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Guatemala: The Climate for Insurgency

An Intelligence Assessment

USAID review completed

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Guatemala: The Climate for Insurgency [Redacted]

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An Intelligence Assessment

*Information available as of January 1981 has been used
in the preparation of this report.*

This assessment was prepared by [Redacted]
Office of Political Analysis. Comments and queries are
welcome and should be directed to the Chief, Latin
America Division, OPA [Redacted]

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This paper was coordinated with the Office of Economic
Research, the Office of Central Reference, the
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Officer for Latin America. [Redacted]

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**Guatemala:
The Climate for Insurgency**

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Key Judgments

The 20-year-old Marxist insurgency in Guatemala is again intensifying. Encouraged by the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua and the growing violence in neighboring El Salvador, the revolutionaries have more than doubled their strength over the past two years, to some 2,000 armed guerrillas. They are stepping up operations, particularly in rural areas where the impoverished Indian masses have been left behind by the country's rapid, but badly skewed, economic growth.

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Havana, encouraged by the prospects for revolution in Central America, has increased its financial aid, advice, and training for Guatemalan insurgents. Cuban leaders are pressing the radicals to set aside their rivalries and establish an effective political and military coalition.

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We believe the insurgents will be unable to improve their military position substantially over the next several months. Even with increased supplies of arms, they will face many obstacles that are likely to make the revolutionary struggle in Guatemala a long-term process. These include repression by the Army, police, and unofficial death squads; dissension within guerrilla ranks; and lack of widespread popular support.

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Guerrilla prospects would be enhanced considerably should the bid for power by fellow revolutionaries in El Salvador succeed, thereby giving Guatemalan leftists training and staging areas across the border and a convenient source of arms and munitions.

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In the north, Mexican territory is used for small-scale arms smuggling, and isolated border areas probably serve as guerrilla sanctuaries. Although Mexico City is keeping the Guatemalan Government at arm's length, it does not actively support the insurgents and will prevent them from carrying out blatant aggression from Mexican territory.

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Lacking the resources and support base necessary to launch a broad, nationwide offensive, the insurgents are pursuing a long-term strategy that they and their Cuban mentors hope will complement the growth of revolutionary activity throughout Central America. Focusing operations on

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four regions—the capital, the Pacific Coast plantations, the Western Highlands, and the Northern Transversal—the extremists are trying to demoralize the Army, erode business confidence, and promote a degree of general insecurity that eventually will undermine the government. [redacted]

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Radical leaders recognize that their success ultimately depends on recruiting and mobilizing the Indians and, in some areas, Indian guerrillas already appear to be playing an important role in the fighting. The susceptibility of the Indians to guerrilla appeals depends to a large extent on cultural and economic factors that are eroding traditional indigenous lifestyles. This process is producing a generation of young Indians who are increasingly unwilling to submit to the injustices of the past. The failure of Guatemala's socioeconomic structure to accommodate these changing aspirations could result in a gradually growing indigenous support for radical change. For the time being, however, most Indians apparently prefer to remain neutral in the violent struggle between leftist and rightist forces. [redacted]

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Guatemalan Government and business leaders, though concerned by the insurgent challenge and the country's growing social and economic problems, are confident that they can maintain the upper hand. The government's response ranges from genuine efforts to improve living conditions for the poor to a continued heavy reliance on repression. President Lucas's regime has initiated social expenditures that, in the Guatemalan context, are unprecedented. A nationwide propaganda campaign to boost the positive image of the government and the armed forces is under way, with the military increasing its role in social welfare programs. At the same time, "death squads" operate with near impunity, decimating the ranks of labor leaders, members of the legitimate political left, and students and faculty of universities. [redacted]

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Improved government performance faces substantial obstacles, many of the administration's own making. The military and the business community do not constitute a unified oligarchy. Latent frictions between the entrenched ultraconservative groups and reform-minded government leaders, who are pushing increased public sector spending, a wider tax base, and reasonable changes, are likely to increase. The government also does not appear to have enough technically and administratively skilled people to implement its social action programs. Despite the new social welfare commitment, the ratio of government expenditures to national income is one of the smallest in Latin America. Moreover, the impact of benevolent programs is reduced by the regime's use of intimidation and increasingly indiscriminate violence. [redacted]

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Nonetheless, Guatemala overall has the best organized, trained, and equipped armed forces in Central America; significant human, natural, and financial resources; and probably sufficient time to sort out and begin solving the problems it faces. To the extent that the socioeconomic and political elites refuse to provide wider benefits, however, they spread the seeds of their own destruction.



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**Guatemala:
The Climate for Insurgency** [Redacted]

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The Radical Left

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The Guatemalan radical left—including both terrorist groups and sympathetic front organizations representing labor, peasants, and students—is the most tenacious in the hemisphere. It has survived constant brutal repression and vitiating internal dissension. Drawing on their years of experience in subversion and feeding on the deep social, political, and economic inequities in Guatemalan society, the radicals are again challenging the government in a campaign reminiscent of the violence that wracked the country during the mid- and late 1960s. [Redacted]

Given the still-limited scope of guerrilla operations, [Redacted] we believe there are no more than 2,000 armed insurgents. Even so, this would be more than double the force of two years ago. Moreover, guerrilla warfare training in Cuba for Guatemalan insurgents has increased significantly and this probably will further strengthen the revolutionary forces. [Redacted]

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Guerrilla Groups

The modern guerrilla movement can be traced to 1962 and the formation of the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR)—an alliance of the Guatemalan Community Party (PGT), dissident military officers, and leftist students. The FAR spawned the first significant terrorist campaigns, which peaked between 1965 and 1969. A brutal government counterinsurgency program killed several top leaders, decimated cadres, and broke up support networks. The FAR repudiated the PGT in 1968 for not helping enough in the fighting, and out of a series of factional splits and mergers grew the now predominant insurgent group, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP). A second major group, the Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), began operations during the past year. [Redacted]

Affiliated Organizations

Several labor, student, and peasant groups sympathetic with the radical left probably constituted sources of recruitment for insurgent cadres during the past year. Most of them were not classic front groups, however, since the guerrillas did not control the leaders or policies of the organizations, even though some members were guerrillas. By the close of the year, however, relentless attacks by rightist death squads forced the majority of these groups to cease operating publicly. Some groups, like the Robin Garcia Student Front (FERG) and the Peasant Unity Committee (CUC) apparently have gone underground and joined the guerrilla movement. [Redacted]

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The EGP remains the largest and most potent guerrilla organization, but if ORPA continues to increase its operations at the present rate it may soon eclipse the older organization. Havana—the major adviser and arms supplier to Guatemalan guerrillas—appears to favor ORPA and this may be a significant factor in ORPA's rapid rise to prominence. Although much smaller in numbers, both the FAR and a group of dissident Communist Party members continue to engage in propaganda or terrorist activities. [Redacted]

The Democratic Front Against Repression (FDCR), established in 1979, represented a fledgling bid to duplicate the broad front tactics of Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutionaries. During 1980, it focused on publicizing human rights violations in Guatemala and in promoting a negative international view of the government of President Lucas. In their travels through Europe, Latin America, and the United States, FDCR representatives tried to project an image of nonpartisan and nonviolent opposition to repression; their public statements, however, echoed the propaganda of the insurgents. The death squads also forced the FDCR to cease overt operations in Guatemala, but a few FDCR spokesmen in exile continue to make statements that are disseminated by domestic and international media. [Redacted]

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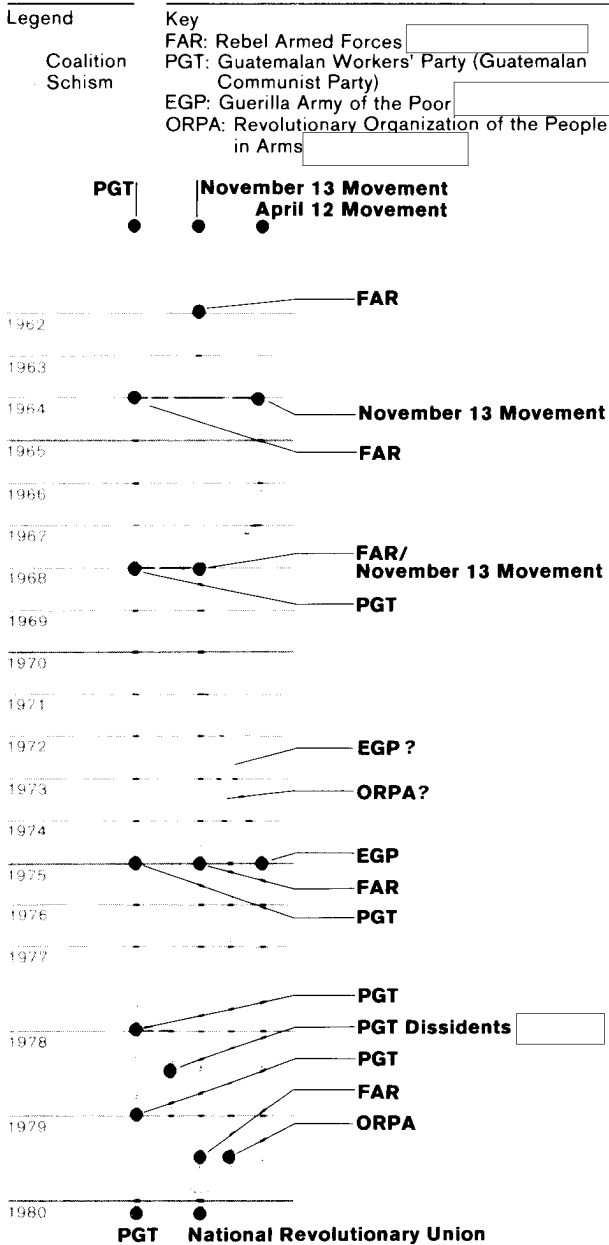
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Figure 1

Guatemalan Radical Left 1962-1980



Cuban Support and the Search for Unity

Havana's friendship, counsel, and material assistance have long been a key factor in the survivability of the radical left in Guatemala. Most guerrilla leaders have spent time in Havana, where Fidel Castro has patiently but persistently pressed them to set aside their differences and cooperate; their reward would be stepped-up Cuban assistance. Castro's goal is to build and sustain a guerrilla coalition responsive to Havana and ready to confront directly the Guatemalan Government at the appropriate time.

Although Castro's task seems formidable, both he and Guatemalan extremist leaders are encouraged by what they believe is the potential for revolutionary upheaval in Central America. The Sandinista success in Nicaragua—and Cuba's role in convincing the factions there to work together—is held up as a model.

In early 1980, Havana succeeded in prodding the four main Guatemalan insurgent groups to agree to coordinate operations, but rivalries between insurgent leaders and disagreements over strategy still seemed to block the ultimate goal of an effective coalition.

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Propaganda flier exhorting the Guatemalan people to join the four guerrilla groups in the struggle against the "criminal Lucas government" and the "assassin Army." Guatemalans are also urged to support actively the insurgents in El Salvador.

CONMEMOREMOS EL 20 DE OCTUBRE
IMPULSANDO LA LUCHA PARA DERROCAR
AL GOBIERNO CRIMINAL DE LUCAS

Las cuatro Organizaciones Revolucionarias
EGP, FAR, ORPA y PGT
Llamemos unitariamente al Pueblo de Guatemala. FUERZAS ARMADAS REBELDES
F A R

- A enfrentar combativamente la represi3n del gobierno y los patrones con la Autodefensa inteligente y organizada, usando todos los medios a nuestro alcance.
- A incorporarse masivamente a la Guerra Revolucionaria Popular impulsada y dirigida por nuestras cuatro Organizaciones Revolucionarias, para dar nuevos y mayores golpes al ej3rcito asesino.
- A apoyar activamente la lucha victoriosa del her3ico Pueblo hermano de El Salvador y seguir su ejemplo combativo.

LA UNIDAD REVOLUCIONARIA, POPULAR
Y DEMOCRATICA ACERCA EL DIA DEL
TRIUNFO PARA NUESTRO PUEBLO

Guatemala, 20 de Octubre de 1980.

PARTIDO GUATEMALTECO
DEL TRABAJO
PGT
Por Guatemala la Revoluci3n
y el Socialismo

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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For the present, the revolutionary effort in El Salvador still appears to be Havana's top priority. If that is successful, El Salvador could serve as a staging area for attacks into Guatemala as well as a convenient source of arms and munitions. In the meantime, Cuba's strategy in Guatemala will concentrate on keeping the radical forces unified while gradually building up the guerrillas' numbers, organization, and public support. [Redacted]

At the same time, Mexico City sees drawbacks in isolating the Lucas government completely, since that would aggravate the siege mentality of the Guatemalan right wing and close off Mexico's own options. Thus, while Mexican leaders will continue to keep Lucas at arm's length, they will also proceed with trade programs and joint development projects. [Redacted]

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Other Foreign Support—Mexico and El Salvador
Mexican leaders are pursuing a dual-track policy toward Guatemala. Official relations between the two countries are cool because of the international notoriety and repression employed by the Lucas regime. President Lopez Portillo has underscored his displeasure with the situation in Guatemala by postponing indefinitely a scheduled state visit. Mexico City is convinced that only socioeconomic reform and more moderate government policies can save Guatemala from an eventual revolutionary upheaval. [Redacted]

[Redacted] the long Mexican border—isolated, sparsely populated, and lightly patrolled by the armies of both countries—is an area of insurgent activities. We believe that Guatemalan guerrillas are smuggling arms—albeit on a small scale—from the Mexican side and are probably using certain areas of Mexican territory as sanctuaries. Indeed, pitched guerrilla warfare is currently under way in Guatemalan departments of the Western Highlands bordering Mexico. [Redacted]

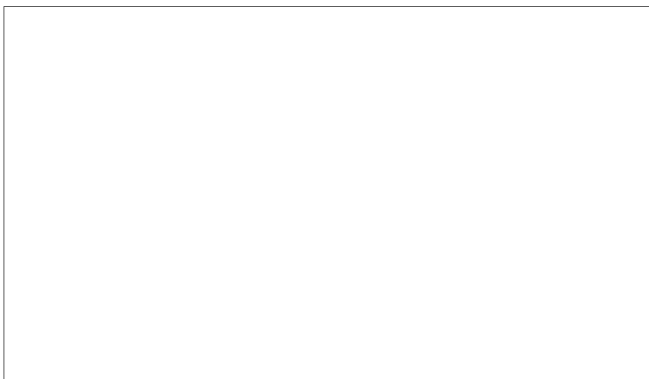
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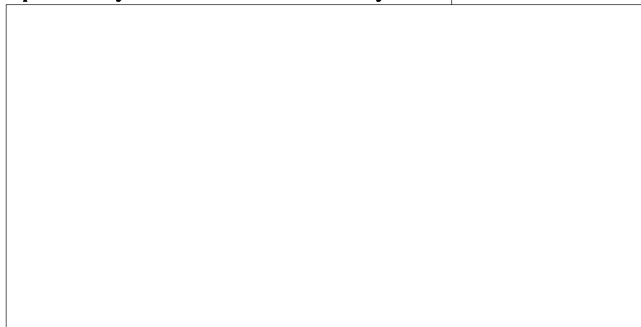
**Active Insurgency**

Unable to carry out operations in all parts of the country, the guerrillas generally have focused on what they regard as the four most suitable or vulnerable regions: the Guatemala City metropolitan area, the Western Highlands, the Pacific Coast Plantation Zone, and the Northern Transversal Zone. [redacted]

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Revolutionary groups in El Salvador have cooperated with their Guatemalan counterparts for several years, primarily in the Guatemala City area. [redacted]



Rural guerrilla warfare is most intense in the Indian areas of the Western Highlands. Throughout most of 1980, the EGP insurgents in the Quiche department waged the most effective military campaign, but toward the close of the year and the beginning of 1981, the area of severest fighting shifted to the ORPA zone of operations stretching west from Chimaltenango and Suchitepequez to the Mexican border. [redacted]

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Although some regional variation exists, current guerrilla tactics generally are designed to minimize rebel casualties, discredit and embarrass the government, garner a maximum of publicity and gain public sympathy. [redacted]

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The Guerrillas' Domestic Strategy

The consensus of the radical left is that the revolutionary struggle in Guatemala will be a long-term process. Thus, their aim is to develop the "infrastructure of the revolution" through propaganda and recruitment, reinforced by a limited campaign of terrorism and guerrilla warfare. Within this framework, four major factors figure prominently in the left's overall tactics:

- The lack of sufficient popular support to escalate hostilities into open warfare.
- The formidable obstacle represented by rightwing counterinsurgency, which has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of overt and covert supporters of the radicals.
- The guerrillas' belief that their "final offensive" will not be possible until the insurgent left comes to power in El Salvador.
- The difficulty of maintaining a unified guerrilla front in the face of strategic disagreements and personal rivalries among the insurgents. [redacted]

In the Western Highlands and the Northern Transversal Zone, the numerical superiority of the Army has compelled the guerrillas to rely on hit-and-run ambushes intended to increase Army casualties and demoralize the troops. [redacted]

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In the Western Highlands, the insurgents have sought publicity by temporarily occupying towns and villages. Wearing uniforms to dramatize the power and legitimacy of the underground army, the guerrillas quickly assemble the local populace and subject it to anti-government, anticapitalist harangues. ORPA has been particularly active in this practice in recent months, gaining a reputation for audacity and effectiveness. [redacted]

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Guerrilla communique in which the "EGP reveals the truth regarding the victorious attack on the Cotzal garrison and refutes the lies of the Army." Contradicting Army spokesmen, the guerrillas claim to have killed 35 to 40 soldiers. In reprisal, "the Army of the rich and its North American, Israeli and Somocista advisers" massacred 60 men, women, and children in that Indian town. "But with this genocidal attitude, the only thing they accomplish is heightening of the awareness of the people that POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY WAR IS THE ONLY PATH LEFT TO FOLLOW...."



EJERCITO GUERRILLERO DE LOS POBRES

COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

EL EGP INFORMA LA VERDAD SOBRE EL VICTORIOSO ATAQUE AL CUARTEL DE COTZAL Y REFUTA LAS MENTIRAS DEL EJERCITO.

El EJERCITO GUERRILLERO DE LOS POBRES -EGP- informa a la Prensa nacional e internacional y al Pueblo guatemalteco, sobre el ataque que victoriosamente llevaron a cabo trabajadores indigenas en armas del Frente Guerrillero Edgar Ibarra, el lunes 28 de julio.

Ese día, a las 5:20 horas, nuestras fuerzas iniciaron un ataque de hostigamiento en gran escala contra el Cuartel Militar de San Juan Cotzal, Departamento de El Quiché, en el cual habfan entre 80 y 100 kaibiles fuertemente armados, bajo el mando de dos oficiales guatemaltecos y dos ex-oficiales de la odiada guardia somocista.

Después de 20 minutos de intenso enfrentamiento (reconocido publicamente como el mayor habido entre el ejército y las fuerzas guerrilleras), el fuego de fusilería de nuestros heroicos combatientes guerrilleros le causó al enemigo las siguientes bajas comprobadas:

- Murieron uno de los oficiales guatemaltecos (que sí fué reconocido por el gobierno de Lucas ante la imposibilidad de ocultarlo) y los dos oficiales somocistas, que aparecían como miembros de la Guardia de Hacienda, torturadores de oficio.
- Entre 35 y 40 kaibiles muertos.
- Entre 25 y 30 kaibiles heridos que han sido distribuidos en diferentes hospitales militares del país (Huehuetenango y Guatemala).
- Ajusticiamos a dos elementos del poder local: Juan Ramos Chamay y Domingo Rodríguez Chamay, gufas y orejas del ejército.

Nuestras fuezas no sufrieron ni una sola baja. Por eso el enemigo no ha podido presentar ni una sola arma capturada.

Hasta las 07:55, cuando ya nuestras fuerzas guerrilleras se habían retirado, llegaron refuerzos enemigos transportados en helicopteros desde el Cuartel de Chajul. Poco después la aviación comenzó a bombardear el centro y los alrededores del Pueblo y del cuartel, provocando tanta confusión que una bomba cayó en pleno cuartel, y los kaibiles dispararon contra la aviación. El cuartel quedó prácticamente destruido y actualmente ha sido desocupado. Posteriormente el ejército desató una feroz y salvajema sacre contra la población civil, ante su incapacidad de golpear a las fuerzas guerrilleras.

La masacre a continuado, contándose hasta el 31 de julio 60 muertos y desaparecidos, entre niños, mujeres, hombres adultos y ancianos. Con esa cobarde represión, el ejército de los ricos y sus asesores norteamericanos, israelíes y somocistas, creen que podrán engañar al Pueblo y aislar al EGP de las grandes masas populares. Pero con esa actitud genocida lo único que hacen es acelerar la toma de conciencia de todo el Pueblo de que LA GUERRA POPULAR REVOLUCIONARIA ES EL UNICO CAMINO QUE LE QUEDA y aumentar su integración a las filas guerrilleras.

HASTA LA VICTORIA SIEMPRE

EJERCITO GUERRILLERO DE LOS POBRES

-EGP-

Guatemala, 4 de agosto de 1980.

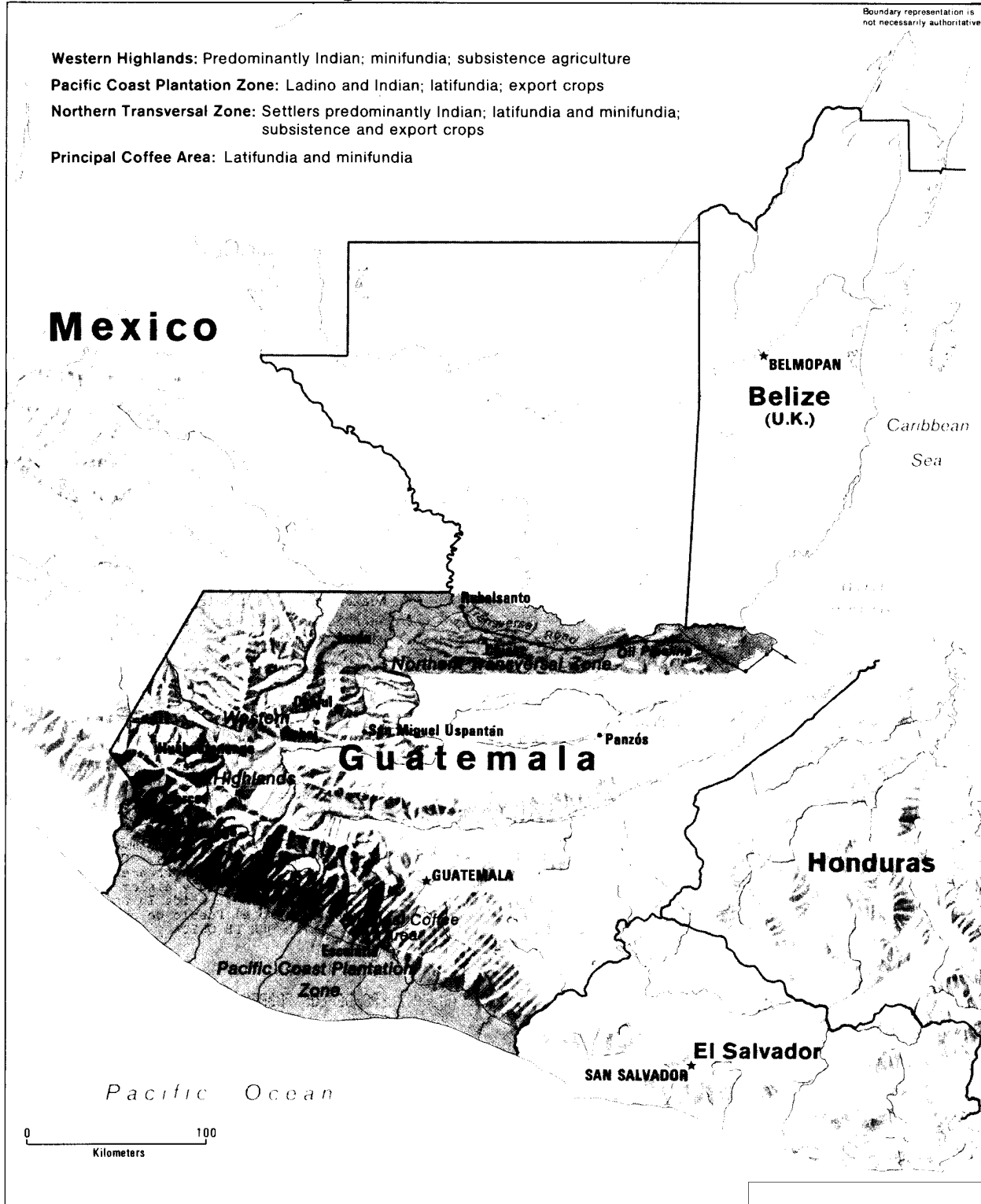
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Selected Socio-Economic Regions

- Western Highlands: Predominantly Indian; minifundia; subsistence agriculture
- Pacific Coast Plantation Zone: Ladino and Indian; latifundia; export crops
- Northern Transversal Zone: Settlers predominantly Indian; latifundia and minifundia; subsistence and export crops
- Principal Coffee Area: Latifundia and minifundia

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative



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Guatemalan Guerrilla Activity: 1979-1980



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In Guatemala City and other areas, terrorist acts include assassinations, kidnappings, and bombings. Uniformed personnel are attacked indiscriminately; particular individuals may be targeted for revenge because of specific acts of repression. A few businessmen have also been killed at random. The radicals hope these tactics will accelerate polarization and undermine the confidence of domestic and foreign companies and investors. [redacted]

Indian Recruitment

Believing that the success or failure of their movement depends ultimately on mobilizing the Indian masses—constituting nearly half of the population—guerrilla leaders have made recruitment of the indigenous population a major aspect of their long-term strategy. [redacted]

[redacted]

Relying primarily on native interpreters to propagandize in the local dialects, the EGP astutely seeks to incorporate entire households into guerrilla operations. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] EGP propaganda, moreover, carefully couches its appeals in terms of local concerns. For example, Ixil Indian resentments over official regulations against cutting firewood are exploited by charging that the government is only preserving the forests for the rich. [redacted]

[redacted]

Thus, a core of Indian militants and sympathizers is being formed—the first of the fruits of the guerrillas' long-term campaign to promote popular insurrection in the countryside. In addition, [redacted]

[redacted]

Despite these beginnings, the percentage of the indigenous population supporting the guerrilla movement apparently remains small and geographically limited. Most Indians still distrust the revolutionaries and would prefer to sit out the struggle—they sympathize with neither the insurgents nor the government [redacted]

Whether the guerrilla organizations can widen their appeal to the Indian masses depends to a significant degree on a variety of socioeconomic factors that are ending the isolation of the Indian communities and eroding their traditional lifestyles.¹ This process is producing a less submissive generation of Indians. But the changes affecting the indigenous population do not necessarily produce revolutionaries. In fact, the decline of the old culture has been accompanied by a strong desire among young Indians to participate in the national mainstream. Economic opportunity could provide an outlet for that desire, while the lack of opportunity could become a major factor in the radicalization of Indian youths. [redacted]

Government Response to the Radical Challenge

Guatemala possesses the resources to offer more social mobility to its poor. Concern over the potential for insurgent successes has caused the government to begin significant social and economic reform aimed at improving the living conditions of the lower classes. [redacted]

An economic downturn in 1979 and early 1980—brought on by rising prices of imports, a squeeze on credit, and the disruption of Central American trade—is likely to cause a cutback in the government's reform program. Nevertheless, the economy is basically strong, and continuing high prices for most agricultural exports and the expected significant increases in oil production promise to ease the situation over the long term. [redacted]

So far, the country's rapidly growing middle class—between 15 and 18 percent of the urban population—sees little attraction in revolutionary activity. The main interests of working class youth also appear to be

¹ See the appendix for a more detailed discussion of the socioeconomic changes affecting the Indian population. [redacted]

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employment, education, and social mobility. If economic conditions decline significantly, however, the radical left would probably gain many new adherents, particularly among urban and rural youth. [redacted]

Current economic problems, therefore, threaten not only the stability of the urban sector but—by reducing tax and other revenues—the continuation of government-financed social welfare programs for rural areas. The Lucas government, aware of the potential difficulties and particularly concerned over agitation by leftist labor unions, raised minimum wages significantly in 1980, doubled the traditional Christmas bonus, and implemented other measures benefiting both urban and rural workers. Nevertheless, the antagonism of the authorities toward politically active unions, coupled with the murders of labor leaders and others by rightist death squads, undercut government efforts to gain good will. [redacted]

Repression and Reform

This mix of repression and reform reflects the variety of views within the Army, the government bureaucracy, and the private sector over how to confront the subversive challenge. The issue is complicated further by regional divisions within the national power structure. Leftist terrorism in the Pacific Coast Plantation Zone and in Guatemala City directly involves the economic base of the national elite; the current guerrilla warfare in isolated areas of the Western Highlands is not an immediate threat. Local elites in the Western Highlands, however, have a much different perspective. Threatened by insurgent agitation among the Indians, they will continue to favor extreme measures to eliminate it—regardless of the course of national politics. [redacted]

On one point there is considerable unanimity among all elements of the ruling elite: the country's unprecedented expenditures in the social sector will not bear fruit if leftists are allowed to engage in subversive activities. [redacted]

The ruling classes traditionally have viewed the national government primarily as an instrument for maintaining the peace, providing minimal services, and allowing laissez faire capitalism to run its course. Even today, despite the new emphasis on social programs,

the ratio of government expenditures to national income remains one of the smallest in Latin America. [redacted]

The Lucas regime, however, has initiated a significant break with the past. Although continuing to believe that prosperity in the private sector will ultimately benefit the poor, the government is investing in the public sector and making the other expenditures—at least partially because of the current business decline. Budgeted public spending has risen from \$282 million in 1978 to \$418 million in 1980, while estimated actual expenditures went up by \$91 million from 1978 to 1979—a major increase compared to the record of previous regimes. [redacted]

The government's programs and activities are highlighted by:

- The Social Action Plan, emphasizing employment and basic services in rural areas.
- A variety of reform measures including land distribution, wage hikes, and improved public relations.
- Armed forces' involvement in civic action and social welfare programs. [redacted]

The Social Action Plan

The government's main effort in the area of socio-economic reform is embodied in its ambitious Social Action Plan. Aimed primarily at the rural poor, the plan intends to generate jobs and provide basic services to the large segment of the population that has failed to benefit from the economic progress of the past two decades. On paper, the plan looks good, but about one-third of the proposed projects are still under study and many of those already approved are bogged down in the planning stages. The overall results may not be apparent for several years and it is questionable whether the government has the intention or the capacity to fully implement this far-reaching program. [redacted]

Government technocrats have warned that should current trends continue, conditions will have deteriorated further by the time President Lucas's term ends in 1982:

- More people will be suffering from malnutrition, which now affects 80 percent of children under five years of age.

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- Illiteracy, now reaching 80 percent in some rural areas, will have increased.
- Unemployment, now at 30 percent, will have increased. [redacted]

The plan's goals, therefore, are to "quickly reorient state activity," emphasizing programs "to increase employment and income, provide basic services to impoverished communities, and improve administrative efficiency." Over the next two years, the plan budgets \$566.7 million for health, housing, education, and child nutrition. [redacted]

The Social Action Plan seems to be a pragmatic effort to gear new programs to local realities. For example, it deemphasizes hospitals and doctors, which provide services only to a small segment of the rural population, and stresses public health clinics staffed primarily by paramedics. Reversing previous policy, the government is also promoting birth control information and the distribution of contraceptives through these clinics. [redacted]

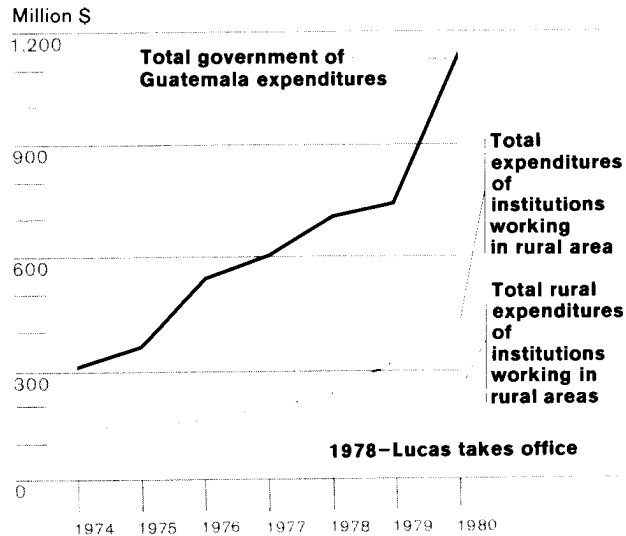
Other Government Measures

A number of other government programs dovetail with the Social Action Plan and are a key to its success or failure. These include incentives to industries moving to the provinces, resettlement of Indians, higher minimum wages, and a stepped-up public relations campaign. Like the broader Social Action Plan, these programs are aimed primarily at improving the lot of the rural poor. [redacted]

A new decentralization law offers substantial tax breaks and other financial incentives to businesses that relocate plants outside Guatemala City. Government planners hope that as firms relocate in the provinces, employment opportunities will increase significantly and help ameliorate the sharp disparity between rural and urban income. [redacted]

The government has undertaken little land reform—in the traditional sense of breaking up large land holdings. Instead, the Lucas regime has focused on colonizing jungles in the Northern Transversal Zone with cooperative units that will receive technical/agricultural assistance as well as access to roads, markets, schools, and health clinics. [redacted]

Figure 4
Government of Guatemala Total Actual Public Sector Expenditures, 1974-80
(Investment and Operating Costs)



Source: Agency for International Development

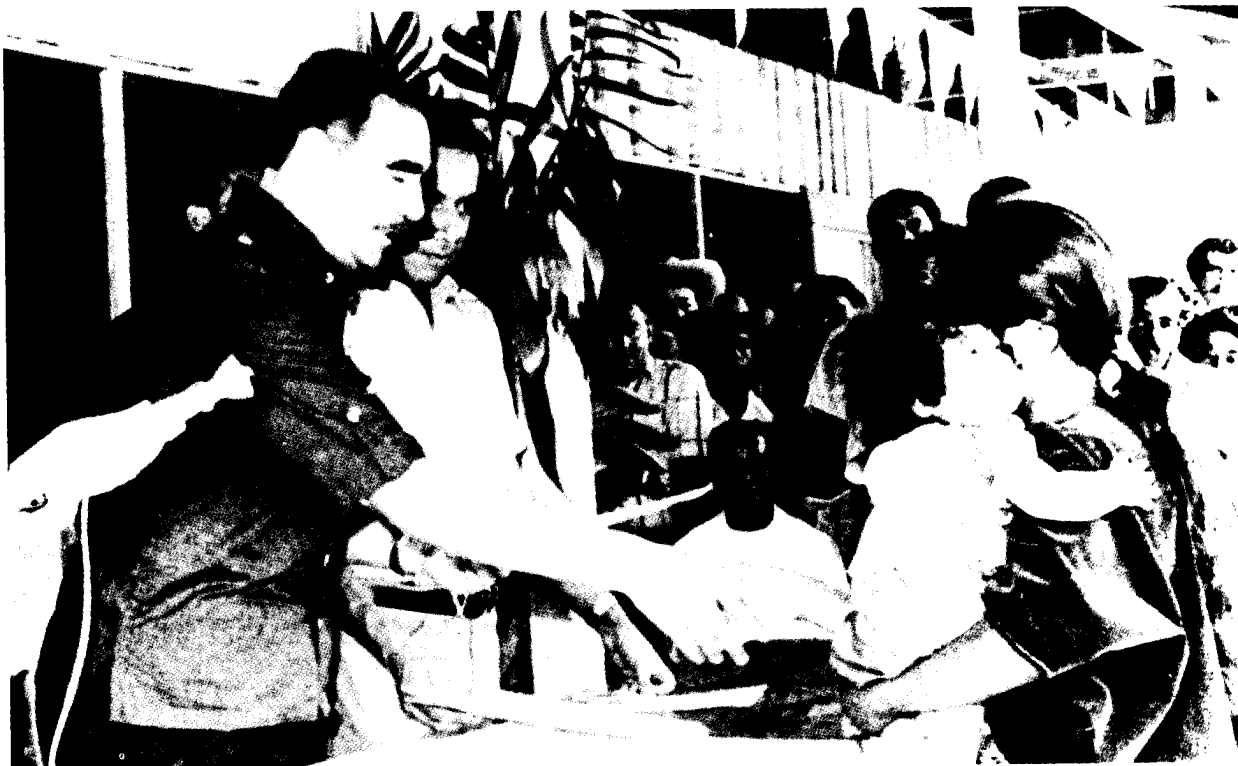
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A top priority is resettlement of Indians from the Western Highlands, where overpopulation and soil exhaustion are major problems. The administration claims that 22,000 titles have been granted during the past two years, but many obstacles remain. Uncontrolled deforestation may ruin the agricultural potential of the new lands, for example, while critics charge that the whole program is merely perpetuating the traditional dependence of small farmers on temporary work on larger holdings nearby. Moreover, since the government cannot adequately control the movement of people in the area, land conflicts among Indian settlers have occurred and there are also allegations that big landowners and developers have evicted some Indians from land they settled independently of the program. [redacted]

Low wages, traditional for agricultural workers, led to unprecedented work stoppages in Pacific coast plantations in February 1980. The authorities reacted with uncharacteristic restraint, and eventually decreed a minimum wage nearly three times higher than the

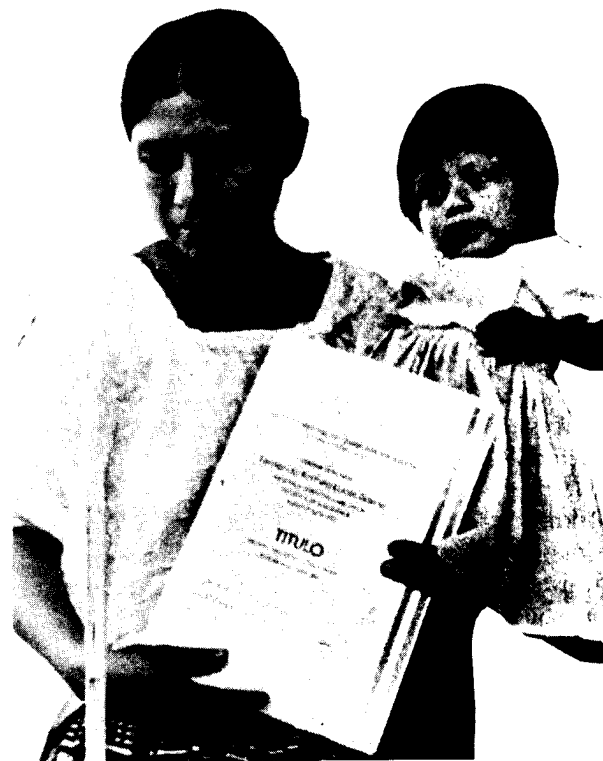
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General Lucas personally distributing land titles to Indians resettled in the Northern Transversal Zone.

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previous rate for workers in cotton, sugarcane, coffee, and livestock—the main exports of agrobusiness. Wages for urban workers also were raised substantially. [redacted]

Some large landowners laid off workers, however, and others refused to meet the minimum wage, despite a public threat by the Labor Minister to prosecute those who refused to comply. Even if a nationwide minimum wage were instituted, workers' purchasing power would still continue to erode because of inflation—currently 13 percent and likely to increase. [redacted]

Concerned over signs of widespread antipathy toward its policies both domestically and internationally, the government has initiated a nationwide public relations campaign emphasizing the benefits of its social welfare program and depicting soldiers as compassionate and nationalistic citizens. The government stresses the high percentage of Indian soldiers to discount allegations of atrocities against the Indians, and exalts as a patriotic rallying point the Maya Indian heritage. This tactic could be particularly effective because of the massive numbers of Guatemalans who retain an Indian identity, and because some officials do maintain close relations with the indigenous population. President Lucas, for example, is intimately familiar with the Indians of his native Alta Verapaz, and speaks the Kekchi language. [redacted]

The Role of the Armed Forces

The Guatemalan armed forces overall probably are the best organized, trained, and equipped in Central America despite certain inadequacies, such as its counterinsurgency capability. To remedy some of these deficiencies, the Army is expanding guerrilla warfare courses and emphasizing civic action and psychological warfare. [redacted]

Military Objectives

A major task of the Army is finding and engaging elusive insurgent units, but a shortage of helicopters, inadequate intelligence, and a frequently uncooperative local populace narrow the government's edge. In addition, contrary to the insurgent strategy of integrating guerrillas into the community, the Army usu-

ally rotates units every four to six months and has made no effort to develop local militias. [redacted]

In areas where guerrilla warfare is most intense, the Army seeks to control the population by roadblocks, searches of homes and individuals, rigid enforcement of identity card regulations, and other measures that antagonize the local communities. Some officers use torture and other harsh methods to elicit information about guerrillas and to discourage support for insurgency. Military commissioners, operating independently of local Army units, sometimes persecute the same peasants that civic action teams are trying to win over. [redacted]

Over the short term, harsh treatment by the military can intimidate most of the rural populace but it also radicalizes some individuals and builds anti-government resentment that benefits the revolutionary cause. [redacted]

Civic Action and Social Reform

The armed forces are already playing an integral role in the colonization projects in the Northern Transversal Zone, as well as in other social welfare programs. Army civic action teams provide medicine and other vital services to isolated areas, and Air Force planes transport people and supplies to the jungle colonies. Emulating the methods of the Sandinista literacy campaign in Nicaragua, the military is reported to be promoting a similar effort that will be fully operational early this year. Moreover, Army officers have been ordered to stop abuses of civilians and to give a high priority to public relations efforts; [redacted]

[redacted] the armed forces face considerable cultural and linguistic obstacles in the effort to gain widespread popular support. Some young Indian men enlist voluntarily, but the dominant indigenous attitude is negative and most native recruits have to be conscripted forcibly. Even with these Indian conscripts, however, Army troops are often not familiar with local dialects. [redacted]

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Guatemalan Army public relations advertisement: "Let us maintain peace in Guatemala. Soldiers are men of the people. People like yourself. Who love and cherish Guatemala as you do. I am your brother. You are my brother. We are a single Guatemalan race."

mantengamos la paz
EN GUATEMALA

**LOS SOLDADOS SOMOS PUEBLO.
PUEBLO COMO TU. QUE SIENTEN Y AMAN
A GUATEMALA COMO TU.**



☼

Soy tu hermano.

☼

Eres mi hermano.

☼

Somos una misma raza chapina.

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Reacting to international and domestic criticism of forced conscription, the Ministry of Defense issued new recruiting and pay regulations in July. Material benefits were raised, and now even include a monthly allotment to compensate families for the loss of a working member. [redacted]

Rightwing Terrorism

Death squad activity—much of it the work of government security forces—has mixed effects. While assassinations debilitate guerrilla organizations and decimate student and labor groups, the atmosphere of repression also alienates segments of the general population, furthering the polarization sought by the radical left. [redacted]

No centralized control over the clandestine rightwing organizations appears to exist, and their activities are growing increasingly indiscriminate. To avenge the recent death of a police chief, rightwing extremists fired randomly on a group of students at San Carlos University, killing seven. Leaders of moderate opposition parties that do not support the revolutionary movement have also been murdered. Radicals on both sides attempt to dramatize their assassinations by machinegunning victims on public streets. Moreover, while most death squad activity condoned by the authorities is aimed at known or suspected leftists, many murders result from purely personal motives. The Guatemalan populace is more likely to blame the government for burgeoning insecurity than the guerrillas. As long as the insurgents remain discriminating in their selection of targets and persuade the public that the government has ties with rightist death squads, the radical cause will gain increasing domestic and international sympathy. [redacted]

Outlook

Over the short term, we believe Guatemalan leaders will try to hold the line by continuing the current mix of repression and reform. They are buoyed by the new administration in Washington, expecting that the United States will now be more aggressively anti-

Communist and thus supportive of the Lucas regime. Abroad, Guatemala is increasing contacts, attempting to obtain military and security assistance from like-minded governments—particularly Southern Cone states such as Argentina. [redacted]

New variables, however, are coming into play, and these will require unprecedented adaptiveness on the part of the power structure:

- The government may not possess the leadership nor the necessary administrative capabilities to attain its social action goals. Low salaries, inadequate training, and corruption among many public employees, coupled with inefficient and time-consuming regulations, may vitiate ambitious projects. As of March 1980, for instance, \$48.5 million out of a total of \$54.6 million of loan projects approved by the United States had not been disbursed; some of the projects date back to 1977.
- The drive to expand the role of the state and to increase government spending may be hampered by the current economic decline, which affects the major sources of tax revenues. Tourism, another large income producer, has declined markedly because of terrorism. Recent murders and kidnappings have undermined private business confidence, severely curtailing investment and credit. The government may try to enforce the previously neglected personal income tax more strictly, but this and other reforms—even if adopted—will be politically difficult to implement. In effect, Guatemala's ruling sectors would have to submit to unprecedented levels of taxation for the benefit of the impoverished majority. The recent tax debates in the Guatemalan legislature indicate that the private sector will avoid the major restructuring sought by some reformers.
- Latent friction between the predominately white upper class businessmen and plantation owners, and the largely *mestizo* middle and lower class military officers could be brought to a head by the issue of socioeconomic reform. The military and the business community are not a unified oligarchy, and considerable distrust—based on social distinctions and differing perspectives on the insurgent threat—exists between the two groups. Although some prominent businessmen publicly espouse the need for reform,

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Rightwing death squads often seek to make a psychological impact on the local populace by dumping the bodies of their victims along public roads.



●TRIPLE CRIMEN. — Habitantes de la finca Torolita, de Escuintla, ven con estupor cómo quedaron los cuerpos sin vida de Salvador Del Cid Herrarte, Feliciano Cardona Contreras e Inés Barillas Pocasangre, muertos a tiros ayer por hombres desconocidos. Los ejecutores del triple crimen, previamente ataron a sus víctimas con las manos hacia atrás, dándoles muerte con ráfagas de metrallera. (SHS)

Prensa Libre

the armed forces seem to be more committed than the economic elites.

- Some conservative military officers, on the other hand, give only lipservice to social reform programs and may work to undermine them. These officers share the views of reactionary civilians that the status quo must be preserved at all costs, and that massive government spending will only result in greater inflation and foreign debts.
- Political violence will pose significant impediments to the social welfare programs. Some rightists, for instance, view the Social Action Plan and similar projects as excessively influenced by members or sympathizers of the radical left. Rightist extremists probably were responsible for the murder in 1980 of Julio Segura, a key advocate of the plan.
- The leftist victory in Nicaragua and the civil war in El Salvador assume particularly ominous signifi-

cance for Guatemala, whose officials until recently have felt abandoned by the United States. The strategy of the Carter administration, according to these critics, was to destabilize the Lucas regime while currying favor with the revolutionary left. They suspect that the United States willfully lowered coffee prices, banned the import of Guatemalan beef, and advised United States business leaders to withhold credit or move their firms out of the country.

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In spite of these potential problems, we believe that the Guatemalan Government over the short term will not be seriously threatened as long as the radical left is stymied in its bid for power in El Salvador. In the meantime, the Guatemalans have at least some of the human and financial resources to begin sorting out the difficulties they face. If the entrenched ultraconservatives block meaningful reform, however, growing violence over the longer term, with its attendant social polarization and economic dislocation, will undermine the present power structure.

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Appendix

Cultural Change Among Guatemalan Indians and Its Impact on Guerrilla Recruitment

New Aspirations

Guerrilla success in rural Guatemala ultimately may depend on the ability of the insurgents to galvanize and channel substantial Indian support against the government. The authorities formerly could take for granted that the fatalistic, introspective nature of the Indians would be an effective barrier to radical left subversion among them. [redacted]

This complacency is no longer warranted. Indigenous culture is experiencing a profound transformation as long-established attitudes and patterns of behavior are being altered by diverse factors:

- Traditional *minifundia* (small plot) agriculture is unable to provide adequate livelihoods, thus intensifying dependence on the national money economy.
- Missionaries and catechists have raised the concept of social justice as well as undermined fatalistic religious beliefs and rituals.
- The Indians have increasing communication with the outside world. [redacted]

These changes—guerrilla leaders reason—could produce a generation of Indian youth who will seek a better life by overthrowing the capitalist system. [redacted]

But these changes could go either way; an expanding horizon does not necessarily produce revolutionaries, and, in fact, the decline of traditional culture has been accompanied by a strong desire among young Indians to enjoy the benefits of participation in national life. Whether Guatemala's socioeconomic system can accommodate changing Indian aspirations is an issue that will be resolved over time. If Guatemalan leaders can provide the Indians with an opportunity for social and economic betterment, we believe the government will benefit from the long process of cultural change. [redacted]

Cultural Challenges and Guerrilla Problems

Radical left propaganda, an integral facet of the strategy to legitimize the insurgency and gain foreign support, depicts Guatemala's Indians as a homogeneous mass being collectively oppressed. This stereotype ignores the linguistic and cultural diversity among Indians, as well as the economic progress enjoyed by a growing number of Indian merchants. Guerrilla propagandists also give the inaccurate impression that all peasants are Indians. Although most of the rural population in the Western Highlands is indigenous, most of the peasants in the eastern zones are not. Furthermore, not all Indians are peasants; many are active and successful in commerce. Anthropological studies increasingly refer to an emerging indigenous elite in various locales. [redacted]

Indians generally consider themselves racially distinct from the dominant, Spanish-speaking Ladino population of Guatemala, but the distinction is primarily cultural rather than racial. The most obvious cleavage is that of language; however, this also separates Indians from each other, since many Indian languages and dialects are spoken. In the same manner that each dialect is limited to a specific area or locality, the traditional cultural orientation of the Indian centers on his native community. This localism, with its particular code of behavior and set of beliefs, distinguishes the traditional Indian from the Ladino, who views himself as part of a wider Spanish-American culture with centers in Guatemala City and abroad. [redacted]

Ladino domination of the economic and governmental structures in the Western Highlands has been facilitated, in part, by the rural Indians' general lack of knowledge about the outside world. During recent decades, however, the Indians' isolation has been reduced by a host of factors including new roads, literacy campaigns, foreign missionaries, an increase in migrant labor, and the availability of transistor radios. [redacted]

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Guatemalan guerrillas; many of them apparently are Indians.



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These have brought a growing sophistication that, while making some Indians more accessible to insurgent appeals, has made others strive for personal economic advancement within the national mainstream.

The insurgents are attempting to take advantage of changing Indian aspirations by promising that a revolutionary government would bring about social and economic improvements that could never be attained under the present capitalistic system. Guerrilla efforts to gain sympathy in indigenous communities probably are enhanced by the antigovernment resentments provoked by the Army's chronic abuses of civilians. Nevertheless, before a substantial number of Indians takes the risk of joining the armed rebellion, the radical left must prove that it is capable of successfully challenging the armed forces militarily.

The left's task is compounded by a growing fragmentation within many indigenous communities, a result of culture changes that pit old values and practices against new social and economic aspirations. Although the attendant polarization has made some Indians increasingly susceptible to insurgent appeals, it also has reinforced the desire of others toward material benefits within the present political order.

Over the last few decades, a major factor contributing to polarization among the Indians has involved traditional Indian religious organizations known as *cofradias*, whose power and influence have declined as indigenous participation in modern commercial activity has increased. In the past, the most prosperous Indians bore many of the heavy financial costs of the *cofradias*—including fiestas and rituals in honor of patron saints—thus enabling these organizations to level wealth, promote group solidarity, and reaffirm traditional customs. Now, however, individual Indians are more likely to use their money for personal advancement, a reflection of the inroads made by modern Western culture. Moreover, class divisions are emerging in some communities as wealthier Indians marry among themselves, thereby establishing an economic elite more likely to favor the status quo—and, ironically, also disposed to revolt if economic progress is blocked unfairly by Ladinos.

The reduction of the socioeconomic and religious significance of the *cofradias* has been accelerated by Protestant and Roman Catholic religious modernizers, who have attacked the system as idolatrous and wasteful. Primarily concerned with social justice rather than traditional religious practices these innovators work through native converts or lay catechists—usually assertive, literate youths—to focus the attention of the Indians on human rights and other issues.

To a limited degree, this has favored the insurgent cause. Some catechists—repudiated by *cofradia* traditionalists and persecuted by rightist Ladinos—have turned to the radical left, particularly to the EGP guerrillas in the Quiche department. Moreover, rightwing groups have been killing catechists and have begun to assassinate liberal priests, a course that probably will prompt some clerics to lend the same kind of active support to the insurgency that they did in the 1960s.

Nonetheless, the polarization within Indian communities does not always work to the advantage of the guerrillas. Seeing their traditional way of life threatened by modernization, some Indians have turned on those who have abandoned long-established customs and practices. And, in some localities, the resentment of *cofradia* traditionalists is so intense that they have sided with reactionary Ladinos—who view the activities of the native catechists and foreign missionaries as a threat to their continued socioeconomic and political dominance.

The Erosion of the Indian Economic Base

Insurgent attempts to recruit Indians ultimately may benefit less from concerted guerrilla strategy than from the lack of economic opportunities, which frustrates the desires of Indians for change and advancement. In this context, the marketing system and the

² An EGP manifesto states: "Christians play an important role in the consciousness raising and organization of our people and have made of their faith a generous force for the liberation of Guatemala. . . . Aware Christians should understand and believe that when peaceful means to achieve justice have been exhausted, revolutionary violence is legitimate and just. In our country, one cannot be a Christian without being a revolutionary." Fidel Castro himself made overtures to Christian militants in his 1971 proposals in Chile for "strategic alliances between Christians and Marxists" and on other occasions.

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IN ANCIENT TIMES Moses gathered together the leaders of the people to lead them out of Egypt.

Biblical Citation: Exodus 3, 16

Our mission is to deliver the people from slavery.

TODAY the poor must unite and work together to attain the kingdom.

They are taking Jacinto. WE MUST HELP HIM!

Translated excerpts from *Comrade Christ (Cristo Compañero)* a series of Christian revolutionary pamphlets using Biblical references to raise the consciousness of the people, particularly Protestant converts, and foster agitation for social justice.



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declining productivity of subsistence farming are converging to intensify the economic plight of the Indians, further alienating them and making some increasingly susceptible to appeals by the radical left.

Despite the advances of Indian merchants, the marketing system keeps most Indians in an inferior position by vesting control of native commerce largely in Ladino hands. For example, the bulk of the agricultural lands in the Western Highlands—the area where indigenous involvement in guerrilla groups has been most pronounced—are owned and farmed in small parcels by Indians. The produce, however, is bought and distributed in the Ladino-dominated market towns, thus rendering the Indians largely dependent on that segment of the population generally opposed to any form of change.

For the Indians, the problem of the marketing system is exacerbated by the *minifundia*, or small parcels of land, which traditionally have supported the indigenous population. Now, however, increasing overpopulation, further subdivisions through inheritance, and the poor quality and meager productivity of the land have rendered the *minifundia* inadequate.

Faced with the erosion of their traditional economic base and unable to secure employment near home, an estimated half-million Indians from the Western Highlands migrate each year to the Plantation Zone for seasonal work. This movement could have far-reaching political consequences, since it helps break down the traditional distrust between disparate Indian communities. This, in turn, could open the way for the emergence of pan-Indian solidarity—an eventuality that has not been missed by the radical left, which is exploring ways to capitalize on the disaffection of migrant workers.

Guatemala's export economy—primarily sugar, cotton, and coffee—largely hinges on indigenous migrant workers, but high inflation is eroding the earnings from plantation labor. The extent of Indian dissatisfaction is illustrated by the massive work stoppages that swept across plantations in the Escuintla and Suchitepequez departments in February and March of 1980, resulting in government decrees nearly tripling the minimum

wages. Although the Peasant Unity Committee was involved in agitation, the strikes apparently were not organized by the radical left; instead, young Indian men were at the forefront of the protests, suggesting some erosion of the passivity that has characterized Indian labor.

Recognizing the potential for widespread unrest implicit in the economic plight of the Indians, the Guatemalan Government is conducting a large-scale program to resettle Indians in the jungles of the Northern Transversal Zone. Plans to expand the work begun by Maryknoll missionaries at Ixcán by creating cooperative units with access to schools, health clinics, technical assistance, and outside markets may founder, however, on the administrative inadequacies of the bureaucracy.

Another serious problem is the dramatic rise in value of formerly worthless jungle land because of the discovery of oil in the zone and the building of the Transversal Road connecting newly opened lands with the Caribbean coast and the national road network. Ladino speculators and developers—including military officers—have acquired large tracts of land in the area. According to various allegations, some of these lands had already been settled independently by Indians who were evicted—either legally or by use of violence. Although Guatemala City claims that the Northern Transversal Zone is to be reserved primarily for the small landholdings allotted by the government, private *latifundia* are also emerging, arousing criticism that Indian dependence on plantation labor will be perpetuated.

Exploitation of Indians has characterized Guatemala's history. Indications are increasing, however, that the indigenous peoples—particularly the young—are now less likely to submit to repression. The notorious 1978 Panzos massacre—in which the military killed at least 32 Indians and possibly as many as 100—was precipitated by Indian settlers protesting evictions, suggesting an increasing resolve to oppose that which previously was met with stoicism and submission. Moreover, in some of the jungle areas, well-organized guerrilla groups now exist to capitalize on Indian frustrations. The Guerrilla Army of the Poor began its revolutionary activity in 1975 at Ixcán, a major col-

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Comrade Christ compares the suffering of the people of Israel under Egyptian bondage with the exploitation of Guatemalan peasants by referring to the Panzos massacre:

IN ANCIENT TIMES God wanted, through Moses, to free His people from slavery.

We cannot bear this hard work any longer.

United we shall change this situation.

TODAY God does not want slavery and death for our brothers.

They killed more than 100 peasants in Panzos.

In the face of this, what must we do as Christians?

Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Exodus 3, 9-10



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onization center, and since then has made several successful attacks on Army units in the Northern Transversal, ultimately hoping to establish a major front in this lowland area. [redacted]

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Although conditions conducive to a popular insurrection are emerging in the rural sector, indigenous support for the radical left probably will be gradual. At this point, most Indian villages still greet both armed guerrilla units and government troops with equal suspicion and apprehension, an indication of the continuing sense of separation that traditionally has been central to indigenous perceptions. [redacted]

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Ultimately the success of the radical left in Indian recruitment appears to be as much in government as in guerrilla hands. The Lucas regime publicly proclaims the intention of providing new social and economic opportunities to assuage mounting indigenous frustrations, but it remains to be seen whether these words will be translated into actions. [redacted]

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