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**The Indians of Guatemala: Problems and Prospects
for Social and Economic Reconstruction**

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Cultural Survival

INTRODUCTION

Slightly less than 50% of Guatemala's population of more than 7,000,000 people is classified as Mayan Indian. The majority of these Indian people live in the Western and Central Highlands; among them are dispersed some 20 different Mayan languages (see map). According to the 1964 census, 96.8% of the population of the Department of Totonicapán was indigenous. This was followed by Sololá, with 93.8%; Quiché, with 84.1%; Chimaltenango, with 77.6%; and Huehuetenango, with 70% (Marroquín 1972:293). One of the underlying features of being an Indian in Guatemala is chronic poverty. Guatemala as a country has the most inequitable distribution of land in Central America: as of 1979, 88% of the farms in the country were classed as "sub-familiar," a classification which defines them as being too small to satisfy the needs of a single family (Hough et al. 1982:7). In the highlands the scarcity of arable land is especially acute; and as the population expands, the amount of agricultural land available to individual families continues to decrease and poverty becomes more widespread.

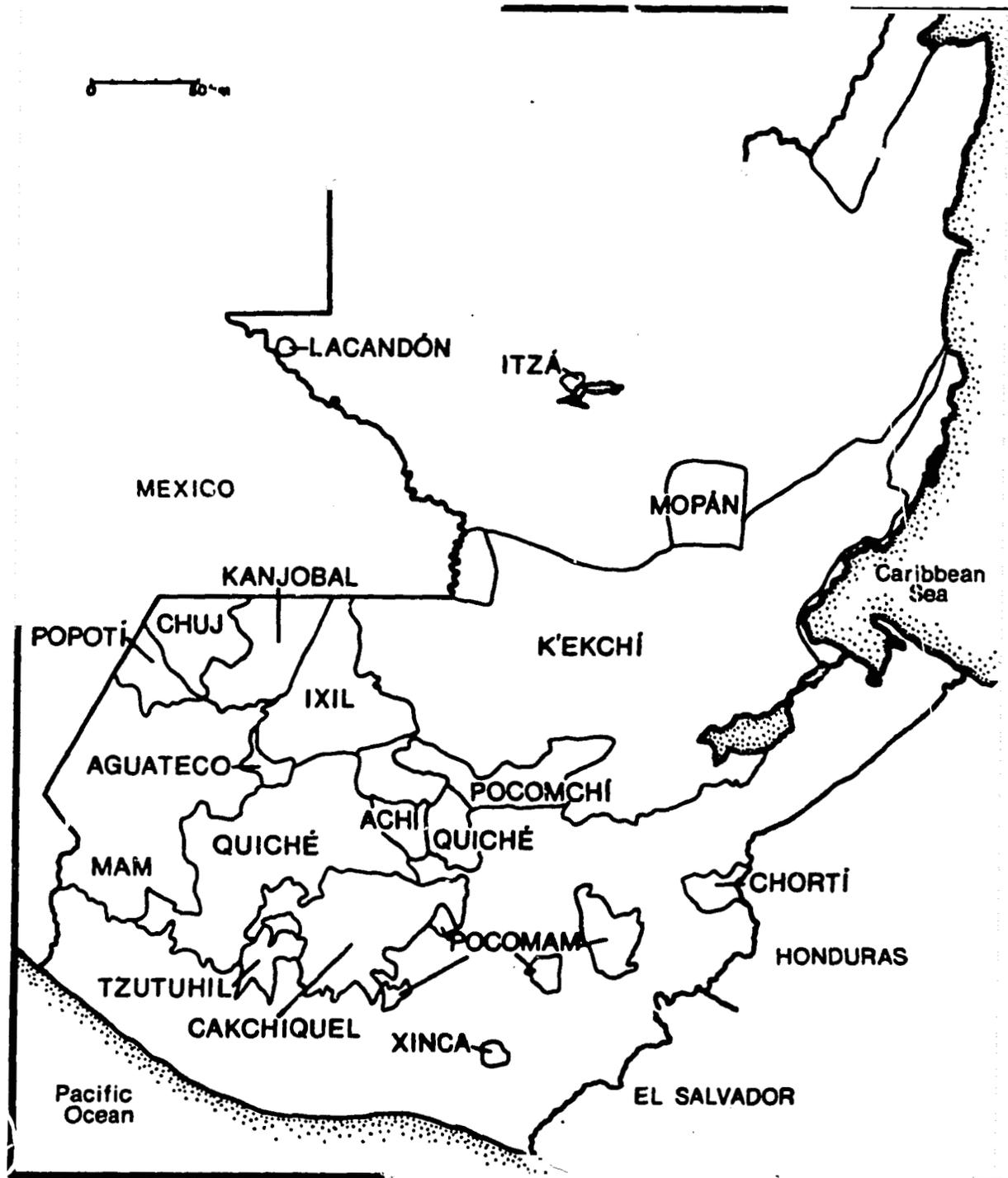
In February of 1976, Guatemala was hit by an earthquake that devastated some of the most heavily populated areas of the country, striking with particularly massive force in the Central Highlands. More than 25,000 people died, as many as 70,000 more were injured, and over 1,000,000 lost their homes. As relief and development agencies flooded in to assist rebuilding, there was a flurry of organizational movement.

Then, beginning in the mid- to late 1970s, Guatemala was visited by a second--and far more destructive and inhuman--tragedy. In response to guerrilla insurgency welling up in the northern regions of Huehuetenango and Quiche, the Guatemalan military launched a counterattack of unrestrained



MAP OF GUATEMALA

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LINGUISTIC SUBGROUPS OF GUATEMALA

brutality. Beginning in earnest with the presidency of General Romeo Lucas García (1978-82), a wave of political violence washed over Guatemala, taking its heaviest toll among the inhabitants of the Central and Western Highlands. The Indian populations of these areas inevitably took sides, either actively or out of necessity. When the battleground was defined they were caught, defenseless, between opposing military forces, and consequently received the most lethal barrages of the crossfire.

The Violence--as it is commonly termed in Guatemala today--steadily increased through the early 1980s, peaked in 1982, and then continued with a discernible decline through 1985. During this period, it has been estimated by a diverse collection of sources, official and opposition, that:

-- according to military sources, more than 400 rural villages were destroyed during counterinsurgency campaigns between 1981 and 1985;

-- according to a study by the Juvenile Division of the Supreme Court, "in the Guatemalan highlands, some 200,000 children had lost one parent since 1980, while at least twenty-five percent had lost both."(Americas Watch 1986:6); more conservative estimates place the number of children losing one parent at slightly more than 100,000;

-- between 50,000 and 75,000 people were either killed or disappeared between 1978 and 1985; (Krueger & Enge 1985:v Americas Watch 1986:6);

-- as many as 1,000,000 million people were displaced from their communities, and perhaps 200,000 became refugees abroad.

On January 14, 1986, Vinicio Cerezo was inaugurated as president of Guatemala. In the wake of open elections, he and his Christian Democratic Party were swept into office by more than 1,000,000 votes. Cerezo was the first civilian president of Guatemala since 1970; his arrival after the recent years of crushing military domination and unbridled violence was greeted with relief and the hope that perhaps the future would bring peace, stability, and what is popularly called "a return to normalcy." People throughout the country were cautiously optimistic. While the military had allowed a civilian to take over the presidency, it was not altogether clear how much power it had actually

relinquished. Both Guatemalans and international observers remained filled with doubt, as was Cerezo himself, who said during his inauguration: "I remind you that I have received the government but not the power" (Inforpress 1987:1).

Although military forces have stepped into the background--and the tempo of violence has subsided substantially--popular wisdom maintains that military control remains intact and that the armed forces can and will step forward with little hesitation if they see the need. The seeds of democracy may have been sown. Whether or not they will be allowed to grow and bear fruit remains an open question.

As if these political difficulties were not enough, the new government must also confront a severely depressed national economy. For the last five years, Guatemala has been slipping into financial crisis while inflation rises, the value of the Quetzal falls, commerce declines, and opportunities for employment decreases (unemployment officially runs at 47%). Agricultural production has been declining steadily over the last few years. Government services have deteriorated in the face of limited operating budgets and generalized political paralysis. Although the Guatemalan government has recently managed to stop the downward spiral with its short-term Social and Economic Reordering Plan, it "placed the burden of the stabilization program on low-income, salaried workers and unemployed people who saw their already limited income shrink further" (Inforpress 1987:24). Critics of the government's economic program claim that the poor majority has yet to benefit much from current policies.

METHODOLOGY OF THE REPORT

Much has been reported about human rights abuses in Guatemala during the 1978-85 period (see, for example, Americas Watch 1986; Krueger & Enge 1985; Davis & Hodson 1982; Fried et al. 1983). Numerous organizations continue to

observe the human rights situation as it unfolds under Cerezo and the Christian Democrats (Americas Watch & British Parliamentary Human Rights Group 1987; Inforpress 1987; The International Human Rights Law Group & WOLA 1988; Manz 1988a, 1988b).

The present report tries to build upon information gathered by other groups while focusing exclusively on the problems of the indigenous populations of the highlands. We attempt to assess the present situation with an eye toward understanding what might be done, now and in the near future, to better the lot of the Indian populations whose lives have been so disrupted. We are primarily concerned with the matter of social and economic development and the ways in which they affect Indian people:

-- How has "development" been defined and put into practice in recent decades, by both civilian groups and the military?

-- How are development and social services being handled in the present transitional phase of military to civilian rule?

-- What are the present needs of indigenous peoples and how are they being or not being met?

-- What are the prospects for assistance among the native communities of the highlands over the near future?

Information for this report was gathered by a four-person team consisting of Theodore Macdonald, Jr. and Norman M. Chapin of Cultural Survival; Patricia Weiss-Fagen of the Refugee Policy Group; and S. James Anaya of the National Indian Youth Council. Research was conducted during three trips to Guatemala; through interviewing knowledgeable persons, including Guatemalans, living in the United States; and by reviewing relevant documentation. Two team members made the first trip, which was ten days long, in September of 1986. Its primary purpose was to contact key informants and map out an itinerary for subsequent travel in the highlands. The team also made a short field trip to Alta Verapaz to visit the Development Pole settlement of Chisec. All four team members visited Guatemala from November 2 through November 21. Working largely

in pairs, we spent time in Guatemala City before embarking on a journey through the highland departments of Huehuetenango, Quiché, Sololá, Totonicapán, and Chimaltenango. We visited a total of 31 rural communities, primarily in the company of community-level promoters and technicians from nongovernmental assistance organizations (NGOs) carrying out activities in the sites visited; local political or church representatives took us on other community visits. In these communities, we talked with members of individual households and participated in general village meetings, speaking to as wide a variety of people as possible in situations that were often difficult. Two team members took a third short trip in June of 1987; focusing on rural communities in the departments of Quiché and Huehuetenango.

In Guatemala City, team members met with NGO representatives from programs in the highlands; recently elected Indian congressional deputies from Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Quiché, Totonicapán, and Chimaltenango; the Director and other officials from the Committee for National Reconstruction (CRN), the Minister of Defense, and the President's Secretary for Special Affairs; representatives of the Guatemalan Congressional Commission on Indian Affairs; UNHCR repatriation officers from Guatemala and Mexico; the Director and other staff members of the Special Commission for Assistance to the Repatriated (CEAR); independent academics and journalists; and USAID officials. In the highlands, we spoke with regional and local representatives of the Catholic Church, NGO field workers, local government officials, and military officials.

To aid discussion of present conditions in the Indian areas of Guatemala, we have somewhat arbitrarily divided the highlands into three broad regions. We define these areas by the intensity of violence, the reaction of the local populations, present conditions, and our assessment of possibilities for

development assistance now and in the near future. The three highland regions are:

-- The Southern Highlands (including Chimaltenango, Sololá, southern Huehuetenango, and southern Quiché), where there was considerable violence during the early to mid-1980s.

-- Totonicapán, which was relatively untouched by the violence which hit its neighbors. (Totonicapán's western neighbor, Quetzaltenango, shares this relative peace, but is not included in the report because the team did not visit the area.)

-- The Northern Region (including northern Huehuetenango and northern Quiché), where the insurgency once held large tracts of territory; despite heavy military presence, sporadic fighting continues here.

Fieldwork in the countryside was circumscribed by a number of limiting factors. During the early 1980s it was extremely difficult to gain access to the Guatemalan highland areas, much less to conduct serious community-based research. With open warfare raging throughout areas of the highlands, few reliable reports of the activity there made their way to the outside world. Now that the violence has diminished, outsiders can reach the areas where it took place; however, the legacy of fear, uncertainty, and doubt--coupled with the lingering threat of direct violence--is a major obstacle to systematic information gathering. Villagers in most of the areas we visited had been terrorized: their houses and crops had been burned, relatives had been killed, and they had often been forced to flee. A pervasive military presence still exists, and, in a few regions, there is sporadic fighting between the army and the guerrillas.

People in the highlands have been living under military rule, with random and systematic violence in their daily lives, since the late 1970s. Many are unwilling to and some genuinely incapable of recounting events of the recent past. During our visits to highland communities, we were often exposed to the psychological pain still residing inside victims of the violence. For example, on several occasions widows cried openly when they told us of their personal

tragedies; and NGO representatives said that as people gradually opened up and spoke of their sufferings, their grief poured out. Beyond this, most of the people we spoke with clearly felt that it was safer to discuss events of the past in a semi-abstract, "passive voice" manner. Instead of saying, for example, that the guerrilla or the army or local villagers killed people, they would make reference to "The Violence" or "The Situation" as the agent of death. Family members had died in "the Violence," as if the Violence marched under its own steam, with no one in particular behind it.

Being aware of these limiting circumstances before venturing into the field, we made virtually all of our visits to rural communities in the company of people who knew and had the confidence of community members. We did not administer questionnaires, nor did we attempt to follow any rigid, systematic interview schedule. In the villages, we used open-ended questioning along previously agreed upon lines, and we carefully avoided sensitive areas of enquiry when circumstances indicated caution. Above all, we were anxious that we not put any of our respondents in danger.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND "DEVELOPMENT" IN GUATEMALA

During the late 1940s, and continuing through the first years of the 1950s, the Guatemalan government actively promoted the formation of cooperatives. At this time, the Indian communities of the Highlands began picking up skills that enabled them to participate on more favorable terms in the nation's economy. This trend was reversed with the overthrow of the Arbenz government in 1954. At this time, the new government cut back the number of social programs for the poor and concurrently instituted an escalation of repressive measures as it sought to reestablish its control over the country. But the process of organizational development continued along several separate tracks outside of the government. The Catholic Church was active with Catholic

Action in moving into the realm of social and economic work; AID began pouring money into assistance for rural peoples, with a strong emphasis on cooperative formation and leadership training; the Peace Corps sent volunteers into the rural areas of Guatemala to work in community development; and international and national NGOs began community action programs in the highland regions. By the mid-1970s, according to an AID study, there were 510 cooperatives in Guatemala, with a total membership of more than 130,000 people (Davis & Hodson 1982:14). Similar organizational developments were taking place in urban centers, with the formation and growth of workers' unions.

During this period, the insular indigenous communities of the highlands came under many new influences which challenged traditional structures. Catholic Action, in particular, combined economic and social development programs involving cooperatives, education, leadership training, and commerce with attempts to implant orthodox Catholicism. This kind of mixture frequently ran counter to established patterns of authority and, while it often brought economic benefits, it also generated divisions within communities. Although this can be seen in hindsight as one of the natural consequences of rapid cultural change, at the time the internal frictions and volatile tension laid the groundwork for much of the bloodshed and violence of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Population growth and the expansion of agribusiness through the 1970s served to exacerbate the already inequitable distribution of land and resources. As the situation of the poor continued to deteriorate, sporadic land disputes began to break out in the countryside. Then, in 1976, Guatemala was hit by a massive earthquake. Foreign assistance for reconstruction began flowing into the country, and numerous relief and development organizations appeared on the scene. By the end of 1976 there were an estimated 100 NGOs in operation, a large percentage of them working directly out of the highlands.

In an attempt to coordinate the activities of both private and public organizations working in the relief effort, the government created the Committee for National Reconstruction, which was headed by a general and under military control, assuring that, at very least, all government agencies would be aligned with military plans.

The confusion brought on by the earthquake, coupled with the sudden abundance of well-financed NGO assistance programs, served to strengthen independent initiatives among the poor. At the same time, popular labor and peasant organizations began recruiting more heavily and making increasingly strident demands for reform, and the guerrilla movement grew steadily in the highlands and the northern lowland tier of Huehuetenango and Quiché, where it was extremely successful in gaining support at the community level. Deterioration of subsistence levels and demands for reform, increasing organizational strength among rural groups, the resurgence of guerrilla activity (which had been quiescent since its defeat in the late 1960s), and the growth of development and relief assistance after the earthquake--all these currents converged to bring a new dynamic to the areas where the Indian population was most densely concentrated.

Before long, the military sought to tighten its control. In late 1976, it moved into the Ixil area of northern Quiché and launched a violent counterinsurgency program. By 1978, the battle between the guerrilla and the military was well under way and Guatemala had entered what was to become a seven-year period of intense bloodshed and brutality.

As the violence escalated and life in the highlands (with the partial exception of Totonicapán and Quetzaltenango) became increasingly chaotic and dangerous, NGOs were forced to limit their activities and, eventually, to pull out altogether. In the areas of most intense conflict--the Northern Region and

the Southern Highlands--community leaders were primary targets, and NGO representatives and local promoters working with them were hit particularly hard. Operating out of bases in the north, guerrilla groups filtered through highland communities and gained fairly widespread support from local populations. Among other things, they promised the Indians armed support in the event of a counterattack.

Under the presidency of General Efraín Ríos Montt, who took power after a coup in March of 1982, the military embarked on a program it called *fusiles y frijoles* ("guns and beans"). The military's primary objective was to pacify and consolidate the conflict areas; to this end it used a two-phase strategy that combined force and development assistance. Following the slogan "Security and Development," the military first used "guns" to secure areas where the insurgency had been active, leaving in its wake bloodshed and devastated and abandoned villages. The military then attempted to lure back the inhabitants, who were by this time broken and submissive, with offers of relief and development assistance, symbolized by "beans." Certain areas of particular strategic importance--such as the Ixil area of northern Quiché, one of the "zones of conflict"--were singled out for special treatment, and by 1983 were being transformed into what came to be called "Development Poles" (see Ejército de Guatemala 1984). The Committee for National Reconstruction was given primary responsibility for supplying these areas with resources for reconstruction into what the army advertized as showcase communities (Krueger & Enge 1985:58).

In late 1984, the military produced a bureaucratic mechanism called the National Inter-Institutional Coordination System for Reconstruction and Development (IICS). The IICS was organized to work at the national, departmental, municipal, and local levels with reconstruction and development programs. Aside from the clear function of incorporating all government

agencies under military control--the Jefe del Estado Mayor de la Defensa Nacional was in charge--the IICS was designed to streamline the flow of resources by means of military discipline. During this time, the civil affairs branch of the military, the S-5, began training promoters to work in local communities, again for the areas of heaviest violence. These promoters were deployed in rural areas to help improve the image of the army through "education" (handing out pamphlets that proclaim, for example, "The Army Is Your Friend"), and to assist with such community improvement projects as construction of schools and bridges. The promoters continue to work in the civilian government of the Christian Democrats, but they wear army uniforms, carry guns, and report directly to their military supervisors.

Thus, by the mid-1980s, development activities in highland Guatemala were largely restricted to military-controlled government programs which were concentrated in "areas of conflict." The NGO community had been forced out of Indian communities in the face of increased violence, and all local initiatives were brought to a halt. Government programs in areas such as the Southern Highlands and Totonicapan were cut back, while the Development Pole program had become the army's centerpiece. Having assumed total control over the nation's operations, the military was defining and carrying out "development" on its own terms.

PRESENT CONDITIONS IN THE HIGHLANDS

The situation of Indian communities varies considerably from region to region; to facilitate discussion of this variation we have divided the highlands (as well as the far northern lowlands of Huehuetenango and Quiché) into three broad regions:

-- The Southern Highlands (including Chimaltenango, Sololá, southern Huehuetenango, and southern Quiché)

-- Totonicapán

-- The Northwest Region (northern Huehuetenango and northern Quiché)

At the beginning of 1985 the Violence had diminished to the point where government agencies and a few NGOs were returning to the Southern Highlands to assess the possibilities for renewing their work. In Totonicapán, the Violence had never become pervasive or systematic. The general chaos and confusion had affected social and economic networks with neighboring departments, and development agencies had suspended most of their activities. Most of the Northern Region, including the northern parts of Huehuetenango and Quiché, was, in 1985, still officially classified by the military as a "conflictive zone" and was consequently under tight army control. If the Violence had to some extent diminished, the level of tension remained high and the region was not, in any sense, "open." The Development Pole program of the Ixil area in Quiché and certain parts of Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz illustrates the inherent contradictions of the military's "development" strategy and the difficulties facing the civilian government in breaking free from the recent past.

The Southern Highlands, including Chimaltenango, Sololá, Southern Huehuetenango and Southern Quiché

Much of this region is characterized by mountainous terrain, with limited areas of open, arable plains. Through the centuries, the Indian population has been pushed onto the more rugged, inaccessible terrain; non-Indian landholders farm the few large expanses of good agricultural land. The Indian area is densely populated, farms are generally small and dedicated to subsistence crops, and there is considerable economic and social interchange along the extensive network of roads. For decades, the people of these departments have divided their time among farming, trading and commerce with urban centers, and seasonal labor on the coastal plantations to the south.

These are areas in which the Violence was extremely heavy from 1978 through 1983. It occurred primarily in the form of assaults by Guatemalan military forces involved in counter-insurgency campaigns, especially during the barbaric "guns and beans" campaign during the presidency of General Efraín Ríos Montt from early 1982 through 1983. Accurate figures on the number of houses destroyed, villagers killed or disappeared, or refugees still at large are not available; but by all accounts the area was severely devastated, creating a scene of widespread social, economic, and political disruption. In contrast to the northern sections of Huehuetenango and Quiché, where refugees fled to Mexico, most villagers from the southern part became internal refugees, fleeing either into nearby mountains, the coastal plantations, or Guatemala City.

The Violence has since subsided, allowing a large percentage of the surviving population to return to its communities and pick up the pieces of the former way of life. The mood of the area, however, remains very tense. Although the military has largely returned to its barracks, its presence is felt everywhere, in the form of armed villagers in Civil Patrols. Furthermore, numerous cases of bloodshed occurred within communities as villagers settled old scores, purchased favors, or simply took advantage of the general anarchy of the situation. These factors combine to create an environment of distrust, uncertainty, and residual resentment.

The needs for assistance in the Southern Highlands were obvious to the government and private assistance agencies that resumed work there. Economic patterns of agriculture and commerce had been smashed, open communication between urban centers and villages had trickled to a minimum, and rhythms of seasonal migration to the coastal plantations had been disrupted. Fields had been abandoned and burned, houses demolished, and possessions stolen; many people had just returned to their communities and were beginning to sort through the litter, with no resources to rebuild their lives. In many areas,

such social services as education and health care had been discontinued for as long as three or four years, and the buildings in which they were carried out had been levelled. People everywhere, were in a state of extreme shock. They were afraid, haunted by nightmares, plagued by headaches and other strange body pains, and filled with anxiety about the future.

The dilemma of the widows and "orphans" (which, in the terminology of Guatemala, usually refers to children who have lost their fathers) serves as a stark indicator of the havoc generated during the years of bloodshed. Although reliable figures are unavailable, it is estimated that during the Violence between 15,000 and 25,000 women were widowed; between 100,000 and 200,000 children lost at least one parent; and a sizeable percentage of the widows lost children, who were either killed outright or died from disease or starvation brought on by the Violence (as were many of their husbands). The incomes of many of these women disappeared entirely upon the death of their husbands. They have been forced to work in activities in which they are inexperienced, such as agriculture and marketing, and to concentrate more heavily on selling hand-made crafts which they had formerly kept largely for their own use. The amount of money they bring in is minimal, requiring all available working-age children to join the quest for subsistence income. Heavier agricultural labor is contracted out to local men as money allows. However, in southern Quiche we saw numerous fields that were fallow because their widow owners lacked sufficient cash resources to pay for labor.

Another problem suffered by widows in many communities where tensions still run high is that they are shunned by other villagers. In many cases their husbands were killed because they were alleged "subversives," a label that consequently taints their families. To be on the safe side, fellow villagers avoid them.

In their own eyes, few people have emerged morally unscathed from the Violence. The rapid cultural changes that took place in the decades before the Violence divided communities, as emerging leaders, competing with traditional authorities, stirred up tensions and rivalries. When the military and the guerrilla squared off in a battle for the loyalty of villagers, the community divisions frequently took on a lethal character. To protect themselves, people often became either active or passive collaborators with both sides. Personal animosities and political differences often flared up and became part of the general violence. The political and personal factors of the violence have left behind a strong residue of resentment, distrust, and even hatred that continues to fester.

These difficulties are compounded by the lack of positive community organization, the absence of leaders, and the fear associated with being identified as a leader. During the Violence, traditional leaders (principales) concerned primarily with ritual and religion were often viewed as harmless, and were spared; but leaders working with cooperatives, labor movements, and other community action groups were invariably killed or forced to flee. Those who have returned are not anxious to openly resume leadership positions in the community.

A negative community leadership structure, however, has been instituted throughout the highlands over the last few years in the form of the Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil, or Civil Patrols. While the system of alcaldes and the comité cívico are still in evidence and continue to carry out limited functions, the real power in the communities lies with authorities of more recent origin that are directly responsible to the military. These authorities are the comisionado militar, who is appointed by regional military officials and is responsible for giving them weekly reports, as well as for finding recruits for the army; and the jefe de patrulla, who is usually selected within

the community but is responsible to the regional military authorities, and has charge of the local Civil Patrols.

The Civil Patrols were first instituted in the early 1980s. During the Ríos Montt period they expanded exponentially throughout the Guatemalan Highlands. The patrols continued building in size and influence under Mejía Víctores, and by the end of 1984 the army claimed a total of 900,000 patrulleros participating in the system (Krueger & Enge 1985:24).

Men toting rifles and shotguns on patrol duty are visible throughout the highlands and have become an integral--and onerous--part of community life in rural areas. All able-bodied adult males must spend from six to 24 hours a week, depending upon the size of the community, patrolling the village. During the height of the Violence, from 1982 through 1984, patrollers were expected to attend marching practices and carry out work assignments and were occasionally enlisted for search missions in the countryside with soldiers. By late 1986, the system had been relaxed considerably in the areas in which armed conflict had ended years before. Yet villagers are still performing their vigilance duties rigorously, and those who fail to comply are often punished severely. Their primary responsibilities consist of keeping an eye on the community and reporting what they see to their superior, the jefe de patrulla, who in turn reports on a weekly basis to the local military commander. In this way, this system of close observation and reporting puts severe limits on the movements of both villagers and outsiders throughout the rural areas in which the Civil Patrols are active.

According to the military, the patrols exist to provide the communities with "their own self-defense...(they) have doubled the efficiency of the security forces in creating the conditions of peace basic to the integrated development of these communities...."(Ejército de Guatemala 1984:vii) -- the

notion being that subversives would attack and kill villagers if the vigilantes were not on constant armed watch. However, the view from the villagers' side is somewhat different. People in most areas of the Southern Highlands perceive little or no threat from "subversives"; in the northern regions of Huehuetenango and Quiché, the guerrillas are present but are not considered to be a threat to the well-being of villagers unless the villagers are closely allied to the military. Participation in the patrols demands that villagers spend considerable time in sterile, non-productive activities. They must make all of their plans around schedules for guard duty, and pay others to take their place when traveling or otherwise occupied. The patrol system forces villagers to spy on each other; they are expected to report anything out of the ordinary, and are punished if they are caught hiding information. In all, the Civil Patrol system produces considerable resentment and serves to promote (rather than lessen) insecurity and distrust among villagers. This environment, hardly favorable for community development work, confronts all NGOs presently working in the highlands.

Totonicápan was unique in rejecting the Civil Patrol system by popular accord in 1982, just a few months after the military attempted to institute the program. The patrols took root and proliferated throughout the other highland regions, and continue in full plumage in most areas. On numerous occasions during his campaign for the presidency, Cerezo promised to make participation in Civil Patrols voluntary rather than obligatory; and in 1986 this provision was worked into the Constitution. By the end of 1986, however, few of the patrols had been dissolved; reports from early 1988 indicated that a small number of Civil Patrols has been eliminated by popular community vote in some villages in the Southern Highlands. Without a guerrilla presence in the area, the military has found it much more difficult to justify existence of the patrols. In general, however, the patrols remain in place and villagers

continue to serve time in them. Although villagers generally consider them an unnecessary drain on their time, there is a very strong sense that they must continue serving the military's wishes. We were told on several occasions--and have seen the same quoted in statements by the military--that the Civil Patrols double the intelligence gathering and security capacity of the military. This figure may be debated, but it remains the general perception throughout the military, a perception that has been communicated to villagers. Thus, although the Civil Patrols may be voluntary in the Constitution, they remain obligatory in real life.

-- Tonicapán

Tonicapán is geographically set in the Southern Highlands--surrounded on three sides by Huehuetenango, Quiché, and Sololá--yet it stands apart. During the years of violence, it was virtually avoided by both military and guerrilla, and as such lies like a quiet oasis in the middle of a war-torn desert. Communities were not destroyed, and villagers were not forced to flee to other regions. The most conspicuous evidence of violence reported in Tonicapán came in the form of mutilated bodies found dumped on a high grassland plateau above the departmental capital. These bodies had been brought in from Sololá, an identification made by their ethnic clothing.

Tonicapán is high (2,250 meters above sea level), and is dominated by heavily deforested, undulating hills on which a variety of subsistence and cash crops are cultivated. Although agricultural land is scarce, its distribution is the most equitable of any department in Guatemala (Hough et al. 1982:73). The people of Tonicapán are known as artisans (principally weavers, potters, and furniture makers) and merchants, and the department in general gives the appearance of relative prosperity. Ironically, although it is home to the highest percentage of Indians in Guatemala, its people are much less

traditional in their culture and political organization than the majority of the Indian communities from surrounding highland departments.

The absence of visible institutionalized control mechanisms of the army is a striking characteristic of Totonicapán. The Civil Patrol system never functioned here, and guerrillas have not operated in Totonicapán on any systematic or sustained basis. Although the economy of the region was severely disrupted due to the violence and chaos that settled into other highland provinces, the social and political organization of Totonicapán survived more or less intact. Consequently, present government and NGO assistance in the area entails less reconstruction and relief, and more of the usual line of development work one finds throughout the calmer regions of Latin America. As the rest of Guatemala heals, the people of Totonicapán will benefit.

-- The Northwestern Region (northern Huehuetenango and northern Quiché)

During the mid- and late 1970s, guerrillas established a power base throughout the northern zones of Huehuetenango and Quiché. This isolated region is difficult to reach by land, and shares a border with Mexico. The Guatemalan military's counterinsurgency program of the early 1980s was especially harsh here. In the highland Ixil area of Quiché the army began its purges early, some two weeks after the earthquake in 1976; northern Huehuetenango was bludgeoned heavily from 1982 through 1984, and the lowland Ixcán area in particular was emptied of people. Being relatively close to the Mexican border, many people fled the country. The intensity of the violence has slackened considerably, but the guerrilla is still operating at a low level and the Guatemalan military presence is obvious. Strong forms of social control are in place, although these are less stringent than they were just a couple of years ago.

A significant percentage of the native population was forced to flee to avoid military sweeps during the years of violence, and remains outside the region today. They are in Mexico, living as internal refugees in other parts of Guatemala, or herded together in concentrated "model villages" as part of the military's Development Pole program.

DEVELOPMENT POLES

The team visited the Development Pole areas of Chisec (including the village of Chituj) in Alta Verapaz; the Ixil area around Nebaj (the villages of Río Azul, Xoncaj, and Pulay) in Quiché; and Chacaj in Huehuetenango. We discuss several of these in detail here because they were the focal point of the military's efforts to mix counterinsurgency with development, and as such provide clear examples of the pitfalls of this approach. Furthermore, the Development Pole settlements still exist and must be dealt with by the present government.

Construction of these poles, often called "Model Villages," was initiated in late 1983 by the military amid considerable fanfare. They were portrayed as carefully planned, consolidated communities in conflictive zones in which security and development were combined to simultaneously fend off subversion and allow villagers to reconstruct their lives. They were, according to a military publication, designed for

those who, during months and even years, wandered starving, pursued, harrassed by fear, hunger, and illness, have found today, in their own territories--where they have voluntarily decided to return--a secure and comfortable place that is their own, so that in tranquility they can dedicate themselves to rebuilding their future (Ejército de Guatemala 1984:vii).

Virtually all of the refugees from these areas had lived in dispersed settlements before the Violence erupted. They were now being invited to return and settle in brand-new nucleated villages and partake of a wide program of support from a variety of government ministries, all under the coordination of

the military. The settlements were nucleated, it was argued, so that the villagers could more efficiently protect themselves from subversives. It was also evident that a concentrated population permitted closer supervision and served as a check on infiltration of what were termed "undesirable ideologies." In its depiction of Development Pole philosophy, the military summoned a fairly good sample of currently fashionable grassroots development vocabulary: "administrative decentralization," "integrated development," "bottom-up planning," and so forth. The concept, as embodied in writings and speeches of military officials, sounds fairly attractive. According to one officer:

Thus, under the coordination of the Army, the activities of the State are based on the creation of conditions of physical and material security for those displaced, to those attracted giving them wide political comforts, such as permanent amnesty, and also the comforts of a new roof, in planned communities offering the infrastructure of streets, community services, medical assistance, employment, and the opportunity to progress according to their individual abilities and wishes (Ejército de Guatemala 1984:vii).

The "model" of the Development Pole, as it was initially conceived by the military, never really functioned anywhere in practice. What resulted was a collection of communities that, quite frankly, defy generalization. Some of the Development Poles were conceived of as the "showcase" variety (Acul, Chacaj). With their carefully built and well-financed infrastructure, they initially were seen as places to which refugees would be attracted and visiting diplomats could be taken. A number of Development Villages, especially those in the Ixil region, were set in motion amid much publicity and then abandoned in a partially built stage. Whether by design or not, several of the pole villages (such as Acanal in Alta Verapaz) have become "re-education" camps in which refugees who surrender to the military are given ideological training over a period of months prior to being relocated. The municipality of Chisec, by contrast, has the relatively relaxed atmosphere of a frontier town that

accepts random refugees as well as land-hungry colonists from other, more heavily populated regions of the country.

Chacaj (Huehuetenango): The reconstructed community of Chacaj is built upon the ruins of "Old" Chacaj on a dry, rocky plain in northwest Huehuetenango, a short distance from the Mexican border. Before the Violence, the inhabitants of the area were native Canjobal and Chuj speakers. In the early 1980s, the People's Army of the Poor (EGP) made incursions into the region and reportedly gained local support. The military subsequently swept through on a counterinsurgency mission destroying communities and forcing the people to flee to Mexico. The military then established a large base for operations. In late 1984, the base was converted into an ambitious Development Pole with 1,068 house lots, a school, potable water, electric lights, and a clinic. An area of irrigated agricultural land was laid out, and technical assistance was supplied by the government of Taiwan. USAID contributed \$120,000, and several other international agencies offered their support. Located within sight of the Mexican border, it was expected that it would serve as a magnet for returning refugees to Guatemalan territory.

The advertised potential of Chacaj has never been realized. Initially, few refugees were attracted for permanent settlement. They arrived in small numbers and then left, a pattern which kept the community in constant flux. More recently, because the National Institute for Agrarian Transformation (INTA) has been luring nonpolitical colonists from other areas of Huehuetenango with offers of assistance, the population has more or less stabilized. By mid-1987, 169 families were residing officially in the camp (the largest population since it was inaugurated), and even this small group exceeds the agricultural capacity of the community's available land. Production of subsistence crops has been low since the community was founded, and virtually no cash crops are

being grown. The people make ends meet through occasional wage labor on neighboring farms--a pattern present in the area before the Violence.

The Ixil area (Quiché): The Ixil area was one of the places where, in the words of several commentators, "it all began." Relatively isolated from the rest of the country, the guerrilla made it an early base of operations. Violence started to erupt in 1975-76 with kidnappings and murders, then the Ixil region became a special target of the military's counterinsurgency campaign of the early 1980s. Many of the outlying settlements, which were made up of dispersed households, were destroyed; those families which managed to escape fled to the surrounding mountains, north toward Mexico, or into urban centers. Eventually, some of the refugees returned and took up residence in the city of Nebaj for a time, before being transferred to the model villages.

The Development Pole program was pushed strongly in the Ixil area, with 17 Model Villages on the books. Virtually all of the inhabitants of the Development Pole communities lived for some time (as long as two years) in Nebaj, where they had no agricultural land and extremely meager and tenuous incomes, before being brought to their new homes. When the military first came into the region, it began building roads so that it could mobilize its forces and secure the countryside. It set up the model communities along these roads, and brought in building materials. Through the Inter-Institutional Coordinating System, the government enlisted assistance for housing, electricity, potable water, and a variety of other construction projects.

The Development Pole program began to sputter shortly after it began. Lack of interest by foreign donors and a downturn in the Guatemalan economy combined to leave virtually all of the Model Villages only partially built; some of the later pole communities, such as Xoncaj, have the appearance of having been improvised out of scraps and leftovers combined with local materials. The community of Río Azul, located 20 minutes from Nebaj along a

wide, recently graded and gravelled road, is illustrative of the difficulties of the Development Pole program.

Río Azul: Río Azul was built in 1982 on the ruins of the settlement of Capul. According to the mayor, it contains 53 houses laid out along a standard grid pattern. The population has varied over the years, since Río Azul has served as a temporary holding tank for groups of people being transferred to other model communities as they are being built. At the time of our visit in late 1986, a tenuous stability had set in because the Development Pole program had stagnated. Officially, the camp had 115 families, but there could have been more. We were told that the present resident population had been made up of people from six settlements that had formerly existed in the area.

At the time of our visit the community had received no support for over a year, and existing facilities, not completely finished in the first place, were deteriorating. We found that bulbs of three of the 10 large streetlights along the road through the center of town were broken, and a fourth streetlight was on the blink. The community, which has no money, is unlikely to replace them. The plank boards and the posts of the houses are rotting in the damp climate. And the central plaza, containing a cement block "marketplace," is unused and falling to pieces. The community has the appearance of a rural slum. Services from the government are minimal and inadequate. Not all residents have farmland near the settlement and consequently farming is made difficult by the distances--often several hours walk--they must travel to their plots, located near their former settlements. The only real source of cash is from the Ministry of Public Works' road maintenance program. With tranquility restored to the region, and a visible relaxation of military control, the people of Río Azul (as well as other Model Villages) long for a return to their former patterns of dispersed landholdings. However, few plan to do so in the short

term. Regional military officials have made it clear to them that present arrangements will be maintained for security reasons.

We draw several conclusions from the military's Development Pole program. First, communities such as Rio Azul have not realized the army's inflated program of development, in which those affected by the Violence are able to "rebuild their future." The communities have not become economically self-sufficient--on the contrary, they have become less self-sufficient than they had been before all of this business started, for they have been concentrated in places some distance from their farms.

Second, the military brought in materials and worked on infrastructure projects. It knew nothing about social and economic development, and was unable to enlist support from other, more experienced agencies. Civilian government workers avoided the poles, as did NGOs and international funders such as AID and the IDB. After the construction had been completed, the program contained no "development" component. Needless to say, self-sufficiency is seldom fostered under conditions in which people are beaten into submission, herded together like sheep, and told to follow orders under penalty of death.

Third, from the beginning, the military has been primarily concerned with security through control of the local populations. Although it maintains a visible presence--in the form of soldier sentries on hills overlooking some of the villages--tension has diminished significantly and the area is much more open and relaxed than before. With the arrival of the civilian government, the military renounced its responsibility for "development" and social services. Yet the civilian government has either been unable or unwilling to step in and fill the gap with any meaningful services; and the NGO community and funders have been keeping their distance. The deteriorating Development Poles need

services, but they have become so politically contaminated that no one wants to touch them, and they are left to stagnate.

Fourth, it appears that if tranquility is maintained in the Ixil as well as in other Development Pole areas, and the military continues to relax its grip on civilian population, the people will soon begin to return to their former settlements and resume their lives as they had been before the Violence. Indeed, many of the houses in the Ixil area will be unlivable within a few years. Without outside assistance and without a source of income, there will be no other alternative for inhabitants but to abandon the communities and return to their land. On the other hand, most recent reports (February of 1988) note a resurgence of violence in the Ixil area, and consequent tightening of military security.

THE REFUGEE DILEMMA

As we have noted, by the mid-1980s a large percentage of the population displaced by the Violence in Southern Quiché had returned to their villages. This is not the case for the 150,000 to 250,000 who left Guatemala and sought refuge in Mexico and, to a smaller extent, in the United States. As of the end of 1987, fewer than 3,000 refugees had returned officially; there is good reason to believe that the majority will remain outside of the country for the foreseeable future. The refugee population includes people from all over Guatemala, but the largest number by far were those who were able to walk across the border from the northern reaches of Huehuetenango and Quiché, and the Petén. The refugees from Huehuetenango and Quiché are largely Indian; most of those from the Petén are ladino.

Only at the end of 1986 did the Guatemalan government reach agreements with Mexico and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and create a special commission to handle refugee matters. The Special Commission

to Aid Refugees (Comisión Especial para la Atención de Repatriados--CEAR), officially constituted in September 1986, unites the Ministries of Development and Defense and the CRN. Representatives of the Catholic Church, the Red Cross, and the UNHCR participate as quasi-official observers, although it must be said that the Church continues to keep its distance from this government-run program. CEAR is directed by Carmen Rosa de León Escribano, a high-ranking official in the Ministry of Foreign Relations who also happens to be the daughter of René de León Schlotter, founder of the Christian Democratic Party in Guatemala and present Minister of Development. CEAR and the Mexican Commission to Help Refugees, COMAR, have signed agreements assuring that refugee repatriations will be made voluntarily and that returnees will recover all of their rights as citizens and will not suffer reprisals.

CEAR was originally given a policy and coordination role within the institutional structure of the government, but since early 1987 has broadened its functions to include activities in the field with returning refugees as well as recently arrived families that had been on the run within the confines of Guatemala (in recognition of this new beneficiary group, CEAR has added "Desplazados" to its name, becoming CEARD). Functioning with substantial funding from the European Economic Community and cooperation from the UNHCR, CEAR has initiated a series of diagnostic and follow-up studies of communities of origin and has set up a basic assistance package of food and reconstruction supplies for returning refugees. It has gained certain autonomy with its own vehicles, warehouses, and operational infrastructure; yet its small staff (less than 20 people as of the end of 1987) would prevent it from increasing its work load if floods of refugees were to return.

Such an event is unlikely to occur at the present time, for neither refugees nor institutions within Guatemala have shown clear enthusiasm for massive repatriation. Both government and private institutions are fully aware

that any attempt to reintegrate hundreds of thousands of returnees in a politically fragile, economically stagnant environment, one with virtually no logistical mechanisms for managing the repatriation process, would result in extreme confusion and probably bloodshed. In late 1986, the Catholic Church was expressing extreme reluctance to support the repatriation effort in the absence of security guarantees for returning refugees. The Church appears to have softened this position somewhat, working more actively with refugees who have returned spontaneously (i.e., not through official repatriation centers) and with displaced families. However, the Church continues to prefer to operate independently of the government.

The military seems pleased to have its repatriation responsibilities taken over by CEAR, since it no longer has to shoulder the onerous tasks of processing papers, distributing food, and overseeing logistical arrangements for resettling the refugees, but is still able to keep an eye on things at close range. Yet, because military officials are ambivalent regarding the entire process, they continue to send conflicting signals. On the one hand, they acknowledge the right of the refugees, as Guatemalan citizens, to return to their communities. On the other hand, they are firmly convinced that the Mexican camps are filled with "subversive elements" who threaten Guatemala's security. Moderates within the military maintain that the refugees who return must be watched carefully.

For the most part, returning refugees are allowed to come back to their native communities. It was our impression from several areas of the Southern Highlands that few of the returnees encounter difficulties in repossessing previously held parcels of land, which have been cared for by relatives and neighbors or left untended. Land abandoned during the height of the Violence was generally not usurped by others in this region. However, in some areas in

which guerrilla activity was pervasive in the early 1980s and continues sporadically today, refugees are not necessarily allowed to return to their original villages; in different areas, other community members or even outsiders have begun farming abandoned land. Since the bulk of the refugees now in Mexico come from these conflictive and confused regions, there is no easy solution to the repatriation issue.

The Ixcán lowlands of northern Huehuetenango and Quiché constitute a special problem in this regard. This rich agricultural region was colonized over the last few decades by people from the overpopulated highlands, and the Catholic Church was heavily involved in purchasing the colonists' land and insuring that they receive title through the government land office. During the Violence of the early 1980s, the Ixcán was hit particularly hard by the military government's counterinsurgency program, prompting most of the population near the border to flee to Mexico. In several well-known cases the military encouraged outsiders to settle and farm the abandoned land, giving them armed protection. In general throughout the region, records of land ownership were lost during the forced exodus; and many of those families that still have their titles are afraid authorities will not honor them should they try to reclaim their land. Despite efforts by the Catholic Church, the government has apparently been less than cooperative in assisting efforts to resolve the land tenure issue. Under such continuing uncertainty and the threat of violence, few refugees from the Ixcán have expressed anything approaching a burning desire to return to their land.

Along with uncertainty over the land issue, reported human rights violations and other forms of discrimination against former refugees also discourage returns. Some of those who did not leave Guatemala fear that the presence of repatriated refugees will result in military actions against the

whole village. In some cases, old political hatreds have been awakened by the return of former militants of the insurgent groups.

CEARD has been responsible for monitoring the arrival of refugees, channeling limited assistance to help them readjust to life in very difficult circumstances. UNHCR has expanded its operations to Huehuetenango for the same purposes. Nevertheless, it remains a fact that few refugees--perhaps 3,000 from a total that may reach 250,000--have opted to return, at least through official channels. In short, refugees encounter numerous obstacles to repatriation. As long as the military rather than the civilian government remains the dominant force in Guatemala, and the present atmosphere of doubt and latent terror persists, no more than a trickle of refugees will cross the border back to Guatemala.

THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Up until the elections, the military had coordinated virtually all government assistance going into the rural areas and had maintained tight control over the areas of heaviest conflict. A variety of government agencies were utilized by the military for its "guns and beans" program, in which building materials were issued to cooperative villagers who wished to rebuild their destroyed villages. The Development Poles were put together with the collaboration of virtually all government service and development agencies by means of the Inter-Institutional Coordination System, with a large portion of the materials being funnelled through the Committee for National Reconstruction.

After almost a year in power, the Christian Democrats' progress in the area of development and social services has been disappointing. Theoretically, the newly created Ministry of Development is supposed to coordinate all private and government development work. Thus far, however, the Ministry has offered

no coherent action plans, and operating funds are scarce. Its publicized program to train 1,770 social promoters to work with community groups has stalled, with few promoters trained to date. Many NGOs view the Ministry as a highly political and potentially dangerous entity threatening to move in on their territory by paying promoters higher salaries, and have consequently kept their distance. According to numerous sources, real government support for the Ministry of Development is tepid because of infighting within the Christian Democratic Party. International funders, also, have been unimpressed by the Ministry's lack of a coherent program.

The government has managed to hog-tie itself with bureaucratic rope, and debilitating infighting continues to block any attempts at coordination. The Committee of National Reconstruction (CRN), which was supposed to disappear once the Cerezo government was in full swing, has instead received a new injection of power and is now directly under the control of the president, for reasons that are not altogether clear. Thus far, the CRN has operated with what might be viewed as a parallel development program; according to officials within the CRN, virtually none of them have communicated with anyone at the Ministry of Development. The CRN's attempts to reach out to the NGOs have been largely futile, according to NGO and CRN sources, although government funding has been offered to the NGOs. On their side, NGOs view the CRN with suspicion because of its legacy from the years of military rule and its highly political role within the present government.

The National Council for Urban and Rural Development forms still another layer in the development bureaucracy. It has in essence taken over the function of the IICS--while also carrying the basic IICS structure, and therefore inheriting a heavy load of its negative image--and is supposed to operate as a coordinating body at the national, departmental, municipal, and local levels. It is nominally under the authority of the Ministry of

Development, but its functions are as yet undefined and little has come of it thus far.

Not all of the blame for this inactivity and confusion rests with the civilian government, however. Although the military has officially relinquished power, it in fact continues to control matters which it considers important and vital for national security. The general attitude within the military is that civilians are incompetent and indecisive, lacking in discipline and will power. And the general attitude within the country is that the military is giving the civilians a chance to show what they can do. If things do not progress--or if any sort of disorder results--the military will rapidly move in to tighten its control and increase its visibility. With this in mind, civilians are behaving in realistic fashion: with extreme caution. But while caution might be the most reasonable response given the circumstances, it has led to inaction.

NGO WORK IN THE HIGHLANDS

At the time of our visit in late 1986, a variety of NGOs were carrying out development assistance programs with communities in the Southern Highlands. Outside of limited relief efforts by Catholic and Evangelical Protestant groups, the Northern Region is devoid of NGOs, particularly among the Development Poles, which are still under strict military control. Virtually all of the NGOs in the Southern Highlands had been there before and had retreated in the midst of the Violence. Having returned under very different circumstances, they have been testing the waters before embarking on serious work. Whereas before the Violence many of these groups had openly promoted organizational development, leadership training, "consciousness raising," and cooperativism, all of these activities are now off limits. Many community members who had participated in programs of this nature in years past have

since been killed or disappeared, or have fled. Beyond this, some of the NGOs have dropped terms such as "promoter" in favor of the more neutral "guide" or "technician." Overtly political themes, or ones that might be construed as political, are not discussed in the communities.

The most effective NGOs working in the highlands use village-level representatives and extension workers who were born and raised in rural communities, yet have received education through the primary and, in some cases, the secondary level. These representatives speak the languages of the people in the communities where they work and have a firsthand understanding of local customs and moral codes. They have often received special training and possess skills in areas such as community-level organization, health, accounting, and agriculture. We were able to observe the programs of several NGOs in action, and determined that they satisfy real needs and are generally very effective in their present limited scope. Both the extensionists and their organizations are strongly dedicated to their work, clearly discernible from their continued work in the communities despite conditions that are dangerous as well as difficult. We were impressed by both their sensitivity and their commitment.

Their programs are consciously of a technical, economic nature, devoid of political overtones. Many NGOs concentrate their efforts on small-scale village infrastructure, such as construction of houses, schools, potable water systems, and bridges. When they resumed their programs during the last two years, much of the work of development-oriented NGOs began, out of necessity, with a fairly heavy component of what must be termed relief, consisting of food and materials for house construction. People were starving and homeless and their food and shelter needs naturally superseded more sophisticated developmental matters. Gradually, the NGOs have moved into technical

assistance in agriculture (primarily in alternative crop strategies such as vegetable gardening), small animal raising, and crafts marketing. Projects with widows, who make up a part of virtually every NGO's program, characteristically cover these areas, as well as literacy training, enabling them to keep track of family finances.

Many of the NGO representatives speak of the need to work on the "healing process," an effort to rehabilitate the spirit of the people as a first step toward reconstruction. It is significant that during village meetings visible problems--such as the need for a school building--are often discussed at length because they are safe topics, while the more troubling psychic turmoil is kept out of sight. Representatives from several NGOs told us that they were beginning to coax some of these painful emotions out into the open so that they can discuss and deal with them.

With villages atomized by the Violence, and kept in fragments by the real or imagined threats of further violence, there is a tremendous need to bring communities back together. For example, rather than splitting widows off as a community subgroup and working with them alone, promoters with some NGOs have sought to include them in community-wide programs of assistance. Promoters also stress sports and cultural functions as ways to integrate communities and build confidence.

Unfortunately, the uncertain political climate of contemporary Guatemala does not allow the NGOs to utilize more than a fraction of their expertise. Most of their energy is spent attempting to restore self-confidence and emotional equilibrium, which are necessary preconditions for, rather than the stuff of, community development work. In order to avoid controversy--either perceived or real--both the NGOs and the communities steer clear of programs that emphasize true development skills, such as group dynamics and cooperativism. Furthermore, the tension generated by the general uncertainty

and lack of clear definition in the government and, consequently, on the international plane, has had the effect of creating friction within the NGO community itself. Factions have formed over issues of acceptable funding sources, the nature of official contact with government organisms, and guarantees of safety for extension agents as they work in the communities. Until the ground rules become clear and current anxieties and fears are dispelled, the NGO community will have considerable difficulty carrying out its work effectively.

INDIAN INITIATIVES

The goal of development programs in the Indian highlands should be to foster organizational skills and self-determination. Unfortunately, there is presently little room for Indian leadership of community groups or cooperatives at the local, regional, or national level. While the Indians of countries throughout Latin America have begun to form intertribal, or interethnic, federations and are breaking into the national political arena, the indigenous people of Guatemala are not. Attempts to create "peasant" (Indian and Ladino) leagues in the late 1960s and 1970s were cut short by the Violence, and all rural organization--except for that supervised by the military--has been forcefully discouraged. Community leaders were either killed or forced into exile during this period, and too much fear and uncertainty still exists to prompt renewed efforts to organize, even at the community level.

Again, there is some regional variation, but in the final analysis the prospects for Indians to actually take charge of their own affairs in the economic, political, and social realms are dim. In the Northern Region, including northern Huehuetenango and Quiché, a low level of conflict between scattered guerrilla forces and the military continues and the civilian population is given virtually no freedom of movement, much less of thought.

The Development Poles of the Ixil area are stagnant yet still firmly under army control, and there is, quite simply, no room for independent local organization. In fact, neither civilian government agencies nor members of the NGO community are interested in working there because of the military presence and the continuing level of tension.

Although the Southern Highland areas of Quiché, Sololá, Chimaltenango, and Huehuetenango have a lower military presence and the level of systematic violence has dropped off considerably, residual fear, suspicion, and resentment effectively inhibit attempts by Indians to take charge of their own affairs with cooperatives and community associations. Even in Totonicapán, where we talked with members of incipient artisan cooperatives, caution is the guiding principle.

It was made clear to us on numerous occasions that those Indians in potential positions of leadership exercised caution when they spoke to us about their own activities. It was our impression, in discussions with Indian leaders as well as with several Indians involved in cooperative marketing ventures, that they will maintain their circumspection until they are afforded a greater measure of personal safety. They believe that the military will view them as subversives if they attempt any sort of organizational work, even although it might revolve around strictly economic--as opposed to political--activities.

CONCLUSIONS

(1) At present, the civilian government is suffering from paralysis and has been unable to move forward in the area of development. Government programs suffer from poor planning and implementation, and little has been done to create a healthy working environment for NGOs. Beyond this, it was our

impression that the present government has been competing with NGOs for political control of the countryside to a great extent.

(2) The legacy left from the years of the Violence is an abundance of resentment, hatred, fear, uncertainty, and confusion among the rural population. People in the highlands are still in a state of shock. These troubled emotions are perpetuated in the countryside by the continued presence of the military, and through maintenance of military programs such as the Civil Patrols and the Development Pole communities.

(3) NGO development efforts with Indian communities in the Southern Highlands are uniformly low key and nonpolitical, with little emphasis on "organizational" or "consciousness raising" aspects of development work. This approach, which aims at satisfying such basic needs as housing and food with small-scale infrastructure projects and technical assistance, represents a conscious recognition of the limitations set by the tense context in which the NGOs work. A number of these NGOs are close to the communities in which they work, have the confidence of the people (as far as this is possible in contemporary Guatemala), and are successfully calibrating their behavior to keep all sides out of trouble. However rudimentary their efforts may seem on the surface, these groups are doing the best they can in a very difficult political environment in which there are severe restrictions on their activities. Given the present atmosphere of uncertainty and psychological confusion, a bolder approach would simply not be appropriate from anyone's perspective.

(4) During the early 1980s, the military attempted to implement its own brand of development. It operated with the conviction that it could get the job done more efficiently and effectively than civilians, and in this spirit launched

the ambitious Development Pole strategy in areas it had designated as "zones of conflict." This strategy was accompanied by an ornate philosophy, a detailed work plan for "model communities," and considerable fanfare.

The Development Pole program fell far short of the military's lofty expectations, and its prospects at the present time are bleak. Pole communities as a whole do not fit into the surrounding social and economic landscape and are not self-sufficient. Much of the infrastructure introduced by the military is deteriorating because of poor initial construction and/or lack of maintenance. The military continues to control pole communities, yet no longer takes responsibility for assistance to them; moreover, neither the civilian government nor NGOs has stepped forward to fill the void. As a result, the Development Poles are stagnant and neglected, and residents, who are unable to move out of them, are caught in a trap that will no doubt remain in place for some time.

With this program to its credit, the Guatemalan military has effectively demonstrated that while a "guns and beans" strategy may be effective in the short run as a counterinsurgency weapon, it has serious flaws as a long-range development strategy.

(5) With the partial exception of those in Totonicapán and Quetzaltenango, Indians in Guatemala are not organized at the regional or departmental level and do not exhibit the potential at the present time for the formation of Indian-run cooperative enterprises, associations, or groups that will attempt to reach beyond the community level. The only organizational structure presently allowed in highland communities is the Civil Patrol, which is controlled by the military and serves to prolong distrust and fear among villagers.

(6) As many as 200,000 refugees are still in Mexico and an undetermined number at large within Guatemala. They have been hesitant to return to their homes because of conditions of insecurity. Beyond this, the military has loudly and repeatedly expressed the opinion that a large percentage of those in exile are subversives--a position which tends to discourage refugees from thoughts of repatriation.

The longer the refugees remain away, the greater the chance that their land will be taken by others. This process has already begun in some regions such as the Ixcán of northern Huehuetenango and Quiché, where the military has apparently brought in outsiders, given them land, and offered them protection against the return of the former residents of the region. The extent to which this is occurring in the most heavily depopulated areas is not known; studies into the matter would be difficult to conduct.

As long as the present government continues without a plan for reintegrating these refugees into the nation and remains unable to provide them protection against military reprisal, nothing can be resolved.

(7) In the final analysis, it is difficult to be optimistic about the present situation of Guatemala. It is true that the Violence has diminished appreciably over the last three years and that there is now more space for development work in highland Indian communities. The legacy of the recent past, however, coupled with continuing military control and an all-pervasive atmosphere of fear and insecurity, casts a deep shadow over the countryside. As long as this debilitating atmosphere remains, it seems likely that little of significance can be accomplished by anyone--even those attached to the government or to private institutions. Any attempt to suggest specific courses of action for development assistance must be set aside until a good measure of tranquility and security is restored to the national scene.

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