, what are we going to feed our families? Look what has happened to our labor. When we harvested the coffee, there was always money; we could get clothing and

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\* *Mancomún* means collective ownership. It is not clear from the text whether the speaker refers to legal or traditional rights to the land.

\* *Chingado* is a curse meaning bastard, or son-of-a-bitch.

\* *Milpa* is a small plot of land, usually planted with corn.

the things that we need to maintain our families. But now, there is no way to better ourselves. We have to start at the beginning again, like helpless children. What a pity this is. What crime have we committed? This is our tragedy. Perhaps if we were guilty of something, then they would have a reason to kill us. But no! Truly, we are farmers; we are worried about our families. Now we have refuge here and we are free, but where do we get our food and our expenses? We are trapped in a terrible situation because of the soldiers.

RI: They took all our money, those *cabrones*. They killed people who were completely within the law. Those *cabrones*! They are ordered to kill. Those are the orders that they receive from the capital. The Law commands. This type of sentence weighs heavily on us. Who knows what they are thinking? They are driving us mad; we may die because of them. Only God knows...

How will we live? In the cold, with no blanket, dear God. Now we must buy our food. That is how we will keep on living, though we have nothing. We will see. Thank God, these Mexicans and their government are good people, children of God. They have given us a place to stay, thank God. If not, we would have been killed already.

RX: If the government hadn't given us a place to stay in Mexico, we would be dead by now, since the soldiers are always on guard. They patrol the border. Where can we...we may be...

RX: Every day helicopters pass by. Yesterday, two went over. They went over six times the day before yesterday.

I1: Did they burn the village of Yulaurel already?

RX: No.

RI: Dear God. They did not burn it. Maybe they will do that later, I don't know. It was still there.

I1: But no one is left there?

RX: No.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 3

*Interview with eyewitness No. 3<sup>1</sup>*I: *Interviewer*R: *Refugee interviewed*

R: I am from the village of San Francisco, municipality of Nentón, department of Huehuetenango. The soldiers came to look through our villages. They told us then that everything looked fine in our village. They said that we seemed to be happy and working hard.

The soldiers said to us, "Let's see what the government can do for you. Maybe they will send you some fertilizer. We can see by your hard work that there is a lot to do here. We don't want you and your families to become displeased with your work; we don't want you to go with the guerrillas because they are liars. That's why we have come to look out for you. You stay here quietly. We have a lot of work to do."

"Alright," we said to them.

"You are doing magnificently here, but we have to tell you something. The most important thing is that you are here in your houses, and that you don't leave. If people are not in their houses, then we will have to kill them because they are the ones who are ruining Guatemala."

"We don't understand this," we said. "We are working honorably here with our families. We are working to feed ourselves so that our wives and children do not go hungry. We have animals that we are tending here at the *finca*..."

"That is good," they said. They came to my house and I gave them coffee; they were satisfied and went off to town.

The Army Visits the Village

R: It was peaceful for two or three days. Then they came back.

"You are living here quietly, but we have to come back to your area again," they said. "Don't be afraid of us, because we are the government army. If you people stay here quietly, you'll be safe."

"Fine," we said. We fed them; they ate what we ate. We even thanked them. Then they left. We knew why they had come--they had come for us, sure.

"Things here are quiet, but we're going to come back. Don't be afraid, don't flee. We are here defending Guatemala for you. The government sent us here for you, to see what was happening here in your villages."

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<sup>1</sup> This is Document 6 of the original report. The interview took place at Colonia Santa Marta, a rural settlement in Chiapas.

"Well, that is fine because we are living and working peacefully at home," we said.

Then, they came looking house by house. "Everything seems fine, we hope you stay this quiet. We'll come back another time; don't be afraid." That's what they said when they left. When they came the second time, it was to massacre us.

### The Army Returns to Kill

R: The army came down to our village at about 11 o'clock in the morning. The clothing they had on was kind of purple; it was *pinto*...that's their dress. At about 11:00 the helicopter came to drop off their food, but they came on foot. They all came at the same time; perhaps they have radios and they communicated to each other about what time they would arrive.

The helicopter was plain white. I really didn't get close to it because I was working when I heard the sound of the helicopter coming down there in the field. It landed, but it was on its way up by the time I got there.

I know it was carrying food because some of our *compañeros* went to unload the cargo that had been brought for the army. When the ones who had carried it came back they told us, "We unloaded a lot of food from the helicopter." They took it to the school and piled it up there. We didn't get a chance to see the other things. The *compañeros* said they were very heavy. We heaped it all together at the town hall.

Soon after, they came to the house and called us. They told us to go to the courthouse because the soldiers had to tell us something.

"There is going to be a meeting. The colonel wants to have a discussion with you; go and hear him, and make sure you listen carefully." That's what the soldiers said, according to my wife who told me about it when I got home. So I changed my clothes and went to catch up with the others. Since we did not know what wrong we had done, we did not think that they had come to kill us. The first time, they had told us not to fear them, so by then we had begun to trust the soldiers, even when we got there and were put in the courthouse. Whoever arrived was taken inside the courthouse.

They separated everyone. They put the men in the courthouse, and the women and children in the Catholic church. The mothers carried their children with them.

When our houses were empty, they went back to look through them and take all of our things. They stole clothes, tape recorders, radios, watches, and money, whatever they could.

Our cooperative in San Francisco had 10,000 *quetzales*. Some villagers keep their money there, also; some had 50, 100 or even up to 1,000 *quetzales*, but the army took it all. Whatever they saw, they stole. We watched them carrying around chickens, eggs, baskets and pots. They were gathering more and more things there on the school patio. They even took all of the tortillas they could find in our houses, the ones our wives had made.

After they had taken all of our things, they came and asked us for a cow.

"Now, we want you to bring two head of cattle for us to eat. We've come here for you, you see; we are going to have a *fiesta* here with you right now." We started

realizing then that they were going to kill us.

"OK, we'll give them to you."

"But you're going to give us cattle that belong to you and not to the *finca*."

"What, we are not shameless. We are hardworking people. We have animals that we've raised ourselves. You can see for yourselves by their markings."

"Well, alright," they said. The cattle arrived and were killed...One belonged to Pedro and the other to a man named Andres. The army wanted them for nothing--they didn't pay us. We were afraid because they carried arms and many of them had bayonets. They are frightening. We didn't know what to do. We are *campesinos*, agriculturalists, laborers--working people.

The soldiers killed and skinned the cattle on the school patio. They ate the meat with the tortillas they'd found in the houses.

When they had finished, they closed the doors of the courthouse, but there were two or three holes in the windows, so we could see outside.

#### Death of the Women and Children

R: The soldiers took our wives out of the church in groups of ten or twenty. Then twelve or thirteen soldiers went into our houses to rape our wives. After they were finished raping them, they shot our wives and burned the houses down.

All of our children had been left locked up in the church which is about twenty meters from the courthouse...they were crying, our poor children were screaming. They were calling us. Some of the bigger ones were aware that their mothers were being killed and were shouting and calling out to us.

They took the children outside. Only the little ones, the 5-, 6-, and 8-year olds, the 2-year olds were left together inside the church. The soldiers had already brought out all the mothers and killed them. Then they brought out the babies--two, one and a half, three years old. They were all holding on to each other. The 10-, 12-, 8-, 5- and 6-year olds were also brought out in groups. The soldiers killed them with knife stabs. We could see them. They killed them in a house in front of the church. They yanked them by the hair and stabbed them in their bellies; then they disemboweled our poor little children. Still they cried. When they finished disemboweling them, they threw them into the house, and then brought out more.

We could see it all. We were very frightened because we realized that we and our families were being murdered. They finished with our poor families and then they set fire to that house too. It burned right away. They were pouring something, maybe gasoline, on the houses. They had a broom which they used for sweeping the houses when they didn't catch fire easily because of the rain. We watched what they did. They brushed first, then set the fire with a match, and the fire burned fast.

Finally they brought out the last child. He was a little one, maybe two or three years old. They stabbed him and cut out his stomach. The little child was

screaming, but because he wasn't dead yet, the soldier grabbed a thick, hard stick and bashed his head. They held his feet together and smashed him against a tree trunk. I saw how they flung him hard and hurt his head. It split open, and they threw him inside the house. Then the soldier came over to us, and we couldn't see anymore...they came to get us, too. So I didn't see how they finished with all of our families, our children.

### The Death of the Old People

R: Then they started with the old people.

"What fault is it of ours," the old people said. "No, sir, we are tired, we aren't thinking anything. It seems that we're not good for anything anymore."

"Nothing, not shit, not tired, not . . . OUTSIDE!" a soldier said. They took the poor old people out and stabbed them as if they were animals. It made the soldiers laugh. Poor old people, they were crying and suffering. They killed them with dull machetes. They took them outside and put them on top of a board; then they started to hack at them with a rusty machete. It was pitiful how they broke the poor old people's necks.

"Aaay, Aaay," cried the poor old man. They were beheading him. He was the only one they did that to. They brought out the next one, and knifed him under the ribs. With one plunge they did it. He did not suffer as much. But the first one suffered a lot because they beheaded him with a dull knife. The knife they were using was all rusted. Later, they were given new knives. They stabbed the people in the ribs; they opened a big hole and streams of blood came pouring out...that made them laugh. About twelve old people were stabbed to death. Then it was over, and they began shooting us.

### The Death of the Young Men

R: They began to take out the adults, the grown men of working age. They took us out by groups of ten. Soldiers were standing there waiting to throw the prisoners down in the patio of the courthouse. Then they shot them. When they finished shooting, they piled them up and other soldiers came and carried the bodies into the church.

I: Why did they take them to the church?

R: I couldn't lie to you, I don't know what they wanted with those poor bodies they put in the church. I only saw them there when I escaped. From a hill I saw flames coming from the church. They burned them there.

I: You were locked up in the courthouse among the men they were taking out to kill?

R: I was locked up, because there was a soldier standing there, like a guard making sure no one got out.

I: And what did the men do as the soldiers were taking them out?

R: Well, the men just stood there watching. It was like taking out sheep. There was nothing they could say, because the soldiers simply called to them, "Come out" (pointing to a prisoner and addressing him formally), "Come out." That's how they did it. They were all frightened, of course. They were frightened, because they knew...they saw them kill our wives with their guns. So of course the men were thinking, "Now the army is going to kill all of us too."

"What are you thinking? Why are you talking so much in there?" the soldiers said. "We aren't going to do anything to you..."

I: But what did your friends do?

R: Well, they were all praying to God the Father to save their lives, that God gather them up, there was nothing else. What else could they say? We were all locked up in the courthouse. That's what everyone was thinking.

Everyone was praying, praying to God the Father to save their lives because there was nothing anyone could do. When they finished taking out the brothers, we began praying there inside the courthouse asking God to bless us. Why did brothers come, the brothers themselves, to kill us? It was not a sickness. God was not sending us a punishment and so we were offering our prayers up. That is what we were doing when the soldiers took away the other brothers, the friends, to kill them...

### The Escape

I: But you were there, and now you're here alive. How did you escape from that death?

R: I was with my *compañeros*. There were only a few of us left alive, perhaps 20 or 25, inside the courthouse. They had taken the rest out; they were all dead. Just after they took out ten more to kill them, one of my *compañeros* began to think. He removed a wedge and opened the window. When he opened it, a fire was burning on the courthouse roof. When the flames were high, the soldiers began to feel the heat so they moved away from the window and went off to one side. So, when my *compañero* opened the window, there were no soldiers there. He jumped out.

After he jumped, we all looked at each other. Then my other *compañeros* followed him. Perhaps seven of us got out, but not all of the seven were able to escape. Only three of us escaped and were saved. They shot the others. They fired at us; the bullets were flying! They fired at me, but because God is so much greater, He saved me. But only God knows why He saved me. When I escaped out the window I felt a bullet whiz by, scraping my head. My head still hurts. I was stunned. I didn't run very much because I had almost fainted from fright. I just went very slowly, and in spite of that the grace of God saved me.

I didn't always go slowly, but I held back because I was so frightened. Of course I really wanted to run away as fast as I could, but I didn't because I was so frightened. I just stayed there, but God helped me out a lot.

That's how I happened to escape, to save myself from the war I found myself in...

### The Survivor's Family and Neighbors

R: In front of the courthouse they killed about fifty-six men.

I: How many children did they kill in front of the church?

R: There were about one hundred and twenty.

I: Could you give us some names of the persons who were killed in San Francisco?

R: They killed some of my children...one was Felipe Lucas, another was Miguel Lucas...Felipe Lucas was ten years old. And Miguel Lucas was eight years old. One daughter, whose name was María Lucas, was five years old. And my other daughter, Catarina Lucas, was two years old. My wife's name was Isabela García. They also killed my relatives. There was María Ramos and Angelina Ramos, and Eulalia Lucas with all her family members.

I: How many children?

R: There were...maybe three. One was seven years old, the other five years old, and one two years old.

I: Are there any others that you remember?

R: Among the women they killed was Petrona Lucas, and Eulalia Alonso and her children as well. One was called Miguel Mendoza, another was Lucas Mendoza, and another was Eulalia Mendoza. These are the children of the women who were killed. And let's see, among my relatives there was Isabela García Lucas, and her children... their names were María García, and the other one...a little girl who was about two years old...Juana García. Those are the names of my relatives who have died. There were lots of them. I can't really tell you about all of them because they took them away by the hundreds.

I: Are there any other friends that you remember?

R: Oh, yes...I remember my other friends like Eulalia Paíz and also María Paíz. And her children...one's name was Miguel Paíz, and another was Mateo Paíz. These were all my family members and relatives.

### The Government Came to Shoot Us

I: How do you know it was the army which committed these killings and not the guerrillas? The army, or rather the government, is saying that it is the guerrillas who are perpetrating all of these massacres.

R: I saw the soldiers that came to kill us. I saw their uniforms which were green and a dark color like coffee--*pinto*. And they were well-armed, the ones who came to shoot us down. That's true, they were well-armed and prepared with all their bullets; they carried bombs. I saw all of this with my own eyes. That's how I know it was the government army which came to shoot us down.

After they came, a helicopter landed to leave their food and supplies. I was working in my garden, fertilizing it, when I heard the noise of the helicopter and



Two metal objects left by the army in San Francisco. They are labelled: "Preserved Beef" rations and "For the good of Guatemala we work and fight against subversion."

© Werner Widmer 1/83

ran to my house. Then as the helicopter was leaving, I heard it above the fog and then I saw it. It was white.

It wasn't the guerrillas who passed through here because they have a different uniform. My wife told me that the guerrillas have a plain green uniform. Also, according to what my deceased wife told me, the guerrillas who passed through here to burn the large house of the *finca* owner were wearing plastic boots. That's what they told me, but I didn't see it. That's the way they dressed according to those who saw them. I didn't see them because I was working in Yulaurel. That's all I can tell you about that.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 4

*The village of Yalambojoch is located on the southwest border of Finca San Francisco. The Guatemalan army passed through Yalambojoch en route to Finca San Francisco and then returned after the massacre. Here, a resident describes the slaughter of six civil patrol members and more than thirty women and children who were attempting to flee Yalambojoch.<sup>1</sup>*

I1 and I2: Interviewers

R: Refugee

R1: The soldiers stayed in Yulaurel and then came to Yalambojoch. There wasn't any killing during the first visit of the army. They were well-armed, with lots of bombs, but the children in the area weren't frightened because on this visit, about July 2nd, there still hadn't been any killing.

About 20 days earlier they came among us also. That time, they went directly to San Francisco, and then to Yalambojoch; the distance between San Francisco and Yalambojoch is about three *leguas*.<sup>\*</sup> After they passed through Yalambojoch, they went directly to Bulej to complete their trip. They were going through all the villages, but there still hadn't been any killing. In Bulej there was some violence involving five men, but nothing else.

When they had passed through all the villages of San Mateo, they returned to Yalambojoch and set fire to all the houses that were not occupied. Sometimes a house is closed because the people go elsewhere to work. When there was no answer from a house, the army went in. This is what they did all over, but there still weren't any killings.<sup>2</sup>

Later we heard the noise of bombs and guns. When streams of bullets passed over the village, we fled with our children. They began to kill all the people who lived in San Francisco--men, women, old people, and infants. But, they still did no harm in Yalambojoch; they only passed by at a distance. When they finished killing the people in San Francisco, they returned once again to Yalambojoch and stayed there for a few days.

During the earlier visit, the army had formed groups to patrol the area. When the army had returned, those poor patrollers were pressed into service every day. About fifty youths participated in the patrols, working day and night. They were never able to rest, and they couldn't go out to produce their food, their corn. They were there when the soldiers arrived in Yalambojoch once again. The army remained in Yalambojoch about four days.

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<sup>1</sup> Document 7 of the original report, this interview is dated 5 September 1982.

<sup>\*</sup> A *legua* is the distance travelled on foot in one hour, c. 5.5 km.

<sup>2</sup> The first time the army passed through the area was around the 2nd of July. They went directly to San Francisco, from there to Yalambojoch, then to Bulej, where they killed five men, and finally to all the villages of San Mateo Ixtatán. San Francisco and Yalambojoch are villages of Nentón. Bulej is a village of San Mateo.

The second time the army came was on its return trip. They came through the villages of San Mateo, from Bulej down to Yalambojoch, and then reached San Francisco, on July 17th. This second time they burned houses in Yalambojoch, but didn't kill any people, until after the massacre in San Francisco, when they returned again to Yalambojoch. Then the army stayed about four days in Yalambojoch. From there, they went to Bulej.

Everyone was already dead in San Francisco by then. The poor men and women of our village were afraid to be around their houses, so they hid with their children. Fortunately, the soldiers did not kill anyone there in the village. But out of fear, a large number of women fled to try to reach a place called Yaltoya. In San Francisco, they had divided the soldiers in half, and one group patrolled the border. When the other half of the soldiers arrived in Yalambojoch, they came across these women with little children--some at the breast, infants of two or three months, children of two, three, four or five years of age. The soldiers killed them all. The children were not able to flee to protect themselves, so they were slashed with knives and disemboweled.<sup>3</sup>

It wasn't possible to count how many were killed, because everyone was terrified. In total, I believe that there were more than thirty. I knew the women, but not the little children. María Mendoza, Antonieta Perez, and Magdalena Gomez were killed. These were the mature women. There were also many young women killed. Juana Domingo and María Perez died. There were little children, and youths as well. Each of the women was carrying her little ones when she died.

Who knows how many machete blows the soldiers struck on their heads and shoulders? All were lying in the road when we arrived that night. That is why everyone fled. The soldiers left the poor women dead, and went to join up with those in Yalambojoch.

#### The Army Kills the Civil Patrol Members

R1: Three days later, the soldiers returned again. They were using the rooms of the school, the chapel, and some houses for their sleeping quarters. Who knows how many soldiers there were, for the entire village was filled with them. When the army left, they did no harm to the people in the village. But while the soldiers were on the road much higher up in the hills, beyond the village, they shot the poor patrol members.

There were about 500 soldiers and they carried a lot of provisions. The poor patrol members were heavily laden with cargo, and they went with the soldiers. They took all of our pack animals--horses, mules, and burros. The soldiers were carrying arms. Who knows what they were loading on the backs of the animals and the poor men.

Then, all of a sudden, when they were more than a kilometer outside of Yalambojoch, they shot them--they shot the poor men. It's said that they tied their hands behind them, made them lie down, and then shot them to death in the road. Then they continued on the road. The soldiers are like wild animals.

As soon as this occurred, many people, including all the women and children, left for Mexico. That was the 24th of July. That day we went to Kilometer 15<sup>4</sup>, and spent three days there; on the 26th we came here to take refuge with our brothers in Mexico.

We arrived at Kilometer 15 at nightfall during a heavy rain. Some children died on the road because of the rain. We all kept ourselves hidden in the mountains. Even the old people came, but many of them died on the way. This suffering did

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<sup>3</sup> The thirty women and children who died in Yaltoya were murdered by the army on July 18th, when it was leaving San Francisco on its return to Yalambojoch.

<sup>4</sup> A rural settlement in Mexico.

us much harm; we have no food now. When we arrived, all the worse because we came at night, the brothers helped us because we had nothing. Machetes, hats... we didn't bring anything, because we fled on the run, staying up day and night.

The soldiers killed six patrollers from Yalambojoch. There was still one person from San Francisco alive; he had been captured.

I1: The soldiers brought with them, tied up, someone from San Francisco?

R1: Yes.

I1: One or two?

R1: Only one, they say. But I did not see this. The soldiers brought only one man, tied up, they say.

R2: There were two.

R1: There were two, then.

I1: Two?

R1: Who knows what happened to this man? They say that he was pointing at some of the villagers, saying, "They're guerrillas, they're guerrillas." One of them was insane by then from hunger, because when the soldiers arrived, they kept them without food.

"Tell us how many guerrillas are here," the soldiers said to the poor people. When the soldiers returned a little later, the people were delirious, so they spoke of other persons. But unjustly! If the soldiers had found arms, if they were killing well-armed men, then certainly it would be guerrillas that they were killing. But they killed the poor men while they were carrying the soldiers' cargo! These are the grave sufferings inflicted upon us...

We give thanks to our Mexican brothers who have given us hospitality here for some time. Who knows what we are going to do about these things?

### "Everyone Was Unarmed"

R1: The soldiers are capturing people who are all unarmed. They come right into their houses. What have the people been doing wrong?

"We are killing lots of guerrillas," they say. They count the children among the number of guerrillas.

Where are these arms that they are threatened with? Perhaps if each person had lots of weapons, then it would be so. But, we don't know how to handle arms. We are honest workers. Where would we get arms to be guerrillas? We can hardly pay for our own machetes.

They say that the soldiers killed the two men from San Francisco in Bulej. Many women, and six patrollers, were killed in Yalambojoch. One patroller was called Andres Lopez, one was Miguel Domingo, another was Pascual Paíz, and another was called Lucas Pedro. Those are the ones from Yalambojoch whom they killed.

R1: They freed the others in Bulej, then took only the pack animals with them. Only these six were killed on the road, one *legua* from the village of Yalambojoch.

### The Army Returns After the San Francisco Massacre

R1: About 500 or 600 soldiers arrived the second time; it wasn't possible to count them. I don't know any of their names. They say that there were six colonels in all.

The soldiers came on foot. People say that a helicopter landed on the border of Yulaurel, but we didn't see it. On the border of Yulaurel, the soldiers split into two groups. Half were still on the way when they came across the poor women in the road.

The other women were still in their houses when the soldiers arrived. They threw my wife out of the house and robbed us of about 25 *quetzales*. My wife was left...

I2: How long did the soldiers stay in Yalambojoch?

R1: I think they stayed about four days in Yalambojoch. They killed two head of cattle to eat. On their first trip we killed one. When they came to kill, on their second trip, we killed another. Out of fear we offered the cattle to them. We also gave them eggs, chicken, and other food. Whatever they asked for, we gave to them.

The soldiers had burned down the houses when they arrived the first time, on their way to San Francisco. They had come directly to Yalambojoch first and set them on fire. Then, afterwards, they went to San Francisco. When San Francisco was left in silence, they came once again to Yalambojoch and burned more houses.

I wasn't there after they burned the houses. The others weren't either, they were hidden in the forest around the village. Only the patrollers were there, forced to stay because they were carrying the cargo for the soldiers. They were training the poor patrollers, there in the village, day and night.

There are about 200 houses in our village, and there is a market as well, on Sundays. Our village has municipal buildings, a courthouse, a jail, a school, and a chapel about 60 feet long and 30 feet wide, with a metal roof. The priest gave us the roof for the chapel. It is well-made, and so are the houses. Who knows what it's like now? Perhaps they have burned all of those buildings.

I2: Do you know if the army has returned there again?

R1: People say that the army has returned, but we haven't seen any evidence. Perhaps the houses are still there, or perhaps now they have been burned. In all, I would say that the soldiers destroyed about twenty houses when they first arrived. After this, I'm not able to say. Who knows?

I1: And the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) never passed by there to burn the jail or vandalize it?



The abandoned market in Yalambojoch, 1/83.

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R1: Once, the EGP came, but that was almost two years ago. They didn't burn the jail; they only slashed it with their machetes, and broke into the courthouse. That was at night. We didn't see when they did these things. There was only that first visit. They didn't touch anyone. All was peaceful then.

But the government came to kill. Surely, this was ordered. The first time, no. But the second time they killed...and we fled.

### Flight From the Village

R1: They killed five people in Bulej as well, before they came to Yalambojoch. They began in Bulej. There they first brought death. There had not been any killing in other villages when we fled, except for in San Francisco, where they had completely destroyed all the people.

I believe no one is left in any of the villages now. There is only silence. Everyone fled from Yalambojoch. Even a blind man followed us here to Kilometer 15! Even the blind. He came all alone. By the grace of God. The elderly, though, all fell on the road. When they could no longer bear the cold, they died on the road. And two little children died from the heavy rainstorm.

It took us a day to reach here. We left there before dawn, while it was still dark, and travelled about 8 *leguas*. Some came by road, but others came through the jungle. We all got soaked, and we were all very frightened.

While we were travelling, we couldn't stop for a moment. We were all frightened. We didn't even carry provisions in our shoulder bags. Now we have nothing...We left without shoes, because we came running. We had nothing to eat.

Some people say that soldiers have already gone to Aguacate; others say they went to Yuxquén and burned it.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 5

*In the following narration, a man from Yalambojoch who witnessed an attack by the Guatemalan army on members of his family and village describes those murders and his own escape. His family was among the approximately thirty women and children killed by government soldiers on the road to Yaltoya as they were fleeing Yalambojoch after the massacre at Finca San Francisco.<sup>1</sup>*

I fled because the houses had been set on fire by the government soldiers. I was outside the village where my house is, and I saw that the houses were burning. So I fled with my wife. We set out on the road which comes here to Mexico. As we were travelling on the road, another group of soldiers of the government army came across my wife. There were about 200 or 300 soldiers. The women were walking on ahead, about 100 meters ahead of us. and we--three of us--were in the rear. The soldiers came across the women and killed them together with all the children. They were just women with their children. We could hear them firing shots to kill the women, so we fled. We left the road and hid. About 25 or 30 women fell dead there...so many women and children. My wife was 35 years old, one of my sons was 11 years old, another 9, and another 7. All were killed.

I continued the journey in the jungle. We could no longer walk on the road, because one could encounter government soldiers. In this way, but with a lot of difficulty, we were able to enter Mexico. We didn't bring anything with us, because our houses had been burned. We left on the day the army returned, and all the people of Yalambojoch fled. But the dead were left there. the thirty dead women, men, and children.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is Document 8 of the original report.

<sup>2</sup> There is a contradiction here. Previously, the respondent states that women and children were killed, but does not identify any of the victims as men. In Document Number 7, the victims are also described as women and children.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 6

People from the town of Yalanhuitz heard about the massacre at Finca San Francisco from a survivor who passed through neighboring Yalaurel on his way to Mexico. In the following narration, a 60-year old man from Yalanhuitz describes the confusion in his village resulting from the rumors of the massacre, the encounter with the survivor, and the subsequent flight to Mexico. This refugee and a Mexican man present during the interview at Agua Tinta Refugee Camp in Chiapas retell the story of the massacre at San Francisco as they heard it from the survivor. They also describe visits by the army to several towns in the area of Yalanhuitz, during which the soldiers offered villagers money and land to return to their homes. Many were killed subsequently.<sup>1</sup>

I1 and I2: Interviewers

R1 and R2: Refugees

R1: We fled because of the massacre of San Francisco. Our settlement was close by; it is two, or at most three *leguas* from San Francisco to Yalambojoch. They came here to kill everyone. We heard it. At least one person fled.

There is a weekly market day in Ixquisís, on Sundays. So, we asked a man who lived there, "What's going on? Are there killings?"

"No," he said. "Only one person has died," he said.

"But we have heard that a lot of people have died."

"No," he said. "Only one, no one else. He tried to flee. 'Where do you think you're going?' the soldiers asked him. Because he had fled, they said, 'Let's shoot him.' Only one died there, and no more," he said.

"Ah, that's good, because we had heard that several had died."

"No," he said. Then I went to see my son.

"I had better go and find out for myself. I'm going to find out whether it is true, or whether it is a lie," my son said.<sup>2</sup>

There were no people passing by. My son left in the afternoon, around five o'clock. He took two other friends with him.

There was only one person nearby, perhaps a *legua* away from San Francisco. He was the only one who had escaped. There were chickens and pigs...but animals were the only things left when my son arrived. The one person who was left began to tell my son what had happened.

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<sup>1</sup> Document 9 of the original report, this interview was taped on 3 September 1982.

<sup>2</sup> The people of Yalanhuitz, who are about an hour away from Ixquisís, a village which has a Sunday market, received contradictory reports of what was happening in San Francisco, which is about three *leguas* away. On the one hand there was a rumor that there had been a large massacre. It is suggested that this rumor stemmed from the fact that people from San Francisco were not going by on their way to the market as they did on other occasions.

Survivor Tells Villagers About the Massacre in San Francisco

R1: "There was a massacre when the army came. Now, in San Francisco, everyone is dead. Perhaps about ten or fifteen escaped. But none of the women or the people in the church or the courthouse did," he said.

"There were two groups of soldiers. They said, 'Let's gather everyone together. Let's kill the people.' Infants, children--everyone--dead.

"I was the only one to see it. No one is left. Who knows how many were in the church, or in the courthouse? Why have you come? The soldiers are still there," he told my son.

So my son returned. Now we knew that the army was there. "Next they're going to Yulaurel. That's where they'll be," he said. That was where the man who came from where the people died went. He had been left there, in San Francisco, underneath the dead. He is a very old man now. There was a window in the church and that was how he escaped. Very slowly, he got away. His clothes, his pants... everything was soaked in blood. His boots were filled with it. He stayed hidden underneath the dead. Then little by little he moved toward a window and climbed out. Then he let himself down slowly.

The soldiers, meanwhile, were eating a steer which the people had killed. "We're going to kill your steer; you better not give us one belonging to your *patrón*... You must have one," they said. "You have to kill it, because we're going to eat."

R2: "Let's eat first," they said.

"You can eat afterwards," said another. But they were already eating. they finished, they killed everyone.

The one left underneath the dead didn't move. He says there were two of them hiding there.

"Now we have killed them all," the soldiers said.

"But we lay there as we had fallen. Then the soldiers left," he said.

One soldier came back in to look once more. But he wanted to cook his food first, since all that remained of the meat was a little bit of the leg. So he left everything as it was and went to look at the steer again. The people were dying, so he left to take care of himself. Then, the one who had not died slowly got up. He went out through a window, slowly lowering himself, and then he fled to the jungle where he hid.

There was another one, also. "Take it easy and you'll get away. Move slowly," said the one to his *compañero*. But the other man had his boots on when he went out. The soldiers heard the noise of the boots and came to kill him. But the first one had taken off his boots and was walking slowly in his bare feet. He was able to hide himself in the woods and he escaped. He kept going, and arrived in Yulaurel. There he had many friends.

"Let's go, quickly," he told them. "The army is about to come. They have just killed everyone in San Francisco. Let's go. They're coming, they're coming to kill," he said. "Why don't you leave? Tomorrow you reach Yalanhuitz. There

is a place called Río Seco close by. After passing there, you will arrive at Ixquisís. Then you will reach where you are going," he said.

So, all of the people of Yulaurel fled in the night. They left behind all their chickens, their possessions...they sought refuge here in Santa Marta.

We heard him, and my son said, "Now this trouble is going to come to us. Everyone in San Francisco is dead, perhaps 200 died, or at least 150. Now they're going to come here. They're already in the area. Tomorrow they will be at Río Seco, and the day after tomorrow they will be at Yalanhuitz. Let's go."

### Flight of the Villagers

- R1: We fled, and came to El Patará. We survived, but now we are foreigners. There are no longer any people in Yulaurel, because the soldiers came, and then returned again. But now they won't come, because there aren't any more people there. Perhaps now that everyone has fled, they will come in helicopters to Ixquisís. But now we have all fled.
- R2: San Francisco is where it began. The slaughter was in San Francisco and... Pojóm?
- R1: Yes, Pojóm, which is above Ixquisís.
- R2: They killed there first. Then they returned again to Yulaurel, but there were no people. Then they went to Triunfo, Río Seco, other villages...
- R1: Yes, everywhere.
- R2: That is when the people heard the news. First they heard that there had been only one death, then they found out that the soldiers were killing people. Then they came here, but there were no longer any people here, so they were only able to burn down the houses.
- R1: We reached El Patará and spent about a week there. That was when they burned all the houses. There are some who say they are from Ixcacchí. This was the first place to burn. It must have been Monday when they burned Ixcacchí. They burned everything that day. Day after day they burned down the houses. Then they came to Yalanhuitz to sleep in the courthouse.
- "Tomorrow we will burn down the houses in Yalanhuitz," they said.
- They destroyed everything. About 100 or 150 soldiers came in fifteen helicopters and were left off in Ixquisís. All day they were arriving. They say the army is still in Ixquisís.

## Strategic Hamlets and Civil Patrols

R2: Right now in Ixquisís there is a training camp. The soldiers go into those places for no other reason than to control the people. They say, "The government isn't killing. The government is very good. The government loves you very much. We have just come to take a census."

R1: Yes, that's how they come at first.

R2: They were taking a census of everyone, and saying that it was very good. They said that they were going to bring electricity and water, and that they would provide medical care and supply the people with food. In this way they deceive the people. Then they form a civil patrol. Patrollers, armed with sticks, are on duty all night long.

R1: All day and all night, some ten or fifteen men are on duty. We have fifteen during the day, and the same during the night. When the night ends, another fifteen take over. Since they're not able to eat, that's how they'll kill them...[ironic laughter].

R2: That's how they conscripted them in San Francisco also, by telling them that the army would be returning again. When they returned, everyone in the civil patrol was working. That's how it was.

"We came to tell you that your government says that everyone must be here. If anyone is away now, we want them all to be here tomorrow. We're going to bring oats, clothing, and a lot of other things. A very large helicopter will come with the things we're going to give away." This is what the soldiers told them.

R1: The coffee and cardamom were cut.

"We're going to clear all this land. There won't be any jungle left when we're through. A helicopter is going to come to the landing field, and we're going to gather together all the coffee and the cardamom," they said.

R2: The soldiers were going to help the villagers to work, to gather the harvest, and to weed the coffee groves.

R1: "We have now signed the agreement to buy and clear the land. We are going to do away with the *fincas*," they said. "So, now you're going to have your own land, and you will no longer have to pay rent."

R2: This is how the soldiers came and controlled the people. The next day, all the people came to get their share of what the soldiers were going to give them. They came of their own accord.

The soldiers said, "Now, everyone come, and kill a cow. We're all going to eat and be happy."

R1: The soldiers all come by helicopter. It seems that they scarcely use their feet.

R2: "Gather yourselves together, because we're going to have a meeting," the soldiers said. "A large helicopter will be coming soon." And a large number of soldiers landed.

Then they said, "Soon a large plane will come, so gather yourselves together. Let's eat, let's drink, and let us talk. Let the men go into the church, all the men. And let the women go into the *agencia*.\* Everyone. We're going to have a discussion.

When they were all gathered together, the soldiers began to execute the women. They dragged them outside, stripped them, cut off their breasts, and slashed them. That is how they did it. They killed someone, and threw the body on a heap. Then they brought out another, and another. They began doing this at about 11 o'clock they say.

R1: Yes.

R2: By 3 in the afternoon the soldiers had not yet finished executing the women. There were several more to go yet. So, they threw a bomb and killed off those who were left. Then they began with the men. They began to kill them as well. But as it grew late, they began to tire. They had already killed a large number. One by one they were bringing them out to execute, execute, execute...but the soldiers were growing tired, so they decided that they should put them all in a heap and set off a bomb, because this wouldn't take any effort on their part. So, they set off the bomb. There were only two that survived, because when the soldiers were ordered to pile the people up in a heap, these men were in the middle of them... They had thrown themselves there before the bomb went off, so it didn't harm them. There were two who survived. On top of them were the dead. Night was beginning to fall.

One of them heard the other moving, and he moved.

"Are you alive?"

"Yes."

"Let's get away when it gets later."

It began to get dark. That was when the rain began to fall, and one of them got away. But he was full of blood. He could barely breathe through his nostrils. When he moved, he couldn't see. The church was closed. He took off his shoes, climbed out very slowly, and took off. But the other fell heavily. The soldiers saw him, and some began shooting. They shot him. This is what the soldiers did.

R2: The other one reached Santa Marta. I believe he's there, in Santa Marta now. That's what they say. I don't know his name. He is a young man, who freed himself from among the dead. He told us everything that had happened.

R1: Yes, that's so. We were in Patará, and he went there to tell about it, so we heard him.

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\* *Agencia* refers to the building which housed the village cooperative.

### Soldiers Persuaded Some to Return

R2: There in Ixcán they laid a similar trap. [See map.] They told the people, "Why are you getting involved in this? Come back. The war is now over, and there is peace. Come back." They came to them very politely. "The good soldiers are here. They are close by. They are giving away 600 *quetzales* to each person. Come back, they want you to return and live in your homes." There were perhaps five or six who came back.

They went back to meet the soldiers. "Come, boys." They embraced them and everything. "And take this." They gave each of them 600 *quetzales*. "Go and bring your families. Even to the children we're going to give 600 *quetzales*, to every one of them. Go and live happily in your houses. We're going to leave you in your houses."

"Very well," the people said. They picked up their belongings. They had been staying in Mexico, but they all went to speak with the soldiers.

"Yes, we're going to give you this." And right there they gave 600 *quetzales* to each one. Even to the children, they gave 600 *quetzales*. So the people brought everyone. But when everyone was there, in their homes, the soldiers took away the money and rounded everyone up. They threw a small bomb into the middle of the people. Then, they didn't waste bullets, but cut the people down with machetes. All were cut down. Just with machetes. This is the way they deceive people. Although the people had already fled to Mexico, they went back. All this was what happened in Ixcán, and caused the people to flee from Patará.<sup>3</sup>

R1: When we heard what the soldiers did in Ixcán, we thought that they were going to do the same thing here. We didn't know if they would come, but it was almost certain. The people said, "Let's leave." We met together in Patará. By now about twenty, or perhaps forty people were in Patará. "Let's leave. Perhaps they will do to us here what they did in Ixcán. They went there to kill. What can we do about it? Let's flee right now. Let's get going."

It's now about a week or two since we arrived. They have already burned our houses. It's about a week since they burned the houses. The army came to take us back to Patará. Most of the soldiers didn't enter [Mexico], but remained on the border. Only a few entered. Some of the civil patrol members had stayed in Yalanhuitz and they showed the army where the road to Patará was. They went with the soldiers to show them where we were.

R2: Some of the civil patrol members were in league with the soldiers. They were not killed by the soldiers, but were treated leniently. They showed the soldiers where the guerrilla camp was, and where their *compañeros* had gone. This is what those who stayed did.

R1: "They're going to kill us otherwise," they said. "They're going to kill us." That's why they did it.

When they showed the soldiers where we had gone, the soldiers didn't kill them [ironic laughter]. This is what our *compañeros* are doing. That is why the army came to Patará. They came at night, and about fifteen of our *compañeros* came to

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<sup>3</sup> Because of this, the people of Yalanhuitz abandoned their first place of refuge on Mexican soil, and fled to Santa Elena, from where they then relocated to Camp Agua Tinta, where the interview took place.

show the way. Our *compañeros* entered [Mexico], but the army stayed at the border. They came to find out whether we were in the huts. There were some who called from the border at Yulchén, and said they came to buy things. This is what they were telling us, so late at night.

But we had heard the day before, "The army will come in the night to kill you because you have come here." So, I went to hide in Santa Elena.

"Don't go. They're not coming until tomorrow, or tomorrow night," said the *compañeros*, there on the border. These were the *compañeros* who came to warn us, so we listened to them.

Now we knew for ourselves that the army was coming to kill us. They told us, "They are going to come at night." We told the people that the soldiers were going to come in the night. They said, "Let's leave. Let's leave in the afternoon, or in the night. Some left in the night for Santa Elena.

That is why we left Patará. It was certain that the soldiers would come at night. So, we left, because they were coming to kill us. That is why we made another trip.

The civil patrol members are still in Ixquisís, but there are no longer any people in Yalanhuitz.

I1: Everyone...?

R1: Yes. Everyone has gone to Ixquisís.

R2: All the civilian patrollers who stayed there had to be in agreement with the soldiers. All who stayed on are now registered as non-guerrillas--that they're not anything but civilian patrollers. They say that there is a training camp in Ixquisís where all these patrollers are now being trained for combat. Almost all the towns are now left without people.

R1: They say that about ten people died in Bulej. Who knows? Perhaps that many, perhaps more. Bulej is far away, so we did not hear. It's about four *leguas* away, near San Mateo.

They were good people, but the soldiers were saying otherwise, and for that reason the soldiers started the civilian patrols. The soldiers were the ones who said it

R2: Some of the civilian patrollers have fled also. They left behind their posts, and fled. Some are here. But some felt powerful, as if they are part of the government. By being with the soldiers, they feel that they are a part of the struggle. That is why they have not fled. But some did. The soldiers let them know, with force, that if they do not collaborate, they will be killed. That is why they had to join them. It wasn't because they were bad people. The army picked them out, "You, and you--you're going to be one, and now!" Only afterwards did they find out what was going on.

R1: One went to gather a little firewood, and soldiers went with him, they say. He went to gather firewood. There were two of them. Two soldiers went to watch over him when he went to gather firewood. Even when he went to the bathroom...

R2: They are always watching them. They can't run away.

R1: That is what is happening to the *compañeros* who are still there.

### The Flight From Yalanhuitz

R1: Yes, if we had not fled from Yalanhuitz, they would have killed us. Some left on Monday, others on Saturday, others on Sunday. We had to pack some things first-- a little corn and some animals. We left them there in the forest. We took all the corn, and fled. That's how we came.

R2: Those who had been conscripted first, fled first. They already had the notice. Others were delaying, but when they saw that most were going, these last also fled.

R1: The army had passed through earlier, in order to round up all the people. All the people came together then. The soldiers spoke with us, saying, "Now you're not going to leave, because there is no killing. It will cost you a lot of money. You have your clothing. Come and work. Who is so poor that he does not have any clothing? Come. We have money to give you, and clothes. Come and get them, whoever needs clothes, come."

The soldiers spoke in Spanish. There were no Indians; they were all *ladinos*. They were dressed in *pinto*. Their pants, shirts, boots, and hats were all *pinto*. There are four styles<sup>4</sup>, but we didn't see all of them. The soldiers say, "Even though we may not return, we have other *compañeros* who are dressed differently." This is what they were saying when they first came. But their pants were all *pinto*.

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<sup>4</sup> The respondent indicates a familiarity with various uniform styles of government soldiers. He may be referring to differences in the clothing worn by different branches of the military, different divisions within the army or by regular army soldiers versus the several kinds of military police in Guatemala. He is not clear on this point.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 7

*In this interview a young man from El Poblado describes how Guatemalan army soldiers forced village members to form civil patrols armed only with sticks and rocks; soldiers then ordered them to send 'suspects' to the army garrison to prove the village's loyalty. This respondent describes the patrol members' reluctance to send people whom they considered innocent to a probable death, and their fear of army reprisal for failure to do so. He explains how the villagers heard the shooting at Finca San Francisco, were warned by a survivor and then fled to Mexico.<sup>1</sup>*

I: Interviewer

R: Refugee

R: The army came to El Poblado and asked us if we would organize and join them. Then they asked us to do a general census and to form a civil patrol. If strangers were seen in or near the village, the patrols were instructed to kill them. Since I know a little about these things, I took the census to the military zone in Huehuetenango. We counted 377 people and about 74 houses. I gave them all the figures about the children and old people.

"Haven't you seen guerrillas around?" the major said to me.

"Well, no," I said. "We have heard of them, but we haven't seen anyone with our own eyes. Who knows what sort of people they are?"

"But we know that you people are guerrillas," he said.

"Well, we don't know any of that sort of people. Who knows what they are like," I said.

"Well, look," said the major. "If you are with the government..."

"Of course we are, that's why we are here with all our people. The people didn't come, but I brought this list which means they are in the village."

"Well, OK," he said. "What we are going to do then is leave 60 guns in the village of El Poblado. With these guns you can fight the guerrillas."

"OK, that's OK, if you are so kind, we will accept," I said.

I: When was this?

R: Around the 20th or 21st of June.

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<sup>1</sup> This is Document 10 of the original report. The interview was conducted at Amparo Agua Tinta Refugee Camp on September 3, 1982. The refugee was interviewed alone at first; later other members of the village joined him.

R: The major also said, "Look, there's one thing. If these arms get to the guerrillas not a seed will be left in El Poblado, not a single seed. We will mow it down. I'll make sure that my army pulverizes you," he said.

"Don't bring any arms, then, because those guerrillas steal arms," I said.

"If you give them these arms, not one seed will be left. We will set fire to you," he said.

"Well, OK then." That's how it happened.

Then he took the list. "Make a copy. I have to stamp the copy you take." he said.

"OK, then." I made a copy and he stamped and signed it. Then when I returned to El Poblado from Huehuetenango, I explained to all the people what was going to happen. About 11 days later I learned that it was not just our village which had to bring these figures to Huehuetenango, but 22 other villages also. The mayor of San Mateo told us, "You've really done it now. Those of you who went to Huehuetenango have planted your stake, now the noose is around your necks. You're tied up now. You're fixed now. In two or three days you're going to see a lot of racket around here. The army is going to do you in. There are going to be lots of dead," he said.

I: Is the mayor a *ladino*?

R: No, he is an Indian.

### Events in El Poblado

R: Two days later, the helicopter came. We were not hurt; the helicopter just went flying over us. Then, an hour later, we heard a lot of noise coming from San Francisco. We were listening. The soldiers got there first. That's where they started killing people. They killed them with machetes.

"This is what we'll have to do with all of these villages, on down," they said.

That's how we found out and we thought--us, why us? But who are we that they won't kill us, too? Before they come we'd better leave. That's why we decided to go. By the time they got to our village, we were gone. When they saw that no one was there, they searched and searched for us. Maybe they thought that we were hiding in the mountains; they looked but found no one.

Finally, after we'd been here about 16 days, they burned our houses. That was the only pleasure they could get. Some of the houses had straw roofs; others had tin roofs. Some were made of tin, others of wood boards, but they were all burned!

That's the story of how we fled. After we got here, our *compañeros* told us the story of how all the others had died. So that's how it happened. Their situation is much sadder than ours. Ours wasn't bad because we were warned that in other places people had been killed. So we decided to leave.

### The Massacre at San Francisco

I: Could you hear gunfire when the people of San Francisco were being killed?

R: Yes, we could hear it. We could hear the noise made by the bombs too. It was close. Nobody went to look. We could hear everything from where we were.

I: What happened?

R: They said that when the soldiers arrived at San Francisco the first time, they were asking for the mayor. The people told them that he was there.

"OK," they said, "we are going to have a meeting here in the courthouse." So they called all of the people together. They herded them all inside. They put the men in the courthouse. They put the women in the church because it wasn't far away. They shut them all up. Then they took money from the houses. There was a cooperative there, too. The soldiers took all the money and said, "Now give us a bull to eat, one of yours." "OK," said the people. They obeyed out of fear, even though it would have been easy to take one of the *patrón's* cattle. Then the lieutenant said, "Now you have to kill another bull, but this time one belonging to the *patrón*."

"No," the people said. "We will not touch the *patrón's* cattle."

"Ah, so you are all very clever."

"No, we aren't."

"If you don't give us another one, you know what we'll do."

"Yes, we know, we are trapped here," said the people.

So, because they did not please the soldiers by killing another bull, the soldiers started with the children--they took the children in groups of 10, and stabbed them to death. They smashed their heads open, and cut the poor little creatures' guts out. They killed them and piled their bodies together.

Then the soldiers brought the women out and stabbed them until they were all dead. They did all of this in front of the courthouse. Then they started with the men.

I: Did the men resist?

R: No, how? There was a window there, but the courthouse was surrounded. The soldiers took the men, too, in groups of 10. They didn't shoot them; they stabbed them. Then, I don't know how one of the brothers thought of it, but he went to a window there in the back, and it wasn't locked. He opened it, and many escaped. Right after the men climbed through the window, the soldiers started shooting. Many died; only nine men escaped. Everyone else remained. The rest were taken to the church, but the soldiers didn't set fire to it. They were all left there. The ones who escaped went down to a village close to San Francisco called Yulaurel. One of them had bullet wounds here and another one

R: had one here [indicating the spots]. The army was coming behind them. When they got to Yulaurel, they told everyone, "San Francisco has been destroyed, we are the only ones who escaped." The people of that village left with them, and no one was killed. It was around 10 o'clock in the morning that the people of San Francisco were massacred.

### Description of San Francisco

I: Is San Francisco a *finca* or a village?

R: It's a *finca*, where people live. There are about 70 houses. Before, there were around 150 houses, but they were divided; one group stayed at the *finca* and the rest moved off of it.

I: Which group was killed? Those who lived inside or outside the *finca*?

R: The ones who lived at the *finca*. The *patrón* of the *finca* is the colonel in Huehuetenango. Bolaños is his last name. I know his first name but I can't remember it. Death didn't come to those who lived outside the *finca*.

I: What's the name of their village?

R: It's called Yulaurel.

I: Had the people bought the land from the *patrón*?

R: No, that's nationally owned land. It no longer belongs to the *patrón*.

### More on the Civil Patrols

I: Tell me, were the soldiers finally able to establish a civil patrol in El Poblado or not?

R: Yes. We selected the people ourselves. As we became organized, we formed groups of 10 or 20, depending on what people wanted to do. Then they instructed us-- if we see a man passing through, we register him. If he's not carrying any knives, or arms, and his papers are in order, then he is free to go. If a man comes through who doesn't carry papers, then we send him to the municipal government. Then the municipal government sends him to the army.

But many of the villages were worried about what happened to the people after we sent them to the army. The truth is, there are some people who don't have papers, but we can't send these innocent people to their deaths.

But we told the soldiers, "We will do as you say, we'll be standing with our big sticks," we said.

"Look for some long, long sticks," the soldiers told us. "Find some rocks to kill the guerrillas."

Now they had us around the neck.

R: But when a person would come through without papers or arms, we'd say, "You're not carrying anything. OK, go ahead." That's what we did in villages where Indians lived. But where there is a farm with *ladinos*, there is no mercy. If someone arrives there without papers, then they take him to the municipality, the municipality sends him to the army, and he never returns. That's how the patrols work there.

The soldiers from Huehuetenango told us, "When you send somebody here to the municipality, that lets us know that you are in favor of the government, and so you will receive arms. But, if you don't send anybody, then we know that you are involved with the guerrillas." Who could bring themselves to send someone? But some villages did send people. The civil patrol from Matazano village, about 3 *leguas* from here, sent three men. They claimed that they were strangers, but they were from San Mateo, an Indian village. When the men arrived at the municipality, the army wasn't there, so someone sent for the soldiers. One of the men tried to explain what was being done to them, but...

"So, are these guerrillas?" the soldiers said. They were amazed. One soldier took one ear and another took the other ear and that's how the men were dragged away. The people who witnessed it screamed, terrified. After that the soldiers tied the men up in sacks. They tied them tightly, and then they flung them against the walls of the municipal building. What strength the soldiers have! After that they threw them on the ground and stomped on top of them. Those soldiers behave like animals. Then they took them out of the sacks again and shot them.

The men killed were from San Mateo. That's where they were from.

I: Who told you this?

R: Someone from my village was there when this happened. Even he was shaken after seeing that.

After the soldiers killed them, they took off their shirts and cut them. Then the men were hung, they say. They were left hanging for two days--upside down, not in a standing position. After two days who knows what the soldiers did with them. They buried them, or let them rot; we don't know what happened after that point.

There are about 100 people in the civil patrol in San Mateo, because it is a big town.

I: Were they involved voluntarily or not?

(More people from El Poblado arrive and also respond to the questions.)

R: Well, not voluntarily because many were forced. If you don't participate on the day your turn comes up, then you're sentenced--sentenced to death. They rotate turns. One group will begin its turn in the morning, until about 6:00 A.M. the next morning. That means that it lasts about 24 hours. Then, it's another group's turn.

I: Do the soldiers give the patrollers arms?

R: No, because the soldiers say they need a captive first. If we had dragged a stranger into them, then that would have meant that we were fighting on the side of the government; then they would have given us arms. The others, the people from Matazanos that I was telling you about, they got arms because they brought three men to the army. They got 22-caliber rifles; the government gave them arms because they are working for the government.

### Other Villages

I: Have the people of Matazano had trouble with the government?

R: No, not yet. They get along well with the government.

I: What other villages get along well with the government?

R: Ixquisís and Pojóm. And then another one that is below Ixquisís, called Villa Linda. A village near the border called Yulchén, and another village there are working directly with the government. According to them there was no reason to flee. Some villages didn't want to go to Mexico, so they stayed.

"Why leave?" many of them said. "This is a good government, they will help us. They'll help us later on; they will give us money, hospitals, and who knows what more, everything." But we had already heard those promises and knew that only death followed.

Now they say that if we return, those who stayed will be free; they will live. But if we stay here then they will die. That's the new plan. Every time they come here, they say, "Why don't you come back? The war is over." But we say, "No. Once we have become refugees the government will not grant us amnesty."

"If you return, the war will end, but if you stay, the war must continue," they say. That's the plan they have.

I: So there are people from El Poblado that didn't come?

R: Almost everybody from El Poblado came. I think only two middle-aged men stayed.

I: Why did they stay? Why haven't they been killed?

R: Who knows, who knows how they live with all of this in their hearts. There was also an old leper that stayed. They don't live in Poblado anymore; they live at Chaquenal where some *ladinos* live.

The *patrón* lives there; that's where they were taken. They are there working in the civil patrols. That's all they do. Everyone in that village fled, everyone. That is our story.

Other Facts About the Village

I: Did you have a school?

R: Yes, but the teacher left two or three years ago. He didn't want to live there. The school was always closed.

I: Did a priest come to say mass?

R: Father Roland from San Mateo visited us every three months. It had been about two months since he had come. He was due to come in August again, but everybody had left.

We had a market, but it wasn't doing very well. People didn't gather together much, and there were lots of things that we had trouble getting. Also, we didn't have much experience in setting it up. That's why it didn't really work.

I: What villages had markets?

R: There is one in Ixquisís. It's a *finca* and everybody goes there.

I: Is there a market in Finca San Francisco?

R: No, but there is one in Yalambojoch, a large village near San Francisco.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 8

*The respondents in this interview are members of a family from the village of El Aguacate, west of San Francisco. They and over 200 others had bought small parcels of land from the government and had organized a successful farming community. The respondents describe their experiences in the civil patrol and their flight upon hearing that members of the Yalambojoch civil patrol had been shot by the army.<sup>1</sup>*

I1, I2: Interviewers

R, RX: Refugees interviewed

R: I was happy living with my family. I had a plantain and a sugar cane crop, and a wooden sugar mill for grinding. I had a coffee patch, about 70 *cuerdas*\* of *milpa*, and a bean patch. My *milpa* is ripening now.

I wasn't going to leave Guatemala, but then we heard about San Francisco, how the government soldiers passed through there. They went through asking if those other people had passed through. Then they came to Aguacate and they destroyed the town prison.

That happened more than a year ago. The government soldiers came to our village and they told us not to get involved with anyone, that we should be content the way we were. Well, we were happy doing our work, we don't know anything about these men they said were roaming around. We know nothing about what business they were involved in. We didn't know anything. It was peaceful in our village.

I left two houses and two work mules. I brought mules to carry a few things like my corn, but I abandoned everything else. I was...I was happy, until I heard about the killing at San Francisco. How loudly the bomb sounded! Nothing like that was happening in our village, but we didn't feel at peace anymore. Then the soldiers came to a village called Yalambojoch. It is very close to our village. Then, well, they began killing the men there too; they killed two of our young men also.

### Events At Aguacate

I1: Was it the army?

R: Yes. Look, brother, I saw the army, I saw soldiers.

I1: How were they dressed and armed?

R: They were this color here; it wasn't *pinto*. They left two men dead. They were this woman's brothers. The one they machine gunned to death was "X" and the other was "X1". That's why she was afraid. She came here, but it was a

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<sup>1</sup> This is Document 11 of the original report. The interview took place at Colonia Ejidal de *San Francisco*. The date of the interview was not noted.

\* A *cuern* is a unit of land measure equal to 435 square meters.

R: struggle to get here. She came full of sorrow. She is my wife. We left together. That's the true story of how we came here. We argued about it with many people, but we came.

"Let's go," we said to them, "let's go to Mexico. If we stay, they are going to kill us."

We left at night, in the pouring rain. By about 12 midnight we arrived at a place called La Trinidad. We made a fire. And the women had brought tortillas like they always do, as well as some *nixtamal*\*, so we ate. We didn't turn back, even though it was pouring rain. Near Finca La Trinidad, the smallest boy died. He was X2's son. His mother carried him, dead. We got to Quetzal at around 8 o'clock in the morning and we buried that poor little boy there. After we buried the little child we came here.

I2: Why did the boy die?

R: Who knows? He got sick, maybe because of the downpour, and then perhaps the cold killed him. But we still came here. Two people from Aguacate came and told us that they went to the village after we left. Who knows if our neighbors left or not? I think that they were killed. Who knows where they are now. We fled in fear, even though we didn't want to leave. Thank God we didn't die of hunger along the way, because our sisters and mothers struggled to bring a little corn and beans. That's why we are still alive. We couldn't bring our chickens or our turkeys; we had to leave all that behind. We went through a lot of trouble to bring a few blankets, but we came anyway. We give thanks to God for having been given some corn. We are very thankful. If the Mexican people had not gone to all that trouble to help us we would have died of hunger. We are indebted to them.

I1: What about the wives of the two brothers who were killed?

R: The wives came here. They are living with their children in a place called Cuauhtemoc.

I1: How did the two men die?

R: The two of them died at about 5 o'clock in the morning. They were at Aguacate, raising the flag. The army had ordered us to make a flag for Aguacate. The soldiers machine gunned them while they were guarding the flag in front of the municipal building. Only the two brothers were there, no one else. I don't remember what day it was, but their children know the dates.

I1: Did you leave that same day?

R: No, we stayed a few more days after the deaths of the two men. Then we came here. In San Francisco the soldiers leveled the town on the first visit. All they left was dirt. They set fire to everything--the women and children. They bombed everything, they machine gunned everything...everything.

I1: So the two men who died were your brothers-in-law?

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\* *Nixtamal* is ground corn used to make tortillas.

R: Yes.

I1: Had the army ordered them to guard the flag?

R: Yes, since the Colonel was at San Mateo, every now and then he sent orders for us to raise the flag. The day after they killed the two men in our village the soldiers went to kill the people of San Francisco. From there they went to Yalambojoch. And we came here. It was no good staying there anymore, so we decided we'd better get out. We left our homes; I abandoned my coffee crop.

### Current Situation Of the Village

I1: Is it ripe? Who is harvesting your crop?

R: No, not yet, it's still tender. I had so many plantains. I had plenty of plantains. We are always struggling to survive, but we used to celebrate on Sundays. But I left my goods; I abandoned everything.

I2: Did many people stay at Aguacate?

R: Only half stayed, but who knows if they are still there now.

I1: Why did some people come and others stay? Did those who stayed have some assurance that nothing would happen to them?

R: We are religious people in our village, we are Catholics, so the people, the ones who stayed, pleaded with God to protect them. They said, "God, we beg you, protect us, don't let us die. We won't leave." They were pleading with God. They put their faith in God the father, that's all, that's the assurance they had. But we decided that we should leave; we were too frightened.

### The Civil patrol

R: The army organized patrols in our village and for a while we worked on the patrols, but we heard that the soldiers organize the patrols and then they kill them. The soldiers machine gunned the patrol from Yalambojoch, and that's why we fled here.

I1: Did they give them arms or not?

R: No, not at all, only sticks. Just little sticks, no arms.

I1: Did they drop bombs from their helicopters?

R: Oh yes, they were bombing.

I1: At Aguacate?

R: No. Why should I lie? It's a sin to lie before God. They hadn't done any bombing at Aguacate yet. Only in San Francisco and Yalambojoch. They had not come to bomb us yet.

I1: How many men are required to form a patrol?

R: Fifteen or twenty, but I don't think they're there anymore. Who knows where they went? Maybe there is no one left in Aguacate. We don't know what has happened.

### Previous Incidents

I1: What did you think, the first time they came, when they set fire to the prison?

R: No, no, they didn't set fire to the prison, they just destroyed it with axes.

I1: Did they speak an Indian language?

R: No, just Spanish.

I1: Did they assemble the people?

R: They gathered the people together and said, "Let's go to destroy the prison. And they destroyed it with axes, that is how it happened.

### The Situation Of the Refugees

I1: When do you suppose the situation will calm down?

R: Who knows if it will last a long while or if it will stop? It's impossible to know what will happen.

I1: And who does this house belong to?

R: This is José Hernandez's house. He's from here, from Colonia Tzisco. He lives here too. He is giving us lodging here as a favor. He stays in the front of the house. We're going to plant some corn and find some seasonal work so we can earn a little money. Then we are going to build ourselves a hut. That's what we plan to do now. We don't plan to go back, that is certain. Not even at night to bring back some corn. It's far away. Suppose we arrive there and find soldiers--they'll shoot us. No, never again, never again.

### Facts About Other Villages

R: They set fire to many houses, even near here in a place called Yulaurel. At another place called Yalcastán, in Yalanbojoch, and in Yuxquén. The soldiers burned the houses in Yuxquén eight days ago.

I1: How many houses were there in San Francisco before they were burned?

R: There were about 70 houses. There were many houses, a church, a municipal building, and a school house.

Il: Yulaurel is a separate village?

R: Yes.

Il: Is that the place they call San José?

R: San José Yulaurel, no, that's another village. It's nearer to here.

### On the Massacre Of San Francisco

Il: What happened in San Francisco? Did anyone tell you about it?

R: We could hear the sounds of bombs and bullets. A few men escaped from San Francisco, and one of them told me the story.

"Well, we were at peace until the soldiers came," he said. "The soldiers separated the women and the children from the men, and they herded the men together and threw a bomb on them." This man was saved because they piled more people in after him, and so when they threw the bomb it didn't reach him.

Il: What's his name?

R: I think his name is "X". I'm not sure that's his name, but I saw him, and he told me.

He was the last one, lying on the ground. That's why the bomb didn't get him. After that he didn't move. Many of the men had fallen on top of him. Then the soldiers went to another house. He realized that the soldiers had left, and so he escaped through the window and ran into the brush. He was covered with blood. That is how the poor man escaped. That's the story he told me. I found him in Cuauhtemoc and we talked.

I escaped too, no bombs got me either. Thanks to God, the bomb didn't get me.

It would be nice if this trouble would die down or end. It brings tears to my eyes when I think about what has happened to my village, and all the things I had to abandon. I beg God to help me go back. But now it's impossible. If I returned I'd be killed, and that's why I won't go back. I hope for the Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ to do us the great favor of solving this big problem [sobbing]. We are asking God, day and night. We have land. I have the title, do you want to see it?

### Land Ownership In Aguacate

RX: We have titles, each one of us.

R: We have titles to our parcels. It's not government land, it's our property, our property. I brought the title. Here it is, look--the title to my parcel.

Il: [Reading the title] "From the desk of the Notary Public, parceled from Finca Yuxquén y Aguacate. Approved by the Director General of Agrarian Affairs in favor of tenant X-3, December 1956...In the presence of Eduardo Rivera Morales Notary Public and Government Scribe on December 2, 1956. Appearing before the court were Alberto Mendez Sandoval, 48 years old, and Mr. Eliseo Escobar Guitierrez, 40 years old, office worker. Both are married. The former appeared before the court in the role of General Director of Agrarian Affairs which he fulfilled by appointment of the Executive Division"--etc., etc., right? "The latter in the role of business manager of Sirs X-V"...Ah ha, so this title involves many people.

R: Yes, each one has title to his parcel.

Il: What are the measurements of your parcel?

R: Well, it is still held in *mancomún*; it's not parceled, it's commonly held.

Il: [Reading the title] "The nation owns the farm designated Yuxquén and Aguacate, situated in Nentón, and it measures 60 *caballerías*, 7 *manzanas*, or about 2703 hectares. 7,441 *varas*\*." How many owners are there?

[The respondents consult among themselves in their language.]

R: 288 of us own the land.

R: Here it says 222 people.

[The respondents agree.]

"They remain obligated to pay a total of 2,220 *quetzales*" together. Did you pay that together?

R: Everyone. Well, you see, it wasn't long ago, maybe two years, two years ago that we paid. We made another payment and then we made this payment. Everyone paid 10 *quetzales* in order to pay the debt for the land of Yuxquén and Aguacate. I think everyone got a receipt. We were happy because we had our land. We were not offending anyone, and we weren't disobeying the government's laws.

Il: So your land borders on Finca Chaculaj to the west, Finca San Francisco to the east, Yalcastán national lands to the north, and San Mateo Ixtatán to the south?

R: Yes. It also borders the national land of Salamay. There is a lagoon at one corner of the land called Laguna Brava.

We cancelled the debt, we sent one *quetzal* every year. They let us pay in annual installments. That's how all of that happened. We don't owe them anything.

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\* 1 *vara* = .836 sq. m.

Position Of Mexican Government

I1: So you're going to tell the Mexican government that it would be better to die here than to go back there.

R: Of course. We hope to find that they will let us stay here in Mexico. Now, we're not thinking about anything, we're happy. We sleep well. There at night when we heard the bombs, even the little children ran to the fields to hide. Why should we wait for death? We'd better go, we decided. That is why we came here.

We thought that the soldiers had calmed down, but we hear that the murdering continues.

I1: And those who came to tell you, they were your friends?

R: We are friends.

I1: But it wasn't to deceive you?

R: Well, who knows. No, we are relatives. We don't know if they are still alive, or if they are killed. It's impossible to know right now.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 9

*In this interview, four members of the village of Yalcastán describe thier struggles to find land in Guatemala after the patrón of a large finca in the area forced them to leave the lands they had traditionally worked. They describe the small community they developed and the disruption caused by the army's arrival in the area. The villagers fled to Mexico after being warned about the San Francisco killings by people from surrounding towns. They retell the story of the massacre at Finca San Francisco as they heard it from a survivor in the refugee camp Cuauhtemoc.<sup>1</sup>*

I: *Interviewer*

R1, R2, R3, R4, RX: *Refugees interviewed*

R1: We were born in Las Palmas where we lived with our fathers. The *patrón's* name is Augusto Castillo. He prevented us from working on the *finca* because he didn't want us to take the land. He told us that the land could not be taken. But we had to take a little bit to feed our families. He chased us out, and that's why we went to live on the national lands of Yalcastán.

We went to Yalcastán about 8 years ago. This child was born there. When we got there, we planted coffee and a few other things--plantains, sugar cane, and oranges. We were living there when the army came to kill us.

### Flight From Yalcastan

R1: The army arrived on July 19th (1982). That is when we came here with our families. When the army arrived in Yalcastán, they didn't find us, so they set fire to the houses. All of the houses have been burned.

We had already left, because we knew that in a village called San Francisco the army had massacred many people. They had burned down many houses and killed women and children. The people who escaped from there warned us that the army was coming and was murdering people. The people from Yalambojoch and from San Francisco, the people who are now refugees here, came and warned us. So we fled here also, and by the time the army got there they did not find us. No one was left, we all fled with our families. Then the soldiers burned our houses down. Yes, that's what the army has done. We weren't able to bring anything along with us, only our families. Some brought a few blankets, clothes, that's all; corn and the other heavy things were left behind. Beans, shovels, machetes, grinding stones, pots and pans were all left behind. I just brought my children.

I: And what were you able to bring, Ma'am?

RX: Nothing. I was only able to bring my little ones.

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<sup>1</sup> This is Document 12 of the original report. This interview took place at Kilometer 15 settlement on September 2, 1982.

## Previous Encounter With the Army

R1: The army was coming from Yalambojoch.

The army had been traveling through the villages for about 10 or 15 days. First, they came through and were lying to the people, telling them that they shouldn't flee because the soldiers were going to bring them food. The people trusted them in Yalambojoch and San Francisco and they didn't flee, but when the soldiers came back the second time, on July 19, that's when they began killing people. That is when people fled and came to warn us about the killings. So we came here in a hurry. That's why we weren't able to bring the heavy things with us, like the corn mill. We were able to bring only our little ones that are just learning to walk. That's all we could bring. The army burned all the houses down.

No one in Yalcastán died. Only the houses were burned.

I: Did you return to your village?

R1: No. Four or five days later, we saw that the houses were burned from a hill on this side of the border.

I: What were the houses made of?

R1: They were constructed of tin, cardboard, galvanized tin, shingles, and pine. The walls were made of wood and boards. The army poured gasoline on the houses and set them on fire. They burned our chapel, too, and the statues we had there. They burned religious records and a lamp that we used for our meetings. We had a record player and we couldn't bring it with us. They burned that as well as other things that we kept in the chapel--books, bibles, all the things we had there.

I: And how do you know they burned those things?

R1: Some people wanted to go and see if any of their things were left, and they saw that everything was burned. The soldiers had poured gasoline on all of the houses. Everything was burned down.

I: And when you came here did you warn any other villages?

R1: No, because there are no other villages near the border. The other villages are farther in the interior. The people from those villages are the ones that warned us about the army. That's how we came here. We left at about 3 A.M. It was raining hard. We arrived soaking wet with our children, without blankets or plastic to protect us. We got here at around 5 A.M. Some people hid in the mountains.

R3: We stayed in the mountains; my little one almost died because of the cold.

R1: About 30 or 35 houses were burned. Only 5 houses were left standing.

I: Why weren't they all burned?

R1: Who knows what they were thinking, but 30 houses were burned.

I: Did the army organize civil patrols?

R1: No, because we fled. They organize civil patrols where they find people. They take villages and close them off and if people flee they kill them.

I: The army was looking for guerrillas, weren't they?

R1: That is what they say, but people fled out of fear. We are ignorant and have no way of defending ourselves. We had to flee here. Thank God these people are good and have given us a place to set up our huts. Now we are here, and we stay in our huts.

### Economic Situation

I: Did you come here to work before?

R1: Yes, we came to find work in November and December, during the coffee harvest.

R2: We also came during the fumigation time in January and February.

I: And you left your crops there?

R2: We left our coffee crop, our plantains, our *milpa*, and bean patch--everything.

R1: The army is still there controlling the border.

R3: People say the soldiers entered the village of Gracias a Dios yesterday.

R1: We aren't going to go and get our crops because the soldiers might get us. What we are doing is working a little bit when we can so that we can manage with our families.

I: You left your corn behind?

R1: Yes, we left corn, beans, coffee, sugar cane, and orange and lemon groves. We had no animals, no cattle.

I: Where did you market your coffee?

R1: Sometimes in Guatemala and sometimes here, to whoever offers a better price, right?

### Warning From Survivors Of San Francisco

I: Could you hear when the soldiers were killing people in San Francisco or not?

R1: No, we did not hear the shots, but the people...they warned us. About five survived. They fled, and that's how we heard about San Francisco.

R2: There were only five survivors. The soldiers killed 250 people in San Francisco.

R4: I heard 350 people were killed...

I: And the five who escaped, where are they?

R2: One is in Santa Marta, he's working there. They killed his whole family--his father, his mother, his wife. He is all alone. He said that they gathered people together. They put them all together, the way you pile corn up, they threw a bomb in among them and that's how it all ended. That's why they fled, they had been out looking for some animals for the soldiers, so they didn't die, but everyone else was finished.

I: Where did this happen, in the church? the courthouse?

R1: In the courthouse. That's where they were killed. The soldiers gathered all of the people in the village and then started to heap them one on top of the other; they heaped them together like that and exploded a bomb.

#### The Massacre Of Yalambojoch

R1: The army was traveling around, and many people from all around came running looking for a way to get here, to Kilometer 15, to defend themselves. The army chased them and killed the people from Yalambojoch, women too.

R2: Forty people died. On the way [to Mexico], here near Yalcastán, children, old people, many died.

R1: They said that they were killed with machetes. Some were shot and kicked. Others were machine gunned. They were left dead on the path.

#### Concerning the Ríos Montt Government

I: Efraín Ríos Montt is saying that the guerrillas are doing the killing. Is that true?

R1: No, it's an outright lie of Ríos Montt's. The soldiers are the ones. There are women who have just given birth to their little ones, and the soldiers come and murder them. The old people who can barely walk with canes are killed too; everyone gets the same. Any child, even a one-year old, a six-month old, whoever they find. That's why almost everyone fled to the border.

#### More Facts About Yalcastán

I: Are your parents alive?

R1: No, they are deceased...

I: Is there a cemetery in Yalcastán?

R1: Yes, we have one.

R2: My parents are buried at Finca Las Palmas. That's where they remained.

R1: Las Palmas belongs to Don Augusto Castillo. He lived in a municipality called La Libertad, near Huehuetenango.

I: Castillo Recinos?

R2: Yes, Castillo Recinos is the one who threw us off his *finca* for working a piece of land.

I: Is Yalcastán national land? You didn't get land titles?

R1: No, INTA didn't resolve the situation for us; we requested the title many times and we traveled to Guatemala City. But they didn't resolve it or give us title. So we got nothing. The government didn't give us schools. We wasted three years looking for a school teacher, but they never got us one. And look how many children there are, none have learned a single letter.

R2: Many can't even speak Spanish.

I: But in Yalcastán they all know Spanish?

R2: Yes, they all speak, but they can't read because there is no school. The government doesn't give us teachers.

### The Church

I: Were you a catechist there?

R1: I was.

I: You too, or not?

R2: No, I worked as a health provider.

I: And where did you learn to become a health provider?

R2: It was through the Sisters from the United States who came and taught us about medicines and illnesses. We worked in Santa Cruz Barillas, Huehuetenango, Jacaltenango, Nentón, San Mateo, Soloma.

R1: I learned to be a catechist in the Huehuetenango Diocese. We took classes at the Apostolic Center there.

I: Do you know Father Daniel Jensen?

R1: Yes, I know him. I work at the Apostolic Center and in the different parishes too: Nentón, Barillas, Jacaltenango. I work in that area.

I: Is Nentón your village?

R1: Yes, Father Rafael is the priest there, but he is not there anymore. He left for the U.S. because he was from there. He went back because of the government offensive.

I: When did he leave?

R1: It was March of 1981. He let us know that he was planning to return. He wanted us to talk with him, but we were afraid to travel because the soldiers were controlling the roads. So we weren't able to talk with him, and we didn't hear from him. Later, another priest from San Mateo Ixtatán came to work with us.

I: What was his name?

R1: His name is Rolando Hennesey. He is the one who worked with us. He came to give classes, too; he must have gone back to the U.S. also because he stopped visiting the villages. The army is killing many people in the villages, that's why he can't come anymore. That's why there are no priests left.

What could we do? There were no priests, so many children went without baptisms.

I: As catechists, did you baptize the children?

R1: No, no...Yes...

I: You've got to make do, right?

R1: Yes.

I: And did you say mass?

R1: Yes, every Sunday and Wednesday. When there were children who needed to be baptized, we would give a talk on baptism, prebaptismal classes too. When there were weddings, we gave classes on marriage too, and on first communion to the children. That is what we did.

### Facts About the Families Of Those Interviewed

R2: My father was born here in Mexico in the municipality of Trinitaria. My mother was born there too. Well, I'm not certain where she was born.

I: Was she from Mexico? Why did they leave Mexico?

R2: Yes. Who knows why they went over to Guatemala? Oh, I know, they moved around on the *fincas*. I don't know what they were called--properties. So maybe the *patrones* were moving them around. I was born at Finca Las Palmas.

R1: My father was born in the Tzisco colony, and my mother was born at Finca Las Palmas in the province of Nentón. Our mothers are sisters. And he's my nephew.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 10

*Two people from the village of Yalcastán describe their flight to Mexico upon hearing of the killings in Yalambojoch. They were among a group of people who travelled to Nentón hoping to participate in the new agricultural credit program proposed by the Ríos Montt government. They describe their disillusionment upon learning that to accept government assistance the village would have to risk losing all of its lands if the harvest was insufficient. The respondents discuss their life in exile: the people who come to the border area and attempt to persuade the refugees to return to Guatemala; the rumors that the army is poisoning streams and animals; and their fear that they are not safe even in Mexico.<sup>1</sup>*

I: *Interviewer*

R1, R2: *Refugees interviewed*

I: Do you recall when the army arrived at your village?

R1: Yes, July 19th, at 11 A.M. They began burning the houses at 12 noon. Then they took the chickens and the other small animals and killed them. They ate some of them, and left the rest, along with our dogs, dead. After they finished burning the houses, they cut the cables that suspended the footbridge which many of us used. They threw it aside and now everything is destroyed. It was Ríos Montt's government army troops, *los pintos*.

I: How did you know it was *los pintos*?

R1: We knew they were coming to massacre the people because Ríos Montt says that you need to frighten the people in the villages. For this reason we knew it was his army.

I: How many houses or families were there in your village?

R1: We were 33 families. They burned 30 houses; only three remain.

I: And how many children were there?

R1: All together there were about 170 children. They all made it here to Kilometer 15.

I: When the army came to your village, did they kill anyone?

R1: They didn't kill anyone because we fled. We knew they had killed about 250 people, including the children, over in San Francisco, in the municipality of Nentón.

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<sup>1</sup> This is Document 13 of the original report. This interview took place at the Kilometer 15 settlement on August 26, 1982.

### Who are the Guerrillas?

I: The army claims that they are not responsible for the killings. They say that it is the guerrillas who are murdering the population. Is that true?

R1: No, it's a lie. For example, two- and three-month old babies don't know why they die. They die without having committed any crimes.

I: But isn't it true that the guerrillas are killing people?

R1: Of course not. I don't know what the government has in mind when it kills all the people in the countryside.

I: The government also claims that if the army is killing people it's because they support the guerrillas--because they are guerrillas. Is that true?

R1: No, no, that is a lie. We don't even know where the guerrillas operate. We don't know about that. We are people who don't have the knowledge to get involved in politics.

I: You are peasants?

R1: Yes, we are farmers, yes, Indians.

I: What language do you speak?

R1: We speak Spanish and the language of San Mateo Ixtatán. The government thinks we are involved in politics, but we're not even educated. We've never entered a school even as children. We have been requesting teachers from the government for three years. They were never sent.

### The Ríos Montt Government

I: People have been saying that after the March 23rd coup and the arrival of Ríos Montt's government, things were going to change. They said that it was peaceful in this part of Guatemala and that people could return. Is it true that with the Ríos Montt government things have improved?

R1: Well...Ríos Montt announced over the radio when he became president that he was going to give peasants fertilizer and credit through the Badesa Bank. They called us to Nentón. At Nentón we asked them if it was true that the government was going to give us credit. They said yes, but with the condition that if the corn did not yield they would take all the village land from us. We didn't want to commit ourselves to this because if they took our land away we would have no food in future years. This credit was just a swindle. It was simply a political move to take the land from peasants; that was Ríos Montt's intention, to take all the land.

I: So what we hear through the press outside of Guatemala is false? The government is not helping the peasants?

R1: No, no, they are not helping us. They are killing us. They use politics to deceive unsophisticated people like us. We are easily misled by them because we lack education; we can't read; we don't understand politics.

## The Massacre At San Francisco

R1: One man escaped. He told us his story.

The soldiers gave away kilos of sugar, beans and oats. They told them not to flee, because they planned to return with lots of food and clothing. The army also said it would bring other things, so that we would have a good harvest. After that the people began trusting the soldiers. When they returned the second time the massacre happened. They tricked the people so they wouldn't become frightened and flee. They lied, saying they were bringing food for the children, and the people trusted them. So when the soldiers came the second time, the whole village was there to receive them. When the soldiers saw that the whole village was gathered, they threw a bomb in the middle of the crowd, and that is how everyone died...

I: Where were the people gathered?

R1: They were gathered in the courthouse and in the church. They say that the men were killed in the courthouse, and that the women were killed in the church.

I: When did the army come to San Francisco for the first time and give away the food?

R1: Well, the first time they came around July 10th. The second time they came was Ju'y 19th.

On July 10th they went around announcing that they were giving food away: rice, beans, sugar and oats and a few other things like cans of sardines. They made it clear that people shouldn't flee because they would return bringing more, lots of food, food for the children.

R2: The only man who escaped was a health provider. He told us the story at Cuauhtemoc settlement. He said that the army claimed that there would be a celebration and told the people to bring a *marimba*\* to the courthouse and the church. Before the dancing was to begin, they told the people to bring two head of cattle to eat for the celebration. After eating, they said they wanted to dance. By now, all the people were gathered. Then they exploded a bomb in the church and another at the courthouse. That is how they murdered all of the people of San Francisco.

They killed the people with bombs...and machine guns.

I: In other places we were told that even the children were beaten to death or killed with machetes. Did they do similar things here or did they only use bombs and machine guns?

R2: They used bombs and machine guns. They gathered everyone together, and some people were beaten. The health provider said that there were 350 people killed. Only two men escaped.

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\* A *marimba* is a large musical instrument like a xylophone.

### Massacre At Yalambojoch

I: Did another massacre by the army take place nearby?

R1: Yes, 18 people fled from the village of Yalambojoch. They wanted to reach Kilometer 15 here in Mexico, but not all of them arrived safely with their families and the things they carried. The army caught up with them and killed them with machetes and machine guns. Others were stoned. The children carried by their parents were stoned to death, their heads crushed. They were all left dead on the path. On July 19th, at about 5 P.M., 18 died there.

### Lies, Promises, and Other Dangers

I: We have learned that there are other people living near here who are being told that they should return, because the army will protect them. They are told that nothing will happen to them, that the army will not harm them. Is this true?

R1: No. We don't want to go back because we have seen their massacres. We are afraid to return because we feel that these are lies--just politics--that the army is using. This is how we see it now.

People have come here to disturb the refugees. They tell them to return to their villages, because the teachers have come. But people don't even have houses to return to. All the villages have been burned. People will not return, because they fear another massacre. No one from here has gone back. All are refugees.

I: Why do you think these people come to ask the refugees to return home?

R1: I don't know. Maybe to kill us. This is something we haven't figured out.

We have heard that the Rfos Montt government was poisoning the water, the crops, and the lands.

I heard over the radio that in the region of Huehuetenango the pastures and animals are being poisoned. It seems that many cattle, horses, and sheep died. It is the government that is poisoning the animal's pasture.

I: Do you believe that here in Mexico you are in danger of being poisoned by water that comes from there?

R1: That is very possible that water can come here by the river. Water knows no national boundaries and crosses into other countries. That's why we are always afraid.

I: Thank you very much.

## DOCUMENT NUMBER 11

*In this interview, a man from La Ciénaga describes how Guatemalan soldiers murdered 15 women and children from Yalambojoch who were trying to flee to Mexico. He recounts the history of his community's attempts to obtain land, and his fear that the Guatemalan government is acting in collusion with large landowners to rid Guatemala of its Indian population.<sup>1</sup>*

I: Interviewer

R: Refugee

R: My name is Antonio. I am from La Ciénaga. I have been here about 18 days. It takes about an hour to walk to La Ciénaga from here.

I: Did you come alone or with your family?

R: I came with my whole family, thank God, and all of the people from the village. We are 245 people in all.

When we arrived, the commissioner came to talk with us and gave us permission to come here. We knew it was forbidden to cross the border, because it is the dividing line between countries. We came to ask for shelter. We moved about 50 meters in from the border. We were very close, there beside the border. It was OK for a few days, but it worried us. We were afraid that they might come after us. So we came here to Yaxán, but we are still afraid that they might come and kill us because, because we know in almost all the villages people are being killed. That's why we left.

I: What day did the army arrive in Yalcastán?

R: We don't remember.

I: Was the day you came here the same day the army came to your village?

R: We didn't note the day or the time. When they arrived at Yalcastán to burn the houses, it was about 3 P.M., or close to 4. The soldiers arrived at our village very late. They were coming from Yalambojoch. They were pleased with themselves because they had been in Yalambojoch. First they passed through the village without saying or doing anything. But when they came here, on their way to Yaltoya, they killed 8 people. They burned houses and the women and children came out. As they were fleeing, the army blocked their way and killed them.

I: Were women and children killed?

R: Yes, there were about 8 women.

I: And how many children?

R: I think there were 5 children killed. Fifteen in all were killed in Yaltoya. They left them in a heap.

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<sup>1</sup> This is Document 14 of the original report. The interview took place in a refugee camp in Yaxán at the end of August, 1982.

I: What village were these people from?

R: This group of people came from Yalambojoch. They were coming here to Kilometer 15. But when they got to the border they were not permitted to enter. So they started back to Yaltoya and that's when the army caught up with them and killed them.

### The Army's Presence In the Area

I: What did the army do when they came the first time?

R: They didn't do anything when they passed through, because they were coming here to burn houses. But when they returned they killed the people. They went directly from Yalambojoch to San Francisco and called all the people together. They called the people out of their houses and forced them into the church, and burned it. The people of Yalambojoch could hear the bullets and bombs since Yalambojoch is only two kilometers from San Francisco.

I: How did the army get to Yalambojoch the first time?

R: They arrived in San Francisco on foot, passing through.

I: Are there barracks or encampments in Bulej?

R: No. They just passed through there. There is a road at San Mateo Ixtatán. They came on that road by car from Acatán. They have their barracks there in San Miguel Acatán.

I: How many soldiers came to Yalambojoch?

R: There were about 80 government soldiers.

I: How do you know it was the government's army?

R: We know it was the government's army, because they were sent from Huehuetenango. They work there. They came to the municipality of Santa Cruz Barillas where there is another encampment.

I: The ones that went to Yalambojoch were from Bulej?

R: Yes. They came here from Acatán. They came on foot to Bulej and then to Yalambojoch. They thought that the people were still at home. They came to kill people, but no one was around. They had just left. So all the army did was burn the houses.

I: In what villages were people killed?

R: In San Francisco. And they killed almost half the people in Yalambojoch. They didn't burn houses or enter Yalcastán, or La Ciénaga.

The people from other villages came to warn us that their houses were being burned, so we left before the army arrived. We left very late.

- I: The Ríos Montt government denies that its army is responsible for the killing and blames the guerrillas. Is it true that the guerrillas are killing the people and burning their houses and villages?
- R: No, it's a lie. They are liars. We don't believe that. It's the government; the government commands the army. There are army encampments in Santa Cruz Barillas. We have seen them before, because they live there in Santa Cruz. They come from Barillas and from San Miguel Acatán, and from the department of Huehuetenango. We know it's the army, because the first time they passed through the villages by helicopter offering fertilizer and money to the *campesinos* to buy the fertilizer, and corn and beans to plant. They offered us all sorts of things. They just offered them to fool us. When they came the second time, they came offering bullets to kill us. They came to all the villages by helicopter the first time.
- I: And the guerrillas living up in the mountains, do they kill people?
- R: Well, we haven't witnessed that. Maybe we just haven't heard about it. We haven't seen or heard anything about that. We don't know how the guerrillas operate. We come from a remote area, maybe that's why.
- I: The guerrillas haven't come to where you live?
- R: No, only the government's army.
- I: Do you speak an Indian language? Are you Indian?
- R: Yes, we speak our own language, Chuj.
- I: Why do you think the Ríos Montt government is killing the Indian peasants of this region?
- R: We don't know why. Maybe he only wants the rich, the *patrones*, to live in this republic of Guatemala. Maybe he wants to kill all the *campesinos* because he thinks there isn't enough land for them to work. Maybe the *finca* owners want the *campesinos* killed.
- I: So you are saying that the *patrones* control the government and the army too?
- R: Maybe the *patrones* control the army, or pay the soldiers to kill the poor people.
- I: In order to take the people's lands?
- R: Yes, to take it away from the people, to use it for grazing, so they can buy more animals. We can't have pastures, because we are poor, we don't have money, but they have a lot and they make more and more. They have money because they plant coffee, beans, and corn.
- They buy good land--huge tracts--but we don't have anything. They want to buy everything.
- I: The government doesn't give loans to work the land?

R: No. The land that we negotiated from the army was nationally owned. Those pieces of land that lie here, right along the border, belong to the village. Our ancestors fought for that land, but they weren't able to get it. They tried to get the land surveyed by the Agrarian Institute, but they were unsuccessful. So we began fighting to get title to the land. We arranged for the agrarian engineer to do a survey and after measuring those tracts, the engineer came and brought a land inspector. First, he asked us why we requested the land. We told him that we requested the land for our children, for them to work. He told us, "If you want the land for your children, you should put your houses there and plant some corn and beans." We did this, and finally we made an agreement and got our land. We divided the 15 *caballerías* among our three groups; we divided the land in pieces like an orange, each one taking his part. We got the first section, then came Las Palmas and finally Yalambojoch.

I: Do you have titles to these lands?

R: No, we only have the surveyor's report. That was how it was left.

I: So what is the crime you have committed to explain why the government massacres, kills and throws you off your land?

R: We don't know. We know that the government gave us the land and so we went to work it. And, now, in almost all our villages, they have burned our houses.

We don't know why. When they come to burn and kill, people don't understand. People are afraid and leave. They come to Mexico.

#### Before, We Voted For Ríos Montt

I: Here in Mexico, we heard through the press, the radio and television that the situation was going to improve after the March 23 coup when Efraín Ríos Montt took power. Is it true that the situation is better now than it was during the Lucas García government?

R: No, what you heard were just words. When Ríos Montt ran the first time, we voted for him 8 years ago and he won the election, because the poor were behind him. The rich backed the other parties...and that's why Lucas stole the presidency. Ríos Montt lost. It's been 8 years since and now finally Ríos Montt got his presidency. On the radio and everywhere, he offered everything, even to people who have money, he promised work and money. That's how he spoke to us. And now what? What is he going to give us? What he's giving is bullets; he is killing thousands of people.

I: He made promises to the poor in the 1974 elections and yet he won the election anyway?

R: Yes. But, they gave him money to leave the country. He was bought off.

This time, he offered everything to all the villages. He offered money, even. That is why the soldiers came to all the villages in helicopters. First, they offered fertilizer and roads. Roads...work...the soldiers came only to deceive the people.

I: And now is Ríos Montt fulfilling all of those promises he made?

R: Yes, now they are giving what they promised, killing the people, and lying to the U.S.

I: So is the Ríos Montt government better or worse than Lucas García?

R: It's all the same. They are all like that. Lucas too. On his way to Ixcán once he almost killed all the people there. He's out, and now with Ríos Montt the same thing keeps happening. We don't know why they are killing us; we are here living quietly and then the army comes.

The rich pay the government to kill people. They want to keep all the land in Guatemala for themselves. They want to get rid of the poor so only the rich will remain in this country. We believe that is why they are killing us.

I: Ríos Montt claims that his army is fighting subversion and guerrillas.

R: Well, we are not subversives or guerrillas. They may have found some arms where they've gone, but think of the thousands of people they have killed--poor people owning only machetes and shovels.

I: Did they find arms in your village?

R: Of course not! In our village?! If you searched our houses you would not have found any. They killed us with machetes.

They killed men, women, and children, the poor little children. They say the small children are guerrillas, so they kill them. Even old people 70 and 80 years old. They kill the very old and very young.

### On Returning To Guatemala

I: And when do you think you will return to Guatemala?

R: Well, as for me, if the Mexican government gives us shelter for another few months, or a few years, we will stay. We are worried. We all want to return, but it could be that within two days they would come and kill us. We are happy here. Mexico is not our country, but let us hope they give us shelter for another few months. We don't want to return. We have heard that they are killing people; we are worried about our families.

I: So when will you return?

R: Well, we don't know when we will return. If the Mexican government pushes us out, then maybe...if we have to die, we will die here...

I: So you would return to your country if the situation changes?

R: If the killing stops, we will gladly return.

I: But you will never return while the Ríos Montt government is in power?

R: I don't know. What if war with the guerrillas continues? We don't know.

I: But you do know that Mr. Efraín Ríos Montt lied when he said that everything was going to change and there would be peace, tranquility, and justice for everyone?

R: Ríos Montt is a liar, through and through.

### House Burnings in Chajián

R: The Ríos Montt government must go and another will replace him. Then perhaps we will receive a message, or hear the news and we will gladly return to our homes. If he doesn't come and burn our houses. Now, though, we have seen that they are burning empty villages. Like in Chajián. We got news yesterday. Since before yesterday, they have been burning houses there.

I: How did you hear about this?

R: A boy came. He lives in Yuxquén. He told me that they have been burning houses in Chajián, since the day before yesterday.

I: How many houses were there in that village?

R: There were about 30 houses. Those soldiers live in the municipality of Nentón. The mayor of Nentón took about 500 soldiers through all the villages. They saw that there was no one living in the villages, so they burned all the houses. That's the news we got the day before yesterday.

## CONCLUSION

Several things prompt me to present the documentation and analysis of the massacre which took place on the rural estate of San Francisco in the area of Nentón in the department of Huehuetenango in Guatemala.<sup>1</sup> First, there had been charges of frequent and cruel massacres from the time General Efraín Ríos Montt seized power in the palace coup on March 23, 1982, until early August when word about the massacre in San Francisco began to reach Mexico (see *EL Día*, 6.8.82). The following table reports only those incidents in which more than 50 people were killed.

## INCIDENTS BETWEEN MARCH 23 AND AUGUST 6, 1982 IN WHICH 50 OR MORE PEOPLE WERE KILLED

Date	Village(s)	County	Department	# Killed
March 23	Parraxit, El Pajarito, Pichiquil		Quiché/Huehuetenango	500+
March 24-27	Las Pacayas Chislrám, El Rancho, Quixal	San Cristobal	Alta Verapaz	100
March 28-April 10	Estancia de la Virgen, Choatalun, Chipila	San Martín Jilotepeque	Chimaltenango	250
March 30-April 2	Chinique		Quiché	55
April 3-5	El Mangal, Chajul		Quiché	100+
April 15	Río Negro	Rabinal	Baja Verapaz	173
April 18	Macalbal		Quiché	54
April 20	Josefina	La Libertad	Petén	100
April 29	Palestina	La Libertad	Petén (?)	100+
April 17-22	Xesic, Chocamán, Chitatal, Chajbal	Santa Cruz del Quiché	Quiché	87
April 29	Cuarto Pueblo		Quiché	200
May 21	Sajquiyá	Chichicastenango	Quiché	110
June	Pampach, Tactic		Alta Verapaz	100
June	Chisec		Alta Verapaz	160 families
July 14	Xepocol	Chichicastenango	Quicha	52
July 20		San Miguel, Acetén	Huehuetenango	200
July 20	St. Theresa		Huehuetenango	60
July 24	Lacaná II	Chichicastenango	Quiché	85
July 31	Lacaná I and II	Chichicastenango	Quiché	61

During the final days of July it was reported that in various villages in the department of Huehuetenango entire populations were massacred and the figure of 300 dead is mentioned for the case of San Francisco (data taken from various issues of *Noticias de Guatemala*).

The scale and intensity of the repression have made it impossible to document any of the massacres in depth as was done in 1978 in the case of Pánzos in the department of Alta Verapaz where more than 100 people were killed. International public to which the people of Guatemala look for solidarity is numbed by so many figures and names of unknown places. Perhaps an indepth study of one massacre will enable readers to imagine what the others might have been like.

A second motive for the present work is the element of inexplicability which makes a massacre something hard to believe. If we ourselves are not victims of the massacre and if our senses are not impacted by the facts, the event is not felt with any depth. The enemies of the people do not want to believe that these massacres happen or that the army is responsible for them; they are not interested in knowing their reality. Paradoxically, those who mechanically disseminate the news can also be affected so that perhaps the moment comes when it does not matter to them to add another zero to the numbers because they do not really believe that human beings can be capable of such atrocities. Then the army becomes a faceless machine; international solidarity loses its forcefulness because the voices which denounce the situation are perceived as hollow and heartless even by those who support the people.

<sup>1</sup> This piece is excerpted from a longer paper presented at the session "Indigenous Guatemala and the National Crisis-II," at the American Anthropological Association meetings on December 4, 1982 in Washington, D.C.

All this inspires the analysis of the San Francisco massacre as seen by eyewitnesses, especially by one witness for whom the fact that the army was going to murder was not at first evident. Only through a process of confronting that crushing reality did he realize its undeniability. By identifying with these people and accompanying them in that process, we too can cross the boundary of the incredible. At the same time, probing the consciousness of these people enables us to make some hypotheses about the development of combativity among those who have passed through a crisis of liminality which is historical, not merely ritualistic.

Another reason for studying the San Francisco massacre in depth is that it was the principal detonator of the flight of some 9000 refugees from northern Huehuetenango to Mexico at the end of July and the beginning of August 1982. Following the path of the news of the massacre from the village itself to the sister village of San José Yulaurel, to neighboring villages like Yalambojoch, Yalanhuitz and Yalcastán and, later, to the refugee camps and the major newspapers, allows us to see how the news alters as it passes from mouth to mouth. Even though variations occur, the basic truth remains. Some testimonies pass through second and third hand sources, but they should not be dismissed because some of the data is mistaken or the numbers changed.

Fourth and finally, the case demonstrates the potential that anthropology can have when applied in solidarity with the struggle of oppressed people for their liberation. Anthropology has an important role to play, even when we use it as an instrument of quick analysis.

#### A Summary Of the Facts

Before going any further, I will summarize the broad outline of facts as they are already known (see *The New York Times*, 12.10.82). On July 17, about 11 A.M., 600 foot soldiers arrived from Barillas, frustrated at their failure to find a guerrillas camp located some time ago in the nearby mountains. Simultaneously, an army helicopter--the unmistakable sign that the actors were not guerrillas--arrived and landed on the soccer field with supplies for the soldiers. The colonel in charge of the operation ordered the people (Chuj Indians) to congregate in the center of the village for a meeting. Even though the villagers noted that the faces of the officials were disturbed, they were not afraid because on June 24, the army had passed through with friendly words without causing any damage. The soldiers scattered to call the women from their houses. Then they gathered the men and closed them in the courthouse and put the women in the small church. The two structures were about 20 meters apart and even though the people were for all practical purposes jailed they could hear what was happening in one place or the other.

The soldiers cut up the meat from one of the bulls they made the villagers give them upon arrival. Then they began to shoot the women in the church. Those who were not killed that way were taken to their houses where they were killed with machetes. While in the houses, the soldiers robbed cassette recorders, radios, clothes and money. With that and funds stolen from the cooperative they took about 20,000 *quetzales*. Next, they returned to the church to kill the children who, separated from their mothers, had been left crying and screaming. They killed them by splitting open their intestines and smashing them against

hard wooden poles. The eyewitnesses could see the horrifying spectacle through holes in the courthouse window and for a moment when the soldier standing guard opened the courthouse door.

After killing the children they began with the men--first the old men, then the working men and youths. They took them outside in groups and killed most of them. Inside the courthouse, they killed the local authorities--the sheriff, the auxiliary mayor and the police. The estate administrator was not sacrificed at San Francisco, but was tied up during the massacre and killed several days later on the road between Yalambojoch and Bulej when the army was pulling out of the area. About 5:30 P.M., seven men managed to escape through the window of the courthouse, but the army noticed them and opened fire. Four lived and made it to refuge in Mexico the following day. One was fatally wounded and died in the hospital at Comitán. Of the three remaining survivors, one was interviewed in August by the Christian Solidarity Committee of the San Cristóbal de las Cases diocese and near the end of September in Colonia Santa María, an *ejido*\* near the border of Chiapas, by the Guatemalan Justice and Peace Committee.

Six other men were still alive in the courthouse and it was getting late. Grenades were thrown into the building. Two men survived, but were completely covered with blood. When the soldiers piled the corpses inside the courthouse they dragged the two onto the heap. Later, about 7 P.M., these two managed to escape through the window, but one was heard because of the noise of his boots and was riddled with bullets. The other had removed his boots and hid in the bush. He arrived in Mexico the next day, stunned, together with one of the men who had escaped at 5:30. This 57-year-old man told us the story of the massacre on the evening of September 4, 1982, in the Mexican *ejido* of Santa Marta. His account was given in the presence of some 20 men from San Francisco who had escaped the massacre either because they were in the fields or, in one case, because the individual was a member of the civil patrol and fled when he went to look for the bulls to feed the army.

Most of the 20 men were from San José Yulaurel, a 90 hectare extension which was given to the villagers of San Francisco by the National Institute for Agrarian Transformation about five years ago. Although all belonged to the large family of San Francisco, some survived because they lived in Yulaurel or, if they had a house in each place, happened to be in the fields. San Francisco itself is a 180 hectare rural estate owned by Colonel Victor Mañuel Bolaños. It was nearly abandoned by the owner because about a year ago the guerrillas were moving freely in the area feeding on his livestock (400 head in 1980) and there was at least one period when thievery was rampant. Francisco Paíz García, who would later be killed by the army, collaborated somewhat unwillingly with the guerrillas so that when these burned the main house of the estate on December 15, 1981, they did not bother the administrator as they did in the case of another individual who aided the army's repression on other estates. From this we conclude that for the army the necessity of wiping out San Francisco lay in its role as a source of supply for the guerrillas. What role the colonel/owner may have played in designing the punishment of these defenseless civilians is unknown.

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\* An *ejido* is a tract of communal lands granted by the Mexican government to peasant communities.

## DATA-GATHERING

I went to the Guatemalan refugee camps located in Chiapas, Mexico, to the north of Huehuetenango--Tzisco, Kilometer 15, Cuauhtémoc, La Gloria, Amparo, Agua Tinta, etc.--a trip which took less than a week in the beginning of September 1982. I was always accompanied by a priest or sister and introduced myself to the Guatemalans as a priest and a Guatemalan. The interviews were tape recorded and even though the witnesses gave their names publicly, sometimes like they were making a declaration, I have preferred to leave them anonymous because the Guatemalan Army has made several incursions into Mexican territory. Information was obtained about other villages in the Nentón area as well as about San Francisco, but I must confess that I myself do not know these areas. The only way I can compensate for this is by using witnesses who have fled to Mexico. After the state of siege was declared on July 1, 1982, the Guatemalan government has kept a tight control over information. There have been massacres about which we will know nothing for a long time because no fugitives escaped. Even the San Francisco massacre took almost three weeks to appear in a Mexican newspaper and almost three months to appear in *The New York Times*.

### Documentation On the Number of Victims

When I arrived in Tzisco, Chiapas, at the beginning of September, I did not know about the San Francisco massacre. I was making a general study of the refugee situation and the causes which had prompted them to cross the border. But as I was interviewing people from other villages I realized that this massacre was of particular importance among the events which took place in northern Huehuetenango in July and August. I tried to get as close as possible to the site where the eyewitnesses from San Francisco were and kept taking notes of the accounts of people from nearby places.

A mass was scheduled to be celebrated in the Mexican colony of La Gloria. The refugees from San Francisco and Yulaurel had come the day before to be at the mass. They agreed to spend the evening giving an account of the massacre. That night they presented a list of 352 victims, including the man who died in the hospital at Comitán. This gave me the idea of reading the list out loud at the mass the next day, the custom in some parts of the Indian highlands where the dead are remembered even to the oldest ancestors. They agreed and the next day I met a group of men in the school corridor making a count of all the victims.

The list was not made for political purposes, not even for international solidarity work, but for ritual reasons for which there was no advantage in inventing names. Their list totalled 302--50 fewer than the eyewitness had claimed to have counted earlier. I did not know which count was more exact. The witness who directed the composition of the list did not want to talk about the difference and said that the list was complete. One possible explanation for the difference might be that not all of the survivors from San Francisco and Yulaurel were present in La Gloria on that occasion.

The list was read out loud during the mass amidst a great silence which gradually gave way to murmuring, but never broke into uncontrolled weeping. During the reading I realized that there were many repeated names and that those who wanted to would take advantage of that to say that the number was inflated.

So after the mass I decided to interview some of the people with the list in hand to verify whether the repeated names really referred to distinct persons.

In these villages the record of names is guarded like a treasure of tradition and the combination of last names is repetitive because of the high level of marriage within the village. In addition, sometimes two or three babies are given the grandfather's name so that if one dies there will be a substitute to carry it on. In such cases, the ordinal number appears together with the last name, for example, Mateo Lucias García the First and Mateo Lucas García the Second. The individuals are not confused on a daily basis because each has an extra name, like a family nickname, in the Chuj language. So, in order to demonstrate that the same names really referred to different individuals I interviewed some people with a cassette recorder, beginning with the last survivor who had lost 30 relatives. Those interviewed gave the ages and kinship relationship with each of their relatives. I interviewed 21 men in this way, some from Yulaurel, and completed age and kinship relationships for 220 individuals.

I had planned to interview only two or three people, but everyone who was still in front of the church wanted to make a declaration. With the eighth informant I began to ask who was responsible for the deaths, to which each one answered "the army," "the army of the government," or "the army of the rich." Note here that the guerrillas who operated in their area were called the Guerrilla Army of the Poor. Their answers put an end to the possibility that the survivors might have been unclear about the cause of the massacre. Their answers also confirmed that they had not included relatives on the list who had died on some other occasion. Using the "List of the Dead," and the interviews with the 21, I made a list of 302 people with the ages and kinship relations for 220. Some of the 21 surviving men must have been residents of Yulaurel because, according to the refugee census, there were only 38 survivors from San Francisco, distributed as follows: 18 years of age and over: 13 men and 5 women; age 7-17: 10 men and 5 women; 6 years or less: 1 man and 4 women.

I do not know the exact number of inhabitants there were in San Francisco. Informants said that there were about 65 houses, including the "volunteers" which seem to have been non-permanent workers. If the population of San Francisco had been about 390 (352 dead and 38 survivors), there would have been an average of 6 persons per house--fewer for the volunteers and more for the permanent residents. The numbers seemed reasonable. According to a census of refugees made at the end of August, there were 72 persons from Yulaurel.

### THE MASSACRE

Now I want to analyze the massacre itself through the eyes of the people who survived it.

At first there was a transition from a kind of trust in the army to the conviction (although not without a glimpse of hope) that the army was going to massacre them. Later there was the horrible acknowledgement of that reality and the destruction of intelligible frameworks for understanding reality. Finally there was the ray of hope even after the reality had imposed itself on the victims.

## The Stage Of Unfolding Reality

The attitude of the villagers toward the army since a few weeks before the massacre was one of trust and security. On June 24, the army had passed by the village/estate and stopped for two or three days to make a careful house to house search. They were satisfied with the people's conduct and even promised to send fertilizers for their fields. That visit was similar to ones made in many other villages in Huehuetenango and corresponded to the government's policy of amnesty. Even though the army acted cordially then, they warned the people that if they joined the guerrillas and were not found in their houses at the next search they would be killed:

We don't want you to go with the guerrillas because they are very deceitful liars. That's why we have come to look out for you....The most important thing is that you are here in your houses, that you don't leave. If people are not in their houses, then we will have to kill them because they are the ones who are ruining Guatemala. (Document #3, p. 34)

The villagers remained calm even though they realized that the army's graciousness was due to their willingness to feed the soldiers. When the army reappeared on July 17, the villagers did not think that anything had changed. The first sign which made them a bit suspicious was the number of soldiers which arrived by surprise and the simultaneous arrival of a helicopter:

There were really a lot! About six colonels and 600 foot soldiers. We were upset, but did not know what to do. When they arrived, a helicopter began flying very low, in circles. (Document #2, p.17)

Another bad sign was the look on the faces of the soldiers and the officers. It contrasted with the benevolent attitude of three weeks earlier: "We were watching them. Their faces were like those of crazed men

The words reveal the mixed sentiments of the villagers. On the one hand they kept quiet and watched the reality which was unfolding. They appeared resigned and obedient and unloaded the heavy boxes from the helicopter. On the other hand they felt strange because of the contorted faces which showed that these men would be capable of crazy deeds.

An additional sign was that they saw among the soldiers a man dressed like the others in a camouflage suit, but tied like a dog. This told them that what they had noted as a charged attitude might mean violence and kidnapping:

They were pulling on a rope...and a man. He was dressed like them...He was tied with a soldier's belt, like a dog. (Document #2, p. 17)

Some said that the man was a captured guerrilla who was brought to identify guerrilla supporters, but one witness, while not denying this, insisted that he could not be sure of it and talked only of what he saw.

When the army took one of the men from San Francisco who was not guilty of anything and cut him with a knife (apparently on the face), the villagers' fears were confirmed for the first time. They broke their silence and commented among themselves in Chuj about what struck them the most:

The soldiers went and brought the man forward. But this man was not involved in anything; he was innocent. We villagers are ordinary people. The soldiers tied up the man who had been pointed out, and slashed his face with something. In our own language we told each other, "They are going to finish him off. Now we are screwed." (Document #2, p. 18)

Increasingly, the unbelievable became apparent: blood would flow, given that injustice and arbitrariness break the standards of what one can expect. Nevertheless, the evidence was not so strong that they resisted or fled.

Their suspicions were confirmed again when they saw the highest local authority standing in the courthouse already tied and in front of the colonel's gun. He told them that the situation was hopeless and that now there was only time to cry.

When we arrived at the courthouse, things were already happening. Francisco Paíz García, the administrator of the *finca*, was standing there. He said, "Now, my *compañeros*, this is it. There is nothing we can do. It is too late. Now, there will be some weeping. See for yourselves what is happening." The colonel already held a gun on Francisco. (Document # 2, p. 18)

Yet in spite of everything they were not sure that everyone would be lost and they continued to obey the army and gave them two of their own bulls as if that might save their lives. The situation got worse when they began to call the men into the courthouse for what would evidently not be a meeting. Rather, the courthouse became their jail.

"OK, finish putting that over there. Get in there. Nobody outside. Get inside." What could we do? Our houses were far away. The center of town was filling up with people. Finally, we were taken into the courthouse, and the door was closed. (Document #2, p. 18)

The witness suggested that there was nothing they could do, not only because of the imbalance of power, but because of their distance from the houses and the fear that something would happen to the women who were being gathered in the village square. So they still obeyed. They had not yet lost hope.

The final sign was that the women and children were locked in the church; no one was left in the houses.

Then the soldiers went and brought all the women and children out of their houses. They were put in the church. It was filled with women. We were watching, but there was nothing we could do. There was already a guard there. (Document #2, p. 18)

Powerless and fearful, the men began to pray.

They said, "Now it is time to pray to God! We have to remember our commitment to God. If we have to suffer this punishment, there is nothing else to do." (Document #2, p. 20)

The content of their prayer was to offer the "punishment" they were about to suffer at the hands of the army to God because there was no other solution. The manner of prayer was the frequent repetition of the same petition. Their prayer was accompanied by the outcry of the children from the nearby church. In those moments, sight was cut off and sound was sharpened.

In this first state there was a series of signs, each of which showed more clearly that the massacre was going to happen. All those signs threatened violence or were themselves violent. But the villagers were not completely sure and no one could guess the magnitude, type or other details about the approaching punishment. The inevitability of the violence prompted them to turn to God and pray. The signs revealed the approaching fact but offered no explanation. The logical inexplicability of what was happening continued, even though there was no doubt about what would come to pass. Finally, there was a deep social break with the army in whose humanity and government they had at first confided.

### The Imposition Of Reality

The second stage was clearly marked by the informant who pointed out that it began at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. The reality of the massacre forced itself suddenly upon the witnesses when they heard the shots aimed at the women and the crying of the children.

Around 1 o'clock in the afternoon there were gunshots. The soldiers began to shoot the women in the church. There was a lot of noise, and children crying and crying. (Document #2, p. 20)

After the first violent eruption, the men could see the soldiers take the women out in groups. They led them to the houses where they raped some and killed them--some with bullets, others with machetes. Finally, they burned them and their houses.

The soldiers stopped shooting and took the remaining women out of the church. They took groups of women to different places. Each groups was killed. Maybe not with bullets, just machetes. We could not see this. They finished killing in the houses and then set them on fire. (Document #2, p. 20)

When they finished with the women, the soldiers went back to where the children were. The second witness noted that the children had stayed locked in the church and on being separated from their mothers screamed for their fathers who were in the nearby courthouse.

All of our children had been locked up...they were crying, our poor little children were screaming. They were calling us. Some of the bigger ones were aware that their mothers were being killed and were shouting and calling out to us. (Document #3, p. 36)

Another witness was more explicit about how the children were taken out of the church, how their bellies were ripped open with a knife, their intestines torn out and the corpses thrown into one of the houses in front of the church. In amazing soberness, he said: "We were watching because we were really frightened, because now we were at the point of dying with our families."

Later, he mentioned how the soldiers killed the last child, the same case that another witness described with horror. I present both versions because this incident was engraved on them as the symbol of the army's bestiality:

Finally they brought out the last child. He was a little one, maybe two or three years old. They stabbed him and cut out his stomach. The little child was screaming, but because he wasn't dead yet the soldier grabbed a thick, hard stick and bashed his head. Then they held his feet together and smashed him against a tree trunk. (Document #3, p. 36)

One of the aspects which made the event unbelievable for those present was that human beings might be capable of committing such beastly acts.

The first witness described the soldiers--men who killed men like animals and men that ate animals like men.

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon it was over...we men were still shut up inside the courthouse. Then, after more than an hour, the soldiers killed a cow. Some were fixing food, peeling the hides...they had not killed the other cow yet. Then, at about 3 P.M., the soldiers began to attack the men...And it went on and on. (Document #2, p. 20)

This underscores that the massacre was not an act of blind violence, as if the soldiers were in an unconscious rage, but rather a premeditated act carried out like a job which required food and rest.

The second stage of the massacre began at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon with the men in the courthouse. Both witnesses retraced the moment when the old men of the community were killed. Like the children, they could not have been considered guerrillas.

They killed three old men with a blunt machete, here [points to his throat], like you kill a sheep. The old men cried out... We were inside the courthouse watching... All of us were there. (Document #2, p. 20)

The witness drew out the contrast with the animals by noting that the old men bleated like sheep when their necks were cut. And to prove again how incredible and inexplicable the deed was, he repeated the refrain which occurs throughout the entire account: "We were watching." But even so, he did not stop affirming that the deed was unbelievable. On the contrary, he reinforced it with an irony that he would take up again later. That is, that the place where justice is done, the courthouse; where declarations of the prisoners are heard--in this very place the injustice was carried out, with nothing heard but the cries of those who were dying.

The second witness gave a detail which pointed to the coolness with which the barbarity was done, almost as if it were a game. When the soldiers cut the old men's necks with the dull machetes and they cried out like sheep, the soldiers laughed.

They took the poor old people and stabbed them as if they were animals. It made the soldiers laugh. Poor old people, they were crying and suffering. (Document #3, p. 37)

Next, they began to take out the young men in groups of ten. They tied them, pushed them to the ground and shot them. Afterwards they dragged them back to the church.

They took them out of the courthouse. There were gunshots outside. How those bullets destroyed a person! The soldiers had begun. And it went on and on. Everyone...! The soldiers were killing them all. We hid and did not look. We heard only the sound of their guns. They killed them in the patio of the courthouse, threw their bodies in the church. (Document #2, p. 20)

The massacre was so terrible that the first witness acknowledged that he numbed himself so as not to feel the impact of what was happening before his eyes and ears. The insensitivity came not only from the horror he was beholding, but from the fact that he himself was virtually dead. So he said: "It no longer weighed on me. Everything was sheer death. The people were dying, dying."

A gradual loss of hope was essential to the gradual imposition of the reality of the massacre on the senses. One witness described it by the drawing near to God in the moment of greatest darkness.

Everyone was praying, praying to God the Father to save their lives because there was nothing anyone could do. When they finished taking out the brothers we began praying there inside the courthouse asking God to bless us. Why did brothers come, the brothers themselves, to kill us? It was not a sickness. God was not sending us a punishment, and so we were offering our prayers up. That is what we were doing when they took away the other brothers, the friends, to kill them...(Document #3, p. 38)

Next came the episode of the flight of the seven men, including the second witness. It was about 5 P.M., the first witness noted. The soldiers had set fire to the courthouse and there were only 20-25 men left according to the second witness. There were about 15 according to the first witness who added that they were "already like fish," that is, cold and dead with fear. When the fire began, the guard near the window drew back from it. At that moment, one of the men inside thought to open the window and escaped. Six others followed him, but only three were definitely saved (i.e. ended up in Mexico). The flight of the seven kindled greater repression and vigilance: "So the army of the government got angry..."

The soldiers took out their anger on the estate administrator, but they did not kill him that day. They did execute the sheriff, the auxiliary and their three policemen inside the courthouse.

"You men come out," the soldier said.

"But sir, I am the *comisionado militar*," one of the men said.

"It doesn't matter if you're the *comisionado militar* or shit."

So right there in the middle of the courthouse, they killed him. [Imitate: the sound of gunshots.] The bullets. He cried out. I was sitting right there on a bench. He did not die right away, and I saw how he was suffering. Then there were more shots. "Another one of you come out!" the soldier yelled. The father of the man who had just died came out. The old man. There were more bullets and then he and his son were together again. "More of you men come out!" "But sir, I am the *auxiliatura*." "It doesn't matter if you're the *auxiliatura* or shit." They killed him behind the table, with the three policemen. Six people were killed in the courthouse. (Document #2, p. 21)

The murder of the estate's authorities was the proof that the government and its army did not respect law, order, or society. They killed the civil patrol they had formed a few weeks earlier. The sheriff appointed by the army was murdered without regard, and the civil authorities of the estate, who were supported by the national system, were shot. Again, all this occurs in the place where one would suppose that justice is done--in the courthouse.

The survivors came to that final moment when it seemed that there was no salvation. There were only seven left and it was their turn to die. It was 6:30 P.M. and somewhat dark. The older man, the witness, exhorted the others not to be afraid because they would go pardoned to the cemetery.

Now there were only a few. I think only seven were left. I told them, "It will not last much longer, boys, and now that we have suffered this punishment, we will go to the cemetery already pardoned." (Document #2, p. 21)

In a sign of resistance to death, the men bunched up together in the corner of the room as if they were struggling against being dragged outside and shot. On hearing the words of the witness, it seems that they clustered together even more tightly, expecting that the soldiers might fire at them directly. But that did not happen. Instead of firing, the soldiers threw grenades.

I thought that the monster was going to shoot. What! They threw the grenade into the corner. Tas! ting! went the grenade. "Aaay," cried the men. Then another. Three! With the fourth grenade, blood began to drip. How it spilled to the floor. The blood was from the grenade. Then the fifth. Yes, but it didn't explode. It stayed without exploding. The blood soaked all over me. But thanks to God, the shot didn't hit. Finally, the rifle came in again. Boom, boom, boom, boom. So they killed everyone. (Document #2, p. 22)

Even in this second stage the massacre was carried out with a complete lack of mercy. There were some apparent contradictions. The irrationality of the punishment of the obviously innocent children and old people; the disrespect for village authorities recognized by the state itself; and the bestiality of the soldiers. All were questions which tortured, but which remained unanswered.

## Miraculous Liberation

The next stage, according to the eyewitness who was the last survivor, was the miraculous liberation from the massacre. After he exhorted his companions not to be afraid because they would go to their graves already pardoned, he added, "Then I got to thinking. Who knows where the idea came from? And I lay face down on the floor." He thought that the soldiers would shoot, but he did not pile in with the others in the corner. The grenades which were thrown at them did not hurt him. He became soaked with the blood of the others, but he was still alive. That blood saved him because it stained him as if he himself were already dead. He recounted what the soldiers said after throwing the grenades:

"Go on. Leave them here in the courthouse. All of them. They'll stay here." So the soldiers came in to pile up the corpses more closely together. The *cabrones!* They grabbed me here and piled me on top of the bodies. I was alive. (Document #2, p.22)

Immediately, he began to think, perhaps like he had not thought during the entire massacre, throughout which he remained rather passive. If he waited until the soldiers left the following day, he ran the risk that upon leaving, they might burn the courthouse, as they had already attempted, and he would be burned inside. But if he tried to escape, he ran the risk of being shot as he passed through the window, like those who had escaped earlier. For almost an hour he turned the situation over in his mind while the soldiers were outside the courthouse trying the stolen tape recorders and later singing. He finally decided to get out. Before attempting his escape, he asked leave of his dead companions to abandon them. His flight was not for lack of solidarity with them, but because he desired freedom and they were already free.

At 7:30 P.M., when I escaped, it was already dark. I saw that the window in the back of the courthouse was open, and I thought, "God help me. We're going to try it. *Compañeros, compañeros*, let me go free to the fields. Give me luck. You are already free. Let me go! I am going to the field." I spoke with the dead. With all my heart, I prayed to them and then I got up. I took off my boots and fled through the window. I looked, and saw guards on either side of the corners. "With the help of God," I said. The soldiers were singing. (Document #2, p. 24)

Another survivor followed him through the window, but he was noticed, focused at with light, and shot. Meanwhile, the witness hid behind a bush until 11 P.M. Then he got up and went carefully, arriving at Yulaurel about 5 A.M. on Sunday morning and at the village nearest the Mexican border about 11 that same morning.

I got to Santa Marta at about 10 in the morning. What shock I was in. Like a dunce. Nothing was clear, not even who I was. I was not sad, I was not thinking about anything. I had not eaten. I had no clothes. Nothing. (Document #2, p. 24)

The man was alive, but he hadn't yet assimilated the horror of the massacre nor the freedom which he enjoyed. When the dullness passed, he said that there was a deep pain in his soul:

That is how I came. My heart is in such pain for the deaths that I have witnessed, the deaths of my brothers, my friends, my *compañeros*. We were all brothers. That is why my heart is crying all the time. (Document #2, p. 24)

Inside, the pain stopped thought because there was no explanation.

The soldiers did not say, "This is the crime, and here is the proof." Nobody had done anything. Who knows why this happened? They did not accuse anyone of any crimes. They just killed them, that was all. (Document #2, p. 24)

The unanswered question was why they had killed innocent people. The witness could, without doubt, attribute the massacre to the army of the government, but that answer was not adequate to the question because the army's conduct raised the question of the conversion of men into animals.

Who knows why? Maybe they were crazy. A soldier was standing there looking at a man who had just been killed. The poor man was already dead, then the soldier attacked him again [makes a gesture across his stomach]. That is how he opened him up and took out his heart...I don't know if they ate it or took it with them. Yes, they cut out his heart! I could see them well at first, and they were acting like crazed men. I don't know if he ate it or took it away in their bag; I felt angry and sat down! The *cabrón* was like an animal. That is how the soldiers were. (Document #2, p. 31)

The witness said nothing more than what he actually saw, although given the bestiality of the army, he insinuated that the soldiers' intention was cannibalism.

As a counterpoint to the Guatemalan army and government, the witness pointed out that the Mexican government gave them hospitality.

...we have nothing. We will see. Thank God, these Mexicans and their government are good people, children of God. They have given us a place to stay, thank God. If not, we would have been killed already. (Document #2, p. 33)

The second witness found another inexplicable point. Why had he been saved from death when others had fallen? "They fired. They shot at me. But God is great and He saved me. None of the bullets touched me. Why would I lie? Not one bullet. But God our Father knows why he saved me."

### The Transmission of the News

People began to flee from other villages after the massacre at San Francisco. Some examples follow which illustrate how they heard the news, how they interpreted it and what they did. Two sites were neighboring villages and two others, one Indian and one *ladino*, were more distant.

The residents of Yalambojoch, a neighboring village, seemed to have been the first to learn of the incident because the army had passed by there the day before and burned some empty houses whose owners were out working. The people from Yalambojoch were on alert. Then, on July 17th they heard shots and grenades and some fled. "When we heard the sound of grenades and guns, streams of bullets were flying over the village. We fled with our little ones." There were others who lived on the outskirts of the village and when the army returned from San Francisco, they fled because of the burning of the houses. But when the soldiers caught them on the slopes of Yaltoya, a nearby village in the direction of the border, they killed 20 to 25 people, all women and children. The men were coming behind and hid in time to escape.

About 25 or 30 women fell dead there...so many women and children. My wife was 35; one of my sons was 11 years old, another 9, and another 7. All were killed. (Document #5, p. 47)

But most of the people of Yalambojoch did not leave, perhaps because two days before the army had punished those who were absent by burning their houses; perhaps because the army's approach from the direction of the border impeded their departure. The army stayed three or four days and burned more houses, but did not kill any people except those who fled. Later, on the road which goes up to Bulej, about a kilometer from Yalambojoch, they killed six members of the civil patrol. It was probably then that the army killed the administrator from San Francisco. With that, the entire population fled from Yalambojoch towards Mexico.

Then, all of a sudden, when they were more than a kilometer outside of Yalambojoch, they shot them--they shot the poor men. It's said that they tied their hands behind them, made them lie down, and then shot them to death in the road. Then they continued on the road. The soldiers are like wild animals. As soon as this occurred, many people, including all the women and children, left for Mexico. That was the 24th of July. That day we went to Kilometer 15, and spent three days there; on the 26th we came here to take refuge with our brothers in Mexico.

(Document #4, p. 42)

In contrast, the flight from Yulaurel was made quickly and easily. Some of the survivors who escaped through the window at 5:30 arrived there at night. The people of Yulaurel acted immediately because they judged that if such a thing happened in their sister village, there would be nothing special to defend them.

They came at night, maybe about 10:30 and by about four in the morning, we were on our way. They came to warn us. Good. We heard that they were finishing with the dead in San Francisco and that frightened us. What help would we have? Why wouldn't they shoot us? So we left. We got ready quickly--some carried their things, others didn't. We were really afraid.

The news arrived at Yalanhuitz, a more distant Indian village to the east of San Francisco, as contradictory rumors. This village was about three hours by foot from San Francisco. The rumors began when the people from San Francisco did not pass by Yalanhuitz on their way to the market of a larger village called Ixquisis. It was commonly said that there had been an

enormous massacre in San Francisco. On the other hand, a man who passed near San Francisco--perhaps because he left early--said that there were no deaths other than a man who was shot escaping from the army. This testimony discouraged them from fleeing because that was the sign of guilt and the army might follow. In any case, it would be almost impossible for them to go back to their village once they left. So some decided to send a few young men to San Francisco to find out the truth in person. It was a risk to stay, but it was also a risk to flee; they needed accurate information. So they sent and verified everything with one of the men escaping from San Francisco. Then they fled.

My son went... "Everyone is dead," they told him. "Maybe two hundred or a hundred and fifty. So, this is the day the army will come. They will arrive in the area. Tomorrow to Río Seco [another village]; the next day to Yalanhuitz." That was it. "Let's go." And we left. (Document #6, p. 50)

They went to Patará in Mexico. About a week after their flight, the army burned the houses in Ixacchí and then in Yalanhuitz. The people of Yalanhuitz were already in Mexico, but they had to go further inside the border because some peasants allied with the army came to convince them to return. The soldiers were right behind them, but this time did not cross the border.

Finally, we can examine how the *ladino* village, Yalcastán--located to the west of San Francisco, reacted to the news. On July 19, after hearing the news from San Francisco, they quickly left.

Yes, July 19, this year, is when we came here with the family. When the army got there, they didn't find us. So they began burning houses. Yes. Now all the houses are burned. It happened because we learned that in the village of San Francisco they had massacred many people. The army killed and burned houses and they were killing children, women....The people that came escaping from there came to warn us that the army was headed this way, killing. People from Yalambojoch and from San Francisco.... We lived closer to the border and they passed to warn us. They came to find out how to get here (Mexico). So we left in a hurry and came here and when the army arrived, they didn't find us. (Document #9, p. 70)

This testimony shows the snowball effect of the flight. The survivors of San Francisco, and those who first fled Yalambojoch after seeing the women massacred in their hurried and fearful walk to the border, passed by villages like Yalcastán where the inhabitants decide to leave. The inhabitants of many other villages fled to Mexico.

The net effect of the massacre was to vacate the border area of its scattered population and to concentrate the remaining population in a few villages controlled by the army, such as Ixquisís. One can deduce from what actually occurred that the logic of the massacre within the overall scorched earth policy was not simply to punish those who supplied food to the guerrillas or who refused to reveal where they were hidden, but to trigger the exodus of the population dispersed throughout a wide area and to control those who stayed behind.

SUMMARY

The informants' account of this terrible massacre (in which about 350 civilians of both sexes and all ages died at the hands of General Ríos Montt's army in the village estate of San Francisco) can be divided into three stages: the unfolding of the approaching tragedy, the imposition of the reality of collective torture and death, and the unexpected liberation. The first stages coincide with the increasing disenchantment with the army (considered demented, bestial, cannibalistic, separated from God--the enemy, even though largely made up of Indian soldiers, i.e., of the villagers' Chuj-speaking brothers). The third stage coincides with the beginning of integration and welcome by all who have taken them in and offered them hospitality--the Mexican government, the solidarity committees and the church groups. Almost never do the survivors mention the revolutionary organizations; perhaps in order to protect themselves.

Finally, the second stage coincides with the sorrowful passage in which physical death is imposed upon the village and the loneliness on the survivors. In the face of the evil suffered by innocent people--especially children, old people, and women--not by nature by the sentence of other men, any logical framework is shattered. Society's fabric is violated by the total disregard and patently arbitrary murder of authorities. The night of horror which they lived did not end with the freedom of the survivors because this inexplicable experience takes time to assimilate. The inexplicability refers not only to the entry into the massacre, but also the exit from it.

People experience such an event at different levels of unconsciousness. Nevertheless, we can hypothesize that the repression made the villagers who fled pass through roughly the same horrible sequence. As a result people have turned away from the army and its government. This population may be given over to fighting against the government and the army--for them, the source of death--and to destroying them.

For those who have not been able to flee and who are forced to surrender and give themselves over to the control of the "model villages," one can only think that they maintain themselves diametrically opposed to the face which, even in declarations made for television, they present to the army in order to live. Even force cannot make them forget experience.

The army also attempts to change its image by giving people food, fertilizer, and medicine, but the opportunism of the army shows up clearly and is rejected, although the medicine and fertilizers are accepted. Knowing this, the army cannot relax its control and so the repression continues behind a policy of apparent assistance.

For those who have clung to the army from the beginning and opposed the revolutionary movement of the guerrillas, the army's tactics are a defense which brings them relative economic and political advantage. There is no proven case of a massacre such as this by the guerrillas. The guerrillas have eliminated informers and collaborators who bring the army to the villages and/or are armed by the army. The army's intention is to provoke the guerrillas into attacking the civil patrols and, if possible, their families. This would pit village against village, one kind of peasant against another. That way the same horror would be generated towards the guerrillas as has been generated against the army.

In the massacre described, some of the army's counterinsurgency tactics are obvious.

1. The isolation of men from women and women from children facilitates the "flow" of information about the whereabouts of the guerrillas or about their collaborators or the location of arms, etc.
2. The premeditated destruction of an entire village forces the entire population to flee and establishes a border strip which is vacant or contains an army-controlled strategic hamlet. In this way, the guerrillas are cut off from the civilian population. This tactic has the unfortunate consequence for the army and government that the refugees flee to Mexico and expose the state of siege to the world.
3. In the interior the army is using a new weapon--hunger. Mountain and cliff areas to where the civil population has fled in terror are surrounded and the flow of such foods as salt, sugar, and beans, is cut off. Peasants have been killed for being caught with a 50-pound bag of sugar. When peasants surrender to the army, their leaders are eliminated and the others are presented as converts or even as victims dominated by the force or the fear of the guerrillas.
4. The army forms civil patrols to help dominate the population, keep watch at night, look for guerrillas, serve as parapets and cannon fodder for the army, kill suspicious parties even though they are brothers, etc. The patrol members are usually forced by the army to carry out this role because economically and logistically, they cannot look for work in other parts of the country. Even though the army enjoys food assistance from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), it cannot pay everyone the food they need and in the long run, people will have to escape, even if they do it with the intention of returning.
5. The use of Indian soldiers of different languages and municipalities to repress the indigenous population is a way to take the bite out of a class struggle which might be supported by an ethnic contradiction. With this the government sidesteps the accusation of genocide. But one wonders which is the deeper violation of the dignity of people, eliminating them or attempting to convert them into beasts.

Ricardo Falla, S.J.  
Washington, D.C.  
December 4, 1982

## Appendix A

## LIST OF THE PERSONS WHO WERE MASSACRED IN SAN FRANCISCO ON 17 JULY 1982

This list was compiled on 5 September 1982 by an Indian secretary and two or three older men who called together the various survivors in order to have them give the names of their relatives who were killed in the massacre. The purpose was to enable the names of the dead to be recited during a mass in La Gloria, Chiapas.

These survivors signed the list, which was considered to be exhaustive. The survivors had previously calculated the number of dead to be 352, including the person who fled but later died in Comitán. The present list only mentions 302 persons. It is possible that some have not been included, since there were survivors of the massacre who had not arrived in La Gloria from Santa Marta when the list was made.

After the mass was celebrated in La Gloria, specific information about the age and family relations of more than 220 victims was obtained from 21 informants. This was done in order to dispel doubts resulting from the repetition of names, which occurs frequently in Indian villages; although in many cases the names are the same, the ages and family relations presented below prove that the people are different.

All interviews were conducted in public so that the speaker was heard by his companions.

The names of the witnesses are contained in the human rights files of the Justice and Peace Committee of Guatemala.

The ages of the victims are approximated; one should not be surprised that two brothers (for example, names 215, 220, and 228) all appear with the same age. Neither should one be surprised that two brothers have the same name (215 and 288). A father will sometimes give two children the same name so that, if one dies, the other will still carry the name.

## VICTIMS OF THE MASSACRE

NAME	AGE	RELATION TO SPEAKER	NAME	AGE	RELATION TO SPEAKER
1. Mateo Paíz García	21	Son	75. Mateo Ramos Diego	72	Father
2. Ana Paíz Domingo		Wife of 1	76. Ana Ramos		Mother
3. Isabela García Silvestre		Wife	77. Andrés Ramos Ramos	36	Brother
4. Isabela Paíz García	20	Daughter	78. Catarina García Paíz		Wife of 77
5. María Paíz García	12	Daughter	79. Ana Ramos García	10	Daughter of 77
6. Angelina Paíz García	10	Daughter	80. Juana Ramos García	16	Daughter of 77
7. Mateo Paíz García	7	Son	81. Angelina Ramos García	9	Daughter of 77
8. Federico Paíz García	6	Son	82. Diego Ramos García	11	Son of 77
9. Francisco Paíz García	4	Son	83. Mateo Ramos García	4	Son of 77
10. Andrés Paíz García	1 m 20 d	Son	84. Isabel Pérez Ramos	32	Wife
11. Isabela Paíz Paíz	1-1/2	Daughter of 1	85. Bartolo Ramos Pérez	9	Son
12. Francisco Paíz García		Brother	86. Diego Lucas Pérez	7	Son
13. Isabela García Marcos		Wife of 12	87. Ana Ramos Pérez	6	Son
14. Mateo Paíz Velasco		Son of 12	88. Catarina Ramos Pérez	2	Son
15. Isabela Paíz García		Wife of 14	89. Mateo Ramos Ramos (S)	32	Brother
16. Mateo Paíz Ramos		Son of 12	90. Juana Lucas Paíz	22	Wife of 89
17. María Ramos Paíz		Wife of 16	91. Eulalia Lucas Paíz	11	Daughter of 89
18. Angelina Paíz Ramos		Daughter of 16	92. María Ramos	40	Sister
19. María Paíz García		Daughter of 16	93. Eulalia Alonso	80	Mother-in-law of 92
20. Francisco Paíz García		Son of 16	94. Juana García Silvestre		Wife of brother of 92
21. Juana Paíz García		Daughter of 16	95. María Paíz García	7 m	Sister of uncle
22. Isabela Paíz García		Daughter of 16	96. Ana Paíz Ramos	20	Sister
23. Angelina Paíz García		Daughter of 16			
24. María Paíz García		Sister	97. Diego Ramos Andres	42	Brother
25. Francisco Paíz Perez		Brother	98. Miguel Lucas	25	
26. María Paíz		Wife of 25			
27. Angelina Paíz García		Daughter of 25	99. Mateo Lucas Paíz		
28. Mateo Paíz		Son of 25	100. Juana Lucas Paíz		
29. Francisco Paíz		Son of 25			
30. Angelina Perez		Mother of 25			
31. María Ramos		Wife	101. Bartolo Pérez	65	Father-in-law
32. Pascual Gomez Ramos	35	Son	102. Catarina Ramos	58	Wife of 101
33. María García		Wife of 32	103. Pascual Pérez Ramos	30	Son of 101
34. Mateo Gomez García	13	Son of 32	104. María Paíz Domingo		Wife of 103
35. María Gomez García	12	Daughter of 32	105. Bartolo Pérez Domingo	13	Son of 101
36. Bartolo Gomez García	8	Son of 32	106. Catarina Pérez Domingo	12	Daughter of 101
37. Mateo Gomez García	3	Son of 32	107. Juana Pérez Domingo	10	Daughter of 101
38. Bartolo Gomez García	3 m	Son of 32	108. Ana Pérez Ramos	36	Wife; daughter of 101
39. Mateo Gomez R.	26	Son	109. Ana Paíz Ramos	14	Daughter
40. Juana Ramos R.		Wife of 39	110. Catarina Paíz Ramos	12	Daughter
41. María Gomez R.	3	Daughter of 39	111. Lucas Paíz Ramos	7	Son
42. Mateo Gomez R.	2 m	Son of 39	112. Bartolo Paíz Ramos	5	Son
43. Baltasar Gomez R.	22	Son	113. Angelina Paíz Ramos	1	Daughter
44. Eulalia Paíz		Wife of 43	114. Juana Paíz García	25	Wife of son of 101
45. María Gomez R.	19	Daughter	115. Bartolo Pérez Paíz	10	Son of 114
46. María Gomez R.		Daughter of 45	116. Felipe Pérez Paíz	7	Son of 114
47. Mateo Gomez R.		Son of 45	117. Catarina Pérez Paíz	5	Daughter of 114
			118. Isabel Pérez Paíz	1	Daughter of 114
			119. Ana Mendoza	30	Wife of son of 101
			120. Bartolo Mendoza Pérez	14	Son of 119
48. Eulalia Marcos M.		Wife	121. Petrona Pérez Mendoza	7	Son of 119
49. Pascual Ramos G.	30	Son of 48	122. Catarina Pérez Mendoza	5	Daughter of 119
50. Angelina Ramos L.		Wife of 49	123. Ana Pérez Mendoza	2	Daughter of 119
51. Mateo Ramos L.	11 m	Son of 49			
52. Juana Ramos M.	20	Daughter	124. Isabela Pérez		Wife
53. Andrés Lucas B.	6 m	Son of 52	125. Eulalia Andres	9	Daughter
54. Andrés Lucas R.		Husband of 52	126. Ana Gómez Andres	8	Sister
			127. Mateo Ramos Paíz S.		
55. Eulalia Paíz	40	Wife	128. Lucas Ramos Mendoza		
56. Pascual Paíz	19	Son	129. Pascual Ramos Mendoza		
57. Isabela Domingo	20	Wife of 56	130. María Mendoza		
58. Eulalia Paíz D.	4 m	Daughter of 56	131. María García Paíz		
59. María Paíz	13	Daughter	132. Pascual Ramos Mendoza		
60. Angelina Paíz	10	Daughter	133. María Ramos García		
61. Lucas Paíz	9	Son	134. Mateo Ramos Mendoza		
62. Isabela Domingo	30	Daughter	135. María Ramos Mendoza		
63. Mateo Domingo R.	10	Son of 62	136. Petrona Ramos Mendoza		
64. Francisco Paíz D.	8	Son of 62			
65. Marcos Domingo P.	7	Son of 62	137. Pedro Pérez García	25	Son
66. Gaspar Domingo R.	4	Son of 62	138. María Ramos Juan	20	Wife of 137
67. Marcos Domingo R.	1-2 m	Son of 62			
68. Diego Lucas R.	40	Husband of 69	139. Pascual Paíz Domingo	28	Son
69. María Paíz	30	Daughter	140. Isabel Paíz Domingo	12	Daughter of 139
70. Marcos Lucas P.	12	Son of 68	141. Francisco Paíz Domingo	7	Son of 139
71. Francisco Paíz I.	7	Son of 68	142. Isabela Paíz Domingo	3	Son of 139
72. Mateo Paíz Lucas	4	Son of 68			
73. Catarina Pérez Lucas	3	Daughter of 68			
74. Marcos Lucas Paíz	1	Son of 68			

143. Andrés López Paíz			225. Bartolo García	15	Son of 220
144. Isabela Lucas			226. María García S.	5	Daughter of 220
145. Miguel Lucas (S)			227. Alberto García S.	3	Son of 220
146. Marcos Lucas Mateo			228. Andrés García D.	40	Brother of 215
147. Isabela Ramos L.			229. Petrona Lucas	45	Wife of 228
148. Mateo Lucas.			230. María García L.	15	Daughter of 228
149. Juana Lucas			231. Bartolo García L.	12	Son of 228
150. Isabela García			232. Catarina García L.	8	Daughter of 228
151. Catarina Lucas			233. Petrona García L.	7	Daughter of 228
152. Ana Silvestre Lucas			234. Lucas García D.	30	Brother of 215
153. Angleina Silvestre Lucas			235. Mariz Paíz R.	25	Wife of 234
154. Isabela Silvestre Lucas					
155. Francisco Silvestre Lucas			236. Antonio García	22	Son
156. Miguel Silvestre Lucas			237. Eulalia Paíz R.	20	Wife of 236
157. Angelina Santizo					
158. Felipe Silvestre Santizo			238. Pedro Marcos Martín	40	Father
159. Mateo Silvestre Ramos			239. Isabela García	35	Wife of 238
160. Francisco Silvestre Ramos			240. Magdalena Marcos G.	9	Sister; daughter of 238
161. María Ramos			241. Juana Marcos G.	6	Sister; daughter of 239
162. Ana Silvestre Ramos			242. Juana Marcos G.	3	Sister; daughter of 238
163. Francisco Silvestre P.			243. Juana Martín		Granddaughter
164. Angelina Silvestre R.			244. Gaspar Marcos M.	23	Brother of 238
165. María Silvestre R.			245. Isabela Pérez	23	Wife of 244
166. Pascual Silvestre			246. Juana Marcos R.	2 m	Daughter of 244
167. Isabela Domingo Paíz			247. María Gomez Andrés	22	Wife of uncle
168. Mateo Ramos Lucas			248. Angelina Marcos	2	Daughter of 247
169. Marcos Lucas García					
170. Isabela García			249. Eulalia Paíz	50	Wife of <i>compadre</i>
171. Ana Paíz Ramos			250. Angelina Domingo P.	12	Daughter of 249
172. Catarina Ramos Lucas					
173. Andrés Lucas García			251. Jorge Santizo	75	Father
174. Isabela Paíz García			252. María García	48	Wife of 251
			253. Gaspar Santizo G.	27	Brother
175. Miguel Ramos Lucas	30	Brother-in-law	254. Juana Diego D.	23	Wife of 253
176. María Paíz García	33	Sister	255. Juan Santizo D.	5	Son of 253
177. Mateo Lucas Paíz	10	Son of 176	256. Jorge Santizo D.	1	Son of 253
178. Marcos Paíz Lucas	8	Son of 176	257. Jorge Santizo D.	18	Son
179. Juana Paíz García	7	Son of 176			
			258. Francisco Paíz		
180. Pedro Pérez	90	Father	259. Juana Lucas		
181. Eulalia Sebastián	80	Wife of 180	260. Eulalia Ignacio		
182. Pascual Pérez Gómez	30	Brother	261. Pascual Ramos P.		
183. Catarina Ramos	35	Wife of 182	262. María Lucas		
184. Pedro Pérez Domingo	18	Son of 182	263. Angelina Ramos L.		
185. Martín Pérez Domingo	15	Son of 182	264. Marcos Ramos L.		
186. Sebastián Pérez Domingo	10	Son of 182	265. Mateo Ramos P.		
187. Mateo Pérez Ramos	7	Son of 182	266. Catarina Ramos L.		
			267. Marcos Lucas	40	Father
188. María Paíz Silvestre	42	Mother-in-law	268. Isabela García S.		Mother
189. Baltasar Paíz García	23	Brother-in-law	269. Mateo Gómez S.	14	Brother
190. Juana Lucas Lucas	18	Wife of 189	270. Marcos Gómez S.	4	Son of <i>padastro</i>
191. Miguel García Paíz	5	Son of 189	271. Catarina García P.	1-1/2	Sister
192. María García Velasco	12	Daughter			
			272. Pedro Pérez G.		
193. Diego García Velasco			273. Andres Paíz D.		
194. Pascual Mendoza			274. María Lucas G.		
195. Miguel Mendoza			275. Eulalia Paíz		
196. Lucas Mendoza			276. Miguel Paíz L.		
197. Petrona Mendoza			277. Francisco Paíz		
198. Lucas Merdoza			278. Isabela Paíz		
			279. Catarina Paíz		
199. Isabela Ramos			280. Catarina Lucas R.		
200. Andres Ramos	61	Father			
			281. María Pérez		Mother of 283
201. Mateo Lucas Lucas	35	Son	282. Pedro Ramos Pérez	19	Brother of 283
202. Angelina Paíz	25	Wife of 201	283. Mateo Ramos Pérez	26	Cousin
203. Juana Lucas	12	Daughter of 201	284. Pedro Ramos Pérez S.	13	Brother of 283
204. Magdalena Lucas	11	Daughter of 201			
205. María Lucas	8	Daughter of 201	285. Bartolo Ignacio		
206. Pascual Lucas	2 m	Son of 201	286. Isabela Pérez		
207. Magdalena Lucas Miguel	40	Wife	287. Francisco Pérez I.		
208. Andrés Lucas Carmelo	50	Brother	288. María Ignacio P.		
209. Andrés Paíz Lucas	30	Son of 208	289. Ana Gracia P.		
210. Mateo Lucas Paíz	10	Son of 209	290. Miguel Paíz L.		
211. Catarina Lucas Velasco	30	Wife of 208	291. María Pérez R.		
212. Domingo Paíz	10	Son of 208	292. Mateo Paíz R.		
213. Bartolo García Pérez	70	Uncle	293. Juana Paíz R.		
214. Petrona Domingo	50	Wife of 213	294. Catarina Paíz R.		
215. Andrés García D.	40	Son of 213	295. Lucas Paíz R.		
216. María Silvestre		Daughter of 215			
217. Miguel García	10	Daughter of 216			
218. María García Silvestre	8	Son of 216	296. Pedro Gómez P.	35	Brother-in-law
219. Bartolo García Silvestre	5	Son of 216	297. Angelina Paíz Silvestre		Sister
220. Miguel García Domingo	40	Brother of 215	298. Mateo Gómez P.	12	Son of 297
221. Ana Santizo		Wife of 220	299. Gaspar Gómez G.	10	Son of 297
222. Bartolo Santizo	17	Son of 220	300. René Gómez G.	5	Son of 297
223. Andres Santizo	3	Son of 220	301. Mateo Gómez G.	2	Son of 297
224. Petrona García S.	10	Son of 220			
			302. Isabela Ramos		

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