CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGE

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON CENTRAL AMERICA

Refugees and Peace in Central America

As this edition of *Refuge* goes to press, news reports from Central America confirm the important gains which have been achieved through efforts to bring peace and democracy to the region. At the same time, there is much to be deeply concerned about. Violence continues at an intense level in some pockets and at a low level over wider areas. The peace process remains fragile. Democratic practices are spreading but remain weak and not fully tested in several countries. Many underlying tensions in civil society are unresolved. Particularly worrisome is the fact that the economies of the region are in very bad condition, in part due to the widespread destruction brought about by civil war.

The papers gathered together here recognize the challenges and risks which must be faced, yet they stress the positive side of current developments. They draw attention to the end of refugee flight from the region and to the growing return of asylees and displaced people. They point out that the self-organized return movement has a two-sided character: it contributes to peace just as it depends on peace for its success. Particular attention is given to the strengths to be found in the return communities and among their international supporters.

The lead article by Brian Egan and Alan Simmons provides an overview of peace, development and repatriation issues in the extremely diverse countries of Central America. This paper and the other articles in the issue all give more attention to the two countries—El Salvador and Guatemala—which experienced the greatest

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YORK LANES PRESS
Centre for Refugee Studies
Suite 351, York Lanes
York University
4700 Keele Street, North York
Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3
Phone: (416) 736-5843 • Fax: (416) 736-5837
Electronic Mail via Bitnet Address:
REFUGE@VM1.YORKU.CA

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internal violence and refugee flight during the 1980s. Of these two countries, El Salvador is by far the more advanced in terms of peace and democratic process. The United Nations multidimensional peace building effort in El Salvador has had an enormous impact.

The late breaking news from El Salvador is centred on all the preparatory work going into the national elections to take place on March 20, 1994. A major effort has been under way with United Nations support to make the elections as democratic as possible under the circumstances. Registers of eligible voters had been in very bad shape. Large numbers of individuals were inscribed more than once. The lists contained tens of thousands of individuals who were deceased (many killed in the civil war) and others who had fled the country. Indications are that many of these problems have been eliminated, but additional problems remain. Large numbers of individual who would like to vote will not be properly registered in time to do so. The potential for abuse and still uncertain levels of voter turnout leave open how democratic the elections will be. A major uncertainty is what will happen should the opposition coalition win and overturn the government which has been in power over the past decade of civil strife. Democratic forces within El Salvador and the supportive resolve of external powers, however, point generally to a successful result, especially if success is judged in terms of the fraudulent and distorted elections of the past.

Guatemala is at an earlier stage in the peace process, yet here too the direction is positive. The Guatemalan military has until now steadfastly refused to accept a United Nations supervised peace process involving negotiation with insurgents. The military has viewed the civil war as purely an internal question. They have also viewed across-the-table negotiations as providing a legitimacy and status to insurgents completely at odds with Guatemalan military tradition. From the military's perspective, the insurgents are an enemy to be crushed and eliminated. Yet, international pressures are building on the Guatemalan military to adopt United Nations managed peace building process similar to that in El Salvador. The accords developed with the Guatemalan refugee community with respect to safe-return opened the door to negotiations, and other events are now leading to pressures for this mechanism to be expanded. The Chiapas revolt in the early weeks of 1994 sent deep shock waves to the Mexican government and on to other nations in the region. The extent to which continuing civil war in Guatemala could be the spark to set off an explosive revolutionary rise of a Mayan nation became a matter for greater regional concern. While the Guatemalan situation remains precarious and uncertain, the existing accords leading to refugee return, along with internal and international pressure for peace, provide a basis for guarded optimism.

Following a generally optimistic tone, four of the papers in this volume draw attention to the leading role in the peace, development and social change being played by returning refugees themselves. Tanya Basok's article observes that the refugees have been transformed by their experiences outside the country and by their relations to international and national agencies, both voluntary and official, in the return process. These experiences and the development of internal strengths gives the return community new leadership potential. In a separate paper, Finn Stepputat extends these arguments into the Guatemalan case in particular. He argues that the returning refugees bring with them a new "imagined community" with a potential for transforming political participation and public attitudes in Guatemalan society more broadly. A particularly striking illustration of a transformation in leadership potential concerns the changing roles of women in the Guatemalan return community, as noted in the paper by Frances Arbour. The fact that women refugees were often left in charge of their fami-

lies and made responsible for their communities during the period of exile led them to develop a whole new set of leadership and negotiating skills. Linda Geggie's article makes a parallel argument with respect to youths. Young Guatemalan refugees who grew up in Mexico have expectations for education, jobs and lifestyle that will lead to further transformations in the return community.

Also following a positive tone, three of the papers in this issue point to the key roles being played by international agencies and voluntary organizations. The paper by Lisa Kowalchuk and Liisa North documents the essential role of the multi-dimensional United Nations peace building effort in the El Salvador. They also evaluate the role of Canadian development assistance and foreign policies in that country, noting that the policy mix is often contradictory and leads to mixed outcomes. Their findings point to concrete recommendations for future efforts by official aid agencies and intergovernmental organizations in the region. Barbara Zerter and Beth Abbott, in separate papers, focus on voluntary, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). They document the ways in which several Canadian NGOs have found ways to join together in a support role with respect to the Guatemalan return community. Their papers make clear that international solidarity is not just a matter of good will. Laying down and making operational workable objectives and strategies for specific activities—such as accompaniment—is an applied art where much has been learned by both the Canadian NGOs and their Central American counterparts.

In the context of an overall optimistic report, it is important that we also keep in mind the challenges and issues which must be faced in the future. Three book-review articles point to some of these issues. Barry Levitt's review of a detailed book on land use and the environment in El Salvador draws attention to the relationship between these factors and structures of power and social conflict in Central America. This is an important topic given that access to land and the deterioration of the ecosystem are major problems which will continue to challenge efforts at peace and development in the region. George Lovell reviews two books on Central American refugees and migrants who have established communities in North America. His review serves to remind us that refugee flight from Central America has led to expatriate communities abroad that are unlikely to return. In fact the number of Central Americans abroad will likely continue to grow in the near future, even as peace, democracy and development spread in Central America. The future of these communities raises questions about migration policy and other aspects of social policy in North America. Finally, Lisa Kowalchuk reviews a volume which provides a detailed portrait of state violence in Guatemala. It is important to understand the roots of this deep seated violence in working toward solutions to the current situation.

Alan Simmons, Guest Editor

Drawing by D. Zakrzewski

Refugees and the Prospects for Peace and Development in Central America

Brian Egan and Alan Simmons

Introduction

On the morning of January 20, 1993 a caravan of more than seventy-five buses wound its way out of the Mexican city of Comitán towards the nearby Guatemalan border. On board were close to 2,500 Guatemalan men, women and children, most of whom had spent the last decade in refugee camps scattered through southern Mexico. Many of the children were too young to have any memory of the land they were returning to. Others, having been born in the camps, had never set foot in Guatemala. Together, children, parents and grandparents were taking part in the first large scale return of Guatemalan refugees from Mexico. At the border and along the highway which traverses Guatemala's lush, mountainous, western highland, large crowds gathered to welcome the returning refugees. In Guatemala City, a large rally was organized to celebrate the return. Refugee leaders described the process as a positive step forward in the struggle for peace, justice and democracy in Guatemala. They stressed that the return was a voluntary, collectively organized effort rather than a state imposed repatriation.

The Guatemalan return was preceded by similar repatriations to Nicaragua and El Salvador—the other two Central American nations gripped by war in the 1980s. Between 1.7 million and 2.7 million people were uprooted in these countries during the first half of the 1980s. Although the numbers are disputed, between 860,000 and 1.7 million fled into exile—with 300,000 to 600,000 seeking refuge in neighbouring countries (Central America or Mexico) and 675,000 to 1.16 million eventually making their way to the United States or Canada. Close to one million more became internally displaced, i.e., they fled their home due to war or violence but remained within their own country (Simmons 1993, 291).

In recent years this outflow of people has begun to reverse, with the Guatemalan return representing only the latest wave of refugee repatriation. Since the late 1980s, tens of thousands of Nicaraguans and Salvadoreans have also returned to their homelands and begun the process of rebuilding their lives. In addition, many people who were displaced within their own countries by violence and war have begun to return to their home communities or to resettle in areas nearby.

Central America finds itself at a critical juncture. The current return of refugees and displaced peoples reflects a transition from a period when the region was dominated by war to one where peace and reconciliation have taken hold. The transition is uncertain and fragile, however, with many of the conditions which spawned the conflict remaining unaltered. In addition, the refugees themselves have changed as a result of their flight, long periods in exile, and experience gained from dealing with international organizations while abroad. How will the returning refugees fare, given such circumstances? What are the prospects for peace and development not only for the returning refugees but also for the many more Central Americans who were displaced or traumatized by the civil conflict of the 1980s?

Crisis, Conflict and Flight

The origins of the current Central American crisis can be found in the history of colonization and development of the region, in particular since the second half of the nineteenth century, when the region was incorporated into the world economy as an exporter of primary agricultural commodities. At that time, local elites began to expropriate lands held by Indian communities and small farmers in order to take advantage of a growing international demand for tropical products such as coffee and bananas. Most of the region's prime agricultural land was soon concentrated in the hands of a few (North et al. 1990, 58). The former owners of these lands were displaced to small and marginal plots of land which were inadequate to meet their subsistence needs. Others became landless migrant labourers. A dual system of agricultural production was established —with large farms producing for export and small farms producing for local consumption—a system which persists to this day.

The imposition of this new economic order generated considerable popular resistance, including numerous peasant rebellions throughout the period of land expropriation. In order to protect their new assets, local landholding elites depended on an increasingly organized and efficient military apparatus; peasant rebellions were ruthlessly quashed. In 1932, one such rebellion in El Salvador was crushed with the resultant loss of ten thousand to thirty thousand lives, mostly peasants and indigenous peoples. Through the process of land expropriation, the land-owning elite and the military became dominant and interdependent centres of power throughout Central America.

The more immediate roots of the Central American crisis stem from the postwar period. From the mid 1950s to the mid 1970s, Central America enjoyed a period of rapid economic

Alan Simmons is a professor of sociology at York University. Brian Egan is a graduate student in the Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University.

growth, led by a "modernization" of the industrial and agro-export sectors. The agro-export sector grew rapidly, becoming increasingly diversified. Few of the benefits of this agricultural production, however, "trickled down" to the poor. In fact, in rural areas the gap between rich and poor grew as more small farmers and indigenous communities were dispossessed of their lands. In addition, the new export commodities (e.g., beef, cotton and sugar) were capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive. This reduced opportunities for employment, and the contradiction between an increasing rural labour force and declining employment in the agro-export sector became more acute. To make matters worse, the focus on production of export crops during this period created a shortfall of food staples (such as corn and beans) upon which the poor depended. Formerly self-sufficient in these staples, several Central American nations became importers of corn and beans (Torres-Rivas 1989, 29).

Through a policy of import substitution, a focus on national and regional (i.e., Central American) markets, and with increased foreign investment, industrial production also expanded rapidly during the postwar period, but with similar results for the poor. As this production was capital-intensive and geared toward the elite and middle classes, little new employment was created and most of the new products were beyond the reach of the poor (North et al. 1990, 30).

A series of shocks from the world economy during the 1970s sent the vulnerable Central American economies into decline and crisis. The dramatic rise in oil prices in the early part of the decade sent interest rates soaring and triggered a round of high inflation. The poor were hardest hit as prices for basic foodstuffs increased beyond the reach of many. Strongly dependent on the export of primary agricultural commodities, the Central American economies were also hit hard by the worldwide recession which began in the mid 1970s. Prices and demand for these export commodities went into decline. Also dependent on the import of machinery, petroleum, pesticides and basic food staples, the decline of export earnings led to acute balance of payment crises for most Central American nations. The private sector and state response to these crises was to cut employment, wages and social services which served to increase existing inequalities (ibid, 31).

While the economic system underwent dramatic change during the postwar period, the system of oligarchic domination of power remained largely intact. In response to worsening economic conditions, increasing disparity and raised expectations, a variety of popular organizations in rural and urban areas mobilized to press for economic justice—access to work and land—and for reform of the outdated system of political domination. Demands for democratization of the political process grew. While this mobilization was overwhelmingly reformist and non-violent, the states' responses were not (Torres-Rivas 1989, 27). Where popular demands were met by violent repression, such as in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala, revolutionary movements were spawned or strengthened. By the late 1970s guerilla movements in each of these countries had grown to such an extent that they were able to seriously challenge military authority. By the early 1980s open warfare broke out in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

In Guatemala, the military responded to small-scale guerilla actions in the western highlands and adjacent lowland areas with a massive and brutal counter-insurgency campaign. These predominately Mayan areas were devastated (Carmack 1988). In urban areas, death squads targeted students, unions and popular organizations. By the time the worst of the conflict had passed in 1984 more than four hundred villages had been razed, fifty thousand to one hundred thousand civilians had been killed either by the army or by death squads, and another thirty-five thousand had "disappeared" (USCR 1993, 4). Between 260,000 and 615,000 Guatemalans were forced to flee their communities, the majority becoming internally displaced to urban areas or remote jungle and mountainous areas. Between

Table 1: Refugees and Displaced Persons from and in Central America (Circa 1987)

Country of Asylum	— Nationality — Salvadorians	Guatemalans	Nicaraguans	Totals
United States	500,000 to 850,000	100,000 to 200,000	40,000 to 80,000	640,000 to 1,130,000
Mexico	120,000 to 250,000	45,000 to 150,000	N/A	165,000 to 400,000
Canada	22,283	7,326	7,081	36,690
Central America	51,700	7,700	67,700 to 163,700	127,100 to 223,100
Total refugees	585,983 to 1,065,983	160,026 to 365,026	114,781 to 250,781	860,790 to 1,681,790
Total displaced	**500,000**	**100,000 to 250,000**	**250,000**	**850,000 to 1,000,000**

Source: Estimates for Central Americans Refugees in the United States, Mexico and neighboring countries in their own region from North and CAPA, *Between War and Peace in Central America*, Table VII. Estimates for Central American Refugees in Canada from Employment and Immigration Canada.

Notes: Refugees are defined as emigrants (living abroad) who have claimed or wish to claim political asylum. Displaced persons are those who have fled their homes due to war or violence, but who remain in their own countries.

160,000 and 365,000 fled into exile, mostly to Mexico, but smaller numbers also went to Honduras and Belize. Eventually, some 45,000 settled in refugee camps in southern Mexico with as many as twice that number dispersed through Mexico (ibid, 6). Others made their way to the United States, Canada or Europe (see Table 1).

In El Salvador the reasons for refugee flight were similar. During the late 1970s popular sector organizations were pressing for social change. In the face of state repression, opposition groups united to form a potent revolutionary force—divided into a political wing (the Democratic Revolutionary Front or FDR) and a military wing (the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front or FMLN). Repression of the political opposition drove many activists into the ranks of the FMLN. Armed conflict increased through the early 1980s and persisted until the end of the decade.

El Salvador generated more refugees during the 1970s and 1980s than any other Central American nation. An estimated 25 percent of the population was uprooted by the conflict. Approximately half a million were displaced within the country, most fleeing to the capital city, San Salvador, the population of which tripled over the decade of conflict. Over fifty thousand fled to adjoining countries, mainly Honduras. Well over half a million more fled north into Mexico, the United States, Canada and Europe (see Table 1).

In Nicaragua refugee flight began in 1982, three years after the triumph of the Sandinista revolution and shortly after the start of the resistance campaign waged by counter-revolutionary forces or "Contras." During the civil war 260,000 to 500,000 Nicaraguans became refugees or were internally displaced (see Table 1). Two distinct groups formed the bulk of Nicaraguan refugees generated during this period—*mestizos* (people of mixed ancestry) from the central highlands and indigenous peoples from the Caribbean lowlands in the northwest.

The displacement of indigenous peoples (Miskitos, Sumus and Ramas) began in the early 1980s shortly after the Contras became active in the area. In response, the Sandinistas moved some 8,500 indigenous people inland, away from the Honduras border to a resettlement site called Tasba Pri ("Free Land"). The resettlement was officially justified by the Sandinistas as a way to protect the indigenous population in the area from attacks by the Contras launched from Honduras. However, the indigenous population saw the move as an attempt to subjugate local authority and disrupt their affairs. The resettlement exacerbated the long standing mistrust between the indigenous people and the central government of Nicaragua (North et al. 1990, 142).

Over the next few years, fifteen thousand to twenty thousand indigenous people fled to the Atlantic coast region of Honduras to avoid the Sandinista resettlement plans (Ortega et al. 1991, 20), while others joined the Contras. In 1985 the Sandinista government reversed its stand and allowed the resettled people to return to their original communities. In addition, after lengthy consultation, the government made significant concessions to the indigenous groups, granting them considerable autonomy. As a result of these actions, many of those who sought refuge in Honduras returned to their communities by the late 1980s (North et al. 1990, 142).

Far more numerous than those of indigenous origin, *mestizo* refugees fled into southern Honduras and northern Costa Rica from zones of conflict in adjacent parts of Nicaragua. The number of refugees flowing into Honduras and Costa Rica increased rapidly after 1983 as U.S. funding for the Contras increased. The situation of these Nicaraguan refugees is complicated by the fact that some of them were involved with the Contras, either as voluntary or involuntary combatants, or were family members of combatants. Of the approximately thirteen thousand *mestizo* refugees in Honduras (ibid, 147), most were *campesinos* (peasants) from northern rural areas. Those that fled to Costa Rica came from rural and urban areas in the south. In comparison to those who fled to Honduras, relatively few settled in camps—up to 65 percent settled in urban areas. Many who fled to Costa Rica claiming political persecution were in fact simply seeking to improve their economic status or to avoid the draft. Estimates of the number of Nicaraguans who fled to Costa Rica vary from twenty thousand registered refugees to two hundred thousand unofficial refugees (Ortega and Acevedo 1991, 20).

Reception and Life in Exile

The reception accorded by the various host governments and people to Central Americans fleeing their homelands ranged from tolerance to outright hostility, often reflecting the ideological and political goals of the receiving state or its allies. Salvadorean refugees fleeing into Honduras faced the most difficult conditions. On at least two separate occasions, groups of Salvadorean refugees trying to cross into Honduras were attacked and killed by a combination of Salvadorean and Honduran armed forces. Once in Honduras, Salvadoreans were obliged to live in restrictive camps run by the Honduran military. Conditions in the camps were difficult—there was little security and the refugees were not permitted to work. On several occasions Salvadorean forces entered the camps and abducted or killed refugees and aid workers (North et al. 1990, 135).

Guatemalan refugees fleeing into Mexico faced similar difficulties. Most of the refugees made their way to the adjacent Mexican state of Chiapas, where they were met by a largely sympathetic local population but a hostile Mexican army. The army initially forced many refugees back into Guatemala. However, pressure by Mexican organizations, including the Catholic church in Chiapas, forced the government to allow refugee camps to be established along the Mexico/Guatemala frontier. Cross-border raids by the Guatemalan military were common during this early period. Sharing a similar indigenous back-

ground with the local population, many refugees integrated successfully into local communities in Chiapas. Beginning in 1984, the Mexican government moved close to twenty thousand of the refugees to camps in the adjacent states of Campeche and Quintana Roo, ostensibly to protect them from raids carried out by the Guatemalan military (USCR 1993, 5). In Campeche and Quintana Roo the refugees were more isolated and subject to different cultural influences. For example, in the camps in Quintana Roo many of the refugee youths found work in Cancun or other major tourist centres nearby (see the paper by Linda Geggie in this issue). In general, the Guatemalan refugees in Mexico enjoyed a certain amount of freedom to travel and work, and provided an important source of labour for small and large farmers in the region. It should be noted that these rights to work and travel were limited. Pay was very low and the Mexican government did suspend travel and work privileges periodically. However, the Mexican government did not welcome the presence of the refugees and exerted considerable pressure for their repatriation.

Reflecting political and ideological interests, the reception of Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica and Honduras differed considerably from that of Salvadorean refugees in these countries. Nicaraguans who fled into Honduras were not persecuted. Indeed, Nicaraguan indigenous refugees who arrived in Honduras before 1985 were often given land and *mestizo* refugees were free to travel and work within the country. Researchers have noted that a similar double standard was applied to Nicaraguan and Salvadorean refugees in Costa Rica. Although the number of Salvadorean refugees in Costa Rica represented only a small fraction of the number of Nicaraguans, the Costa Rican government took various measures to discredit and discourage Salvadoreans who sought asylum in that country (North et al. 1990, 147).

The Contras had easy access to the Nicaraguan refugee camps in Honduras and exerted strong political and ideological control over the refugees. Because the camps provided them with recruits, the Contras tried to prevent Nicaraguan refugees from repatriating by controlling the media, and by creating a system of mistrust in the camps. For example, anyone who listened to the Voice of Nicaragua, the official radio station of the Nicaraguan government, or who refused to identify themselves as a victim of the Sandinista government was suspected of being a Sandinista sympathizer (Ortega 1991, 30).

Many refugees from Central America fled the region entirely. Estimates suggest that 60 percent or more of the total number of refugees generated during this period fled to North America (see Table 1). Of these, the vast majority, between 640,000 and 1.1 million, went to the United States. Smaller but significant numbers—around thirty-six thousand by 1987—also fled to Canada. U.S. figures show a particularly broad range, since most of the migrants entered the United States by land across the Mexican border without any documentation. Many of those who went to Canada arrived as visitors and then claimed refugee status after they were in the country. By far the largest movement to the United States and Canada was from El Salvador.

Many Nicaraguans also went to North America. Reflecting their strong ties to home culture and land, Guatemalan refugees were far more likely to stay in Mexico, although many also went further north.

Reception conditions in North America varied depending on country of origin, country of destination and period of arrival. Nicaraguan exiles (most of whom were opposed to the Sandinistas) were generally welcomed in the United States as "defenders of freedom," hence their conditions of arrival were relatively good in that country. A small number of Nicaraguan refugees fled further north to Canada. In contrast to the Nicaraguans, Salvadoreans were more often viewed as unwelcome dissidents in the United States. Their conditions were more precarious and they were more likely to move to Canada, where they had a high probability of being accepted as refugees. Tougher U.S. legislation, enacted in 1986, limited the number of undocumented migrants, which led to a corresponding increase in the number of Salvadorean refugee claimants in Canada (Simmons 1993, 301). While Canada has in general accepted claims for asylum originating both in Central America and from claimants who came on their own to Canada, there have been notable tragic incidents in which Canadian officials were too slow in responding to requests for refugee status from individuals facing death threats in the region (Whittaker 1987).

Gradually, information is beginning to emerge on the integration of Central American refugees in North America. Salvadoreans seem almost indistinguishable from Mexicans in their integration into the informal employment and low wage manufacturing sectors of the southwest United States (Fernandez et al. 1989). Integration among Guatemalan refugees seems to be following a similar path, although at a slower pace due perhaps to their greater cultural dislocation. Few hard facts are available on Central Americans in Canada, but the general impression is that they have had greater difficulty than other immigrants and refugees. This difficulty may be due in part to the fact that many arrived at the time of a national reces-

Few hard facts are available on Central Americans in Canada, but the general impression is that they have had greater difficulty than other immigrants and refugees. ... It may also be due to the fact that in Canada employment requires capacity in English or French (unlike the southwest United States where, for many jobs, Spanish is an asset).

sion and structural adjustment associated with high unemployment. It may also be due to the fact that in Canada employment requires capacity in English or French (unlike the southwest United States where, for many jobs, Spanish is an asset). How these diverse patterns of reception will affect the desire of refugees to return home in the future is unknown.

Return and Reintegration

On August 8, 1987 the presidents of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica signed Esquipulas II, a regional peace accord which linked peace and development efforts in the region with the resolution of the refugee crisis. In 1988, in response to a proposal from the Central American presidents, the United Nations began to organize the first meeting of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA). Out of the first CIREFCA meeting, held in Guatemala in May 1989, came a Plan of Action which helped establish conditions for the return of refugees throughout the region. Among other conditions, the Plan committed governments in the region to respect the rights of refugees and to recognize the legitimate role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Weiss Fagen 1993, 32).

While Esquipulas II and the CIREFCA Plan of Action helped form the institutional framework in which large scale repatriation could occur, other factors were often of greater importance. For example, the signing of the peace accord and the creation of CIREFCA seemed to have little impact on the rate of repatriation of Nicaraguan refugees. In the Nicaraguan case, two other events—the Nicaraguan election of 1990 and the series of agreements reached between the Sandinista government and the indigenous population—were of much greater importance.

A series of cease fire agreements and discussions over autonomy from 1984 to 1988 between the Sandinistas and displaced indigenous groups paved the way for the repatriation of these peoples. By 1988 most had returned to their areas of origin, including those who had been resettled in Tasba Pri, and had begun to rebuild their communities (Ortega 1991, 31).

The return of Nicaraguan *mestizo* refugees from Honduras and Costa Rica remained at a low level until the defeat of the Sandinistas in the 1990 election, following which the Sandinistas signed a peace agreement with the Contras. A massive repatriation of Nicaraguans from Honduras and Costa Rica followed. Over twenty-five thousand Nicaraguans repatriated in the last six months of 1990 alone (Ortega and Acevedo 1991, 37). By January 1993 a total of 71,500 had returned (Weiss Fagen 1993, 33). Many of those repatriating were Contra combatants who had to be disarmed—under the disarmament program close to twenty thousand turned in arms. Most of the internally displaced have also returned to their areas of origin.

The reintegration process in Nicaragua has been complicated by the fact that the return brought Nicaraguans from both sides of the conflict together in one community. In some areas, despite a decade of bitter conflict, the two sides have integrated peacefully. In other areas, especially where land is poor and other resources scarce, bitter feelings remain and there is intense competition for land and other economic resources. As a result, armed conflict has resurfaced in some areas.

In El Salvador the process of return took a much different route, beginning with the mass return of internally displaced people back to their regions of origin. The first such return was to the town of Tenancingo which had been destroyed by fighting and abandoned in 1984. This major return was facilitated by the Catholic church and a number of operational agencies it created. Following this example, grassroots organizations and the displaced organized several other mass returns in 1986 and 1987. In turn, these internal returns catalyzed refugees in the Honduran camps to organize for their own mass repatriation. By early 1990 virtually all the refugees in the Honduran camps had repatriated (Weiss Fagen et al. 1991, 144).

Many of the mass returns, both from within El Salvador and Honduras, were to zones of conflict controlled by the FMLN. Suspecting that these communities of returnees would become bases of support for the guerilla forces, the Salvadorean military made efforts to disrupt the returns, particularly for those returning from Honduras. The church played a crucial facilitating role by urging the military to allow the returns. The refugees also proved capable of mustering significant national and international support (ibid, 158).

Guatemalan refugees began returning from Mexico as early as 1984 under a government sponsored repatriation program. By December of 1990 a little over six thousand refugees had returned under this program. Most refugees did not partake of the government plan, however, largely due to uncertain political and economic conditions within Guatemala (AVANCSO 1992, 54). At the same time, the leadership of the refugees in Mexico (the Permanent Commissions or CCPP), had begun planning for a mass return once conditions in Guatemala improved and had begun negotiations with the Guatemalan government.

In October 1992, the Guatemalan government and the CCPP reached an agreement and signed an accord which recognized certain basic rights of the returnees.

Although political and economic conditions within Guatemala remained uncertain, the first group of refugees returned in January 1993. This group settled in the Ixcan, in the remote northern corner of the department of Quiche, an area which experienced some of the worst violence of the early 1980s and which produced many of the refugees who fled to Mexico. By early 1994 several thousand more refugees had returned to this same area, which remains a zone of active conflict between the army and guerilla forces. Like the Salvadoreans, the Guatemalan refugees are highly organized and have drawn significant support from Guatemalan and international NGOs.

Challenges: Toward an Agenda for Action

Violence has diminished in the region as a whole but persists to some degree in many areas. Despite the end of the civil war in El Salvador, scattered "disappearances" and assassinations of the political opposition continue. In Nicaragua only a small contingent of Contra forces remains active, but the former Contra leadership and its allies abroad continue to threaten remobilization.

In Guatemala, military violence against indigenous communities has subsided, but the military remains pervasive throughout society. This is especially true in the countryside where civil patrols are omnipresent and low level conflict is ongoing in remote areas, making it perilous and risky for many refugees to return. In fact, Guatemala continues to generate new refugees, albeit in smaller numbers, even as other exiles are returning.

Another continuing challenge for the return arises from the fact that Central America, excluding Costa Rica, is one of the poorest regions in the Americas. The development challenge in the region is evident in the figures shown in Table 2.

Incomes in the poorest countries of the region are in the range of US$1,100 per year in El Salvador and less in the other countries. Not only are incomes very low, but income growth over the twenty-five year period between 1965 and 1990 was either extremely low (less than 1 percent per year in Guatemala and Honduras) or negative (in the case of El Salvador and Nicaragua), reflecting the violence and economic disruption of civil war. Poor health and sanitation contribute to the high infant mortality rates in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador that are double or triple those in Costa Rica and seven or eight times higher than those in the United States and Canada (see Table 2). There are relatively few doctors in the poorest countries of Central America, and high proportions of the adult population are illiterate; more than half of adult women in the case of Guatemala. While accurate information on income distribution and land tenure is hard to come by, it is widely acknowledged that land continues to be scarce and increasingly inaccessible to poor farmers. It is a irony that a major source of income for the region, and especially for poor communities, consists of remittances sent home by Central American refugees and migrant workers in the United States and Canada. For example, in 1992, remittances to El Salvador were estimated at US$718 million, making it the nation's major source of foreign earnings (Arriola 1992).

Despite these significant challenges to peace and development, important opportunities are available for assisting those most affected by the violence and resolving the current situation. Action seems particularly promising along the following four dimensions:

1. Community identity and leadership

As Basok and Stepputat indicate in their articles in this issue, the refugees have learned much through the processes of exile and return. They have developed a stronger sense of who they are. They have developed their own vocabulary which links "return" to the peace and development process itself. Return is an important step of self-determination which reinforces local leadership and initiative. Through their experiences abroad, returnees have also developed expectations for schooling and health services, and have acquired negotiating skills with state, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Table 2. Select Social and Economic Indicators

	GNP/Cap. in $US. (1990)*	Growth GNP per capita. (1965-90)	External Debt as %of GNP (1990)	Population in millions (1991)*	Infant mortality rate/1000 (1990)	Population per doctor (1984-89)*	Percent Adult illiterate (1990) Female	Male
Central America								
Costa Rica	1,900	1.4	70	3.1	21	960	7	7
Guatemala	910	0.7	38	9.5	62	2,180	53	45
Honduras	640	0.5	141	5.3	64	1,510	29	27
Nicaragua	420	-3.3	112	3.8	55	1,560	27	27
El Salvador	1,000	-0.4	40	5.3	53	2,830	30	24
North America								
Canada	20,380	2.7	n/av.	27	7	455	5	5
Mexico	2,490	2.8	42	86.3	39	1240	15	13
United States	21,810	1.7	n/av.	252	9	419	5	5

Sources: World Development Report 1992. World Bank, 1993, Tables 1, 24 and 28, Washington, D.C.: World Bank
(*) Development Report 1993, UNDP, New York: Oxford University Press

Their desires and capacities now constitute important resources for leadership in peace and development activities at home.

2. *International linkages and solidarity*

The relationship between external "helping" organizations and the refugees has not always been smooth. Helping organizations can at times begin to dictate and take control without consultation (Basok 1993). However, the experience of the last decade or so has led to improved working relationships between the refugees, the communities to which they are returning and external organizations. Leadership has shifted to the refugee community. The external agencies have taken on the role of "accompaniment" in both a literal sense, i.e., ensuring the safety of the returnees by physically accompanying them on their return (see the article by Beth Abbott in this issue), and in the broader sense of providing emergency and short term development assistance consonant with the returnees' plans. These linkages and international solidarity provide additional important resources for peace and development in the region.

3. *International support*

Monitoring of the peace accords by the United Nations is now an important element in rebuilding the region. The UN peacekeeping force in El Salvador, for example, is small but provides an important external vigilance. Moreover, (as indicated by Kowalchuk and North in this issue), internationally financed development projects play an important role in regenerating local communities, even though these projects may be undermined by macro-economic conditions imposed by the same foreign donor nations. More effort needs to be given to creating an economic climate conducive to development and peace by pursuing macroeconomic policies which will assist, not hinder, local initiatives. Continuing international support for both peacekeeping and economic growth with equity will be important for the durability of repatriation and development efforts in Central America.

4. *Refugee policy*

The welcome evidence of emerging peace and repatriation must not blind us to the fact that the process is uneven. Individuals, families and communities will not all experience the same conditions. While the conditions for return have been created for large numbers of refugees, others find themselves under threat. Some who have returned may be forced to leave again to find security. Others, for particular circumstances in their community, may need to flee for safety even as conditions generally improve. There will be a continuing need to monitor human rights and to address the need for asylum on a case by case basis. Vigilance is required by those in receiving countries to assure that those in need of asylum receive it. A just refugee policy in receiving countries will continue to be an indispensable resource for the long term effort to build peace, security and prosperity in Central America.

The seventy-five bus loads of Guatemalan refugees who began the recent return to that country stand as a clear illustration of the path to the future in the region. By describing their return as a political act, Guatemalan refugees have articulated a key desire of refugees everywhere—to have greater control over their own lives. The self-led return required that international agencies and nongovernmental organizations provide supportive accompaniment and related development assistance. The efforts of international peacekeepers and promises of local development activity supported by international donors provide a greater measure of security and hope to those returning. The knowledge that asylum is available if required helps to build the confidence of those returning. All of these elements must be strengthened to ensure an enduring and just solution to the challenges of peace and development in Central America. ■

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The Troubled Road to Repatriation in Central America: Lessons Learned by Refugees in Exile

Tanya Basok

In refugee assisting circles it is generally believed that the best solution to the refugee problem is voluntary repatriation. Similarly, many refugees living in exile nurture the hope that one day they will be able to return to the lands they were once forced to flee. This desire is especially strong if they face economic restrictions and administrative harassment in the country of asylum. When political conditions in the county of origin improve many refugees return. Often refugees get tired of waiting for the conditions to improve in their home countries and decide to go back in spite of persistent violations of human rights.

In Central America we have examples of both peaceful return and return before peace has been secured. The mass repatriation of Miskito Indians to the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua from Honduras was in response to ceasefire agreements with the Sandinista government and successful negotiations on limited Miskito autonomy. Alternatively, Salvadoreans returned from Honduras and Guatemalans from Mexico on an individual basis even when many were interrogated by the military, tortured, and killed by army bombs, gunfire, shrapnel, or mines (JRS 1991). Mass repatriation also started before safe return could be guaranteed. The 4,500 Salvadoreans from the Mesa Grande camp in Honduras announced their decision to repatriate in January 1987—a time when civil war was still being waged in El Salvador. They continued to make plans for their return in spite of reluctance by the Salvadorean government to meet basic their requirements necessary for return (ibid). Similarly, their compatriots in the Honduran camp of Colomoncagua started their return in November 1989—before their return was officially approved and their safety guaranteed (Cagan and Cagan 1991, 130). Given the persistent harassment of Salvadorean refugees by the Honduran military and severe limitations on mobility within Honduras, it is hardly surprising that Salvadorean refugees chose to return. By comparison, Guatemalans in Mexico enjoyed better living conditions and safe asylum, yet the first group of 2,454 Guatemalans decided to repatriate to the province of Quiche on January 20, 1993. In this case, government promises did not protect those returning from helicopter surveillance or interrogations by the military (Gunn 1993, 10).

Refugees are less likely to feel homesick if economic and political conditions in the country of asylum are better than those in their own country. It is for this reason that most refugees who fled to Costa Rica have chosen to stay there. Recognizing this fact, on November 17, 1992, the President of Costa Rica, Rafael Calderon, signed a decree enabling Central American refugees to apply for resident status if they had been refugees for over two years (CIREFCA 1993).

Repatriation does not mean the restoration of former lives for refugees. During their absence both socio-economic and political conditions in their country will have changed. The longer refugees have stayed in asylum, the more changes they experience upon their return. If the country has been involved in a prolonged civil war, refugees return to destroyed roads, burned bridges, devastated fields, and people who bear physical and/or psychological scars. The repatriates are not the same as they were before they fled their country. The refugee experience leaves a significant imprint on them. I will outline some of the possible effects, both positive and negative, that life in asylum may have on the process of reintegration of Central American repatriates.

Empowerment and Politicization

Many refugees who fled their small, isolated villages in Central America find themselves in camps surrounded by people with similar flight-related experiences. In the face of adverse conditions, a common goal of survival creates a sense of unity among them. In camps, refugees form committees to run their own affairs. In exile, their political consciousness is also raised as refugees try to interpret the political conditions which forced them to flee their homelands. Since their return is premised upon the improvement of human rights in their country, they become keenly aware of the political developments there. Political discussions are often stimulated and directed by members of various political parties. Even literacy classes, music and other forms of artistic expression become statements of protest against violence and injustice in their country.

Refugees also learn that any political change or resistance to change requires collective action. And while it is difficult to influence political processes in the country of origin from a refugee camp, conditions prevailing inside the camps and/or certain policies towards refugees in the asylum country can be manipulated through such collective action. The best known example being the Salvadorean refugees in the Colomoncagua camp in Honduras who successfully engaged in a number of protest activities, including resistance to relocation, opposition to attacks carried out on refugees by the Honduran army, demands for more protection from UNHCR, and a hunger strike to protest increased cuts in food assistance and poor medical services (Cagan and Cagan 1991, 45).

Tanya Basok is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Windsor, Ontario.

Refugees in other Central American camps have learned that they too can partly control their lives through organized activities aimed at making their pleas known to the international community. Because their camps are frequently visited by representatives of international agencies, refugees have learned to use these contacts to make their messages known to the outside world and to exert pressure on governments. They have also learned that when their demands are backed by the international community, they can negotiate with the government of their home country. Both Guatemalan and Salvadorean repatriates engaged in lengthy negotiations with their respective governments demanding that security conditions and access to land be guaranteed before they returned. Once empowered, repatriates may continue to use collective action to meet their demands upon their return.

Some Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras were kidnapped by the Contras and forced to fight on the Contra side. Others, living in refugee camps, had to provide food and other forms of assistance to the Contra fighters (Ambos 1987). The extent to which these refugees became ideological supporters of the Contras may have influenced their choice to become involved in Nicaraguan politics upon their repatriation.

New Skills and Knowledge

In the countries of asylum, international NGOs provide funds for the education of adult and children refugees. Adult literacy classes received by many refugees in exile give them an edge over their compatriots who stayed behind. Refugee children who, thanks to UNHCR emergency aid, are not pressured to work in order to contribute to the family income, can afford to attend classes. In addition, many adult and adolescent refugees receive technical and business administration training courses that they may find useful upon return. Also, some indigenous refugees have improved their Spanish language skills when forced to share camps with other refugees who do not understand their language.

Refugees living in camps and those placed in rural projects also learn that there are certain advantages and disadvantages in cooperative work. Governmental and non-governmental agencies providing assistance to refugees often try to encourage them to work collectively. In many cases, these attempts are resisted by refugees who prefer producing individually (Aguayo et al. 1987). In Costa Rica, for instance, people who were forced to work in cooperatives found it difficult to maintain peaceful inter-personal relations. Conflicts over power, levels of remuneration, and ideology, created tensions and led to the eventual disintegration of many projects (Basok 1993a). As I have argued elsewhere, (Basok 1993b) in the urban environment, cooperative forms of production may hinder the economic viability of these small enterprises (ibid). Yet, for agricultural producers there are great advantages in collective marketing. And this is the lesson that many refugees who were involved in rural projects may bring back with them when they return.

"Dependency Syndrome"

Having to depend on emergency aid for a prolonged period of time produces what has been termed a "dependency syndrome" (Clark 1986) among refugees. Even those who are placed in productive projects often have their incomes supplemented by emergency aid. They know that if problems related to production or marketing arise, they will still have their basic needs met by various agencies assisting them.

Upon their return, repatriates initially receive financial support from international NGOs but they are expected to quickly become self-sufficient. Of course, without limitations on their mobility and unrestricted access to casual employment opportunities, repatriates are in a better position to fend for themselves than they were in the country of asylum. Yet repatriates may still find it difficult to sever their dependency on international aid agencies. This was the case with repatriates from Colomoncagua (Cagan and Cagan 1991, 163) and it is possible that other repatriates will have similar experiences.

Guilty Conscience

Finally, social reintegration of repatriates may be affected by the degree to which they carry a guilty conscience due to the fact that they escaped while their friends and relatives stayed behind and endured the burden of physical abuse and economic devastation. Many researchers have reported high levels of anxiety among refugees who blame themselves for the humiliation, harassment, torture and even death of those they left behind. Of course, refugees often receive psychological treatment both inside camps and outside. With time, some of this anxiety may dissipate. Yet, it is possible that upon their return, refugees are once again reminded of the hardship suffered by their loved ones who did not manage to escape; reawakening feelings of guilt. ■

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The Imagined Return Community of Guatemalan Refugees

Finn Stepputat

As Benedict Anderson said, nation states are "imagined communities" in the sense that a limited number of individuals are defined as members of a nation which is conceived as "a deep horizontal comradeship" regardless of existing inequalities and differences (Anderson 1983). The fact that the Guatemalan state was never able to incorporate its Indian peoples into an imagined, national community is a necessary key to the understanding of the violent conflict which forced more than one hundred thousand Guatemalans—mostly Indians—to leave the country between 1981 to 1983. Since 1993, large, well organized groups from the forty-five thousand assisted camp refugees have begun to return. I shall argue here that an "imagined return community" has developed in the camps despite existing differences among the refugees and the fact that they have been located in a large number of geographically dispersed camps.

State and Community in Guatemala

Over the colonial period, the Indians in Guatemala developed a distinct identity closely related to the local community, or more precisely, to the township to which they belonged. Local communities were moulded by the colonial administration as a measure of control and division which reduced the risk of regional Indian revolts (Smith 1977). Segregation was an important technique of colonial rule, and even though *ladinos* (that is people of Spanish origin or *mestizos* who adopted non-Indian culture) began to occupy the centres of urban townships during the nineteenth century, Guatemalan society remained highly segregated in spatial, social and cultural terms. Today, more than 90 percent of the population in rural highland townships are registered as being indigenous.

The community became an important element of Indian political life which helped them retain relative autonomy vis-à-vis the *ladino* structure of domination (Smith 1990). To some extent, state power remained external to the community, and attempts to assimilate Indians into the national culture were unsuccessful; thus, Indian communities are often described as "closed" and "corporate" entities (Wolf 1957).

Indians maintained a strong local identity which, until the 1970s, appeared to be more important than other identities. Those who fled to Mexico were categorized as "Guatemalan refugees," but to many of them nationhood (not to mention refugeehood) made little sense from the outset. They constructed their own meaning of "Guatemalan," which differed slightly from the conventional: "We call ourselves Guatemalans, but we have not even been there" (i.e., to Guatemala City). In their definition, "nation" sometimes refers to township, as in "we come from many different nations." Refugees often refer to themselves and others as, for example, Miguelenos (from San Miguel) or Cobáneros (from Cobán) rather than, for example, using linguistic categories such as Maya, Kanjobal and Kekchi. This concept of local identity persists no matter how many years they have lived away from the community where they were born.

Being in a refugee camp, the observer may be stricken by the diversity of pre-flight experiences, languages, religious affiliations, economic assets, etc. Nevertheless, the assisted refugees have developed a distinct set of discourses and practices—the culture of an imagined return community—which is nurtured by the collective experience of living in exile. It is not an all-encompassing culture, the membership of the community is blurred, and it is fraught with disagreements and conflicts, but the effects are tangible.

La Tristeza and the Dilemma of Exile

Edward Said once described exile as an "unhealable rift forced between... the self and its true home," a break which is marked by an "essential sadness" or "the crippling sorrow of estrangement" (Said 1984). In the case of the Guatemalan refugees he seems to have hit the nail on the head. *La tristeza,* the sorrow or sadness, permeates their representations of how it is to be a refugee:

> "Here people are sad."
> "Remembering makes me sad."
> "When we have a *fiesta* we forget the sorrow a little, and we forget how our country is."

In less general terms, Guatemalan refugees recurrently use the metaphor of *posada* when talking about conditions of exile: "We asked *posada* with the Mexicans" or "thanks to the Mexicans who have given us *posada*..." *Posada* is a shelter, lodge or hostel: to ask *posada* at the homes of acquaintances or strangers used to be a familiar custom among merchants when they were away from their home towns. As described by Redfield the custom of "asking *posada*" has the double meaning of being away from home and having a detached relationship to people who give *posada* (Redfield 1939).

The metaphor thus describes an experience of transience and detachment among Guatemalan refugees. In this aspect, they seem to share their experience with many other refugee groups. In a way, the construction of nation states implies that refugees, strangers to the nation state by definition, are

Finn Stepputat, Ph.D., is based at the Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen, Denmark. This article is based on two field studies in a refugee settlement in Campeche, Mexico, in 1988 and 1990.

thought of as future returnees; they are "out of place" and are usually expected to return when conditions allow.

While the Mexican government has declared that registered refugees can stay as long as they want to, the refugees themselves have perceived a number of political, juridical and economic pressures for repatriation. Clearly, the Mexican government favours the repatriation solution, and no measures have been taken to grant refugees permanent legal status in Mexico. However, time may solve the problems as refugee children born in Mexico are granted Mexican citizenship.

Expressions of dispossession and insecurity abound when the refugees talk about their conditions:

> "We left everything behind when we fled; we arrived poor, with empty hands, to Mexico."
> "Here you have no security; if you die, your wife and children are left on their own; we leave nothing here."
> "We're only surviving here because the Mexicans lend us land, but how long will it last?"
> "It's the doubts that make life hard."

Since their legal status does not permit them to own land, refugees have to work, rent or sharecrop the land of others in order to survive. In a slightly different form, they use the metaphor of *posada* to describe this specific relationship to land, which is very common in Guatemala:

> Here [in Mexico] we are *posados* in the land of others as we were before in the cold land [i.e., highland Guatemala]... They will not give us documents to the land we are working. We will have no security here, either.

While some refugees have decided to stay in Mexico in spite of these conditions, others have repatriated to Guatemala; they were "tired of waiting." The rest, the majority, has been waiting for conditions to improve in Guatemala. But the dilemma of exile is not the only factor in the choice between staying or going back; since 1986, a major source of debate and disagreement among the refugees has been how the refugees should go back to Guatemala.

Return versus Repatriation

When a civilian government was installed in Guatemala in 1986, the UNHCR made a tripartite agreement on voluntary repatriation with the Mexican and Guatemalan governments. Since then, the Guatemalan government has officially encouraged the refugees to repatriate "dropwise" in smaller groups, under the aegis of the agreement.

Simultaneously, however, Guatemalan refugees began to organize in order to achieve an "organized, collective return," under certain conditions, negotiated by the refugees themselves. In 1987, the forty-five thousand refugees who lived in some one hundred camps in southern Mexico elected representatives for the Permanent Commissions (CCPP) to negotiate, lead and coordinate the return. The Permanent Commissions registered the type and quantity of land properties of the refugees and began the struggle for recognition as a representative body by the Guatemalan government.

Support for the Permanent Commissions fluctuated, but at the end of the day no more than a tenth of the registered refugees opted for "individual" repatriation from 1987 to 1992. In the camps, the distinction between the UNHCR-mediated repatriation (*la repatriación*) and the Permanent Commissions negotiated return (*el retorno*) is a crucial one which relates to a complex of other important distinctions among the refugees (e.g., religion and mode of organization).

The distinction is reproduced through discourses on social conduct and moral standards which link *el retorno* to a normative concept of refugeeness. In this vocabulary, a "real" refugee has suffered violence and dispossession. Shopkeepers, for example, are not real refugees because they "sold their land and their cattle and arrived in Mexico with 1000 *Quetzales*. They are ahead of us." A real refugee is one who perceives exile as transient and therefore does not become overly attached to life in Mexico. Those who opted for resettlement in more permanent camps in Mexico were said to be planning to stay in Mexico: "Here we are many who want to return to Guatemala; therefore we'll stay and wait [in the present camp]." But real refugees should not repatriate either. They should wait until conditions are ripe for a collective return. As a refugee put it to me in 1988,

> those who want to go back now, are those who left Guatemala of their own free will. They didn't suffer the war, they just left when they heard something about the war (Kanjobal man, aged forty-eight).

Imagined Return Community

The "imagined return community" of the Guatemalan refugees is a symbolic construction related to the organization for a collective return. As in other imagined communities, a common history has been constructed; one that emphasizes the struggle of the poor (Indian) for material improvement, autonomy and dignity, against the rich and their army who wanted to break them and take their land. A common future is envisaged, in which the refugees return together, repossess the land, and establish settlements where they can look after each other:

> I don't think I'm going back. Not yet. The flesh is afraid of dying. Who knows if they begin to murder again. And returning like that, alone... there is no security. Only if we all go together, from Quintana, from Campeche, from Chiapas... well, let's go! (Mam woman, aged sixty).

The present is marked by *la tristeza*, the experience of living with the dilemma of exile as described above, but *la tristeza* is also used normatively to represent the image of the real refugee who stays and waits. Another important element for the imagined return community are the myths about the solidarity displayed during flight and exile. The need for continued unity and solidarity is often voiced. For those of the adult refugees who had land titles before they fled Guatemala, the repossession of their land is almost an obsession. In the 1970s many of them bought land in newly established cooperatives and settlements in the lowlands close

to the Mexican border. When they lived in the Guatemalan highland, they "spent much time wandering in search of land," making their way as day labourers. A sense of prosperity, progress, tranquillity, autonomy and dignity permeates the refugees' narratives about the life they had achieved, a paradise from which they were abruptly expelled.

When the refugees discuss their future in Guatemala, it is hardly possible to distinguish past from future. Return is imagined as a repetition of a familiar theme: the descent from the highland to the virgin lowlands and the transformation from a wandering, landless labourer (also suffering *la tristeza*) to an autonomous peasant.

"Return is Struggle, not Resignation"

On October 8, 1992 after five years of negotiations, the Permanent Commissions and the Guatemalan government signed an agreement which guaranteed most of the refugees' demands, including the right to return collectively (i.e., in larger groups than demanded by the government), the right to organize and move freely, exemption from military service for three years, and access to land. However, the Permanent Commissions did not succeed in limiting the army's presence in the area of return.

By February 1994, three groups had returned "organized and collectively" to Guatemala. As groups, they acquired land in the so-called "peace zone," where, despite its name, confrontations between the army and the guerillas still take place. As the slogan of the return movement foreshadowed, "return is struggle, not resignation." The return process has been an extremely politicized struggle between the Permanent Commissions and the government of Guatemala. Every detail of the practical arrangements contains the potential to disrupt the communication between the parties.

The attitudes of Guatemalan authorities have, in some regards, become more progressive since 1985-86, but many still consider refugees and returnees to be subversives in disguise. The returnees themselves display strong anti-state attitudes. Their imaginations and practices are informed by their experiences with state-terror and more than a decade of life in refugee camps (Stepputat 1989; 1992).

The returnees are trying to create settlements which are relatively autonomous from the state. Some aspects of the present situation may thus bring to mind the "closed corporate community" of the colonial society; but the creation of an imagined return community indicates that they are far beyond that. Apart from the extensive networks of Guatemalan refugees in Canada, the United States, Belize, Mexico, Nicaragua and Honduras, the Permanent Commissions have succeeded in mobilizing the attention and support of the "international community" to a degree unprecedented in Guatemala. The refugees may have become more aware of being "Guatemalans" in exile, but they certainly have become aware of being "citizens of the world." The question is, will they be able to find their home in this world? ■

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The Voices of Women: A New Force Shaping the Guatemalan Return

Frances Arbour[1]

For much of the more than twelve years in which Guatemalans have been refugees in Mexico, the voices of women were not heard. Most of those who fled to southern Mexico were indigenous peasant women, who were often illiterate and spoke only indigenous languages. Unable to communicate in Spanish, they became isolated and had little contact with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Mexican authorities, the international community or the local groups offering solidarity.

After the 1986 election of civilian president Vinicio Cerezo, there was mounting pressure for the refugees to return to Guatemala. The president's wife, Raquel Blandon de Cerezo, visited the camps in November 1986 to tell the refugees that conditions had changed in their country so they could forget what had happened and return home. Many of the widows responded with a letter asking that those responsible for their husbands' deaths and disappearances be brought to justice. Shortly thereafter, the refugees elected the Permanent Commissions of Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico to begin negotiations aimed at guaranteeing a safe and dignified return. In those first elections, two of the eight representatives chosen for the Permanent Commissions were women.

New Opportunities Develop Confidence

Gradually, more and more Guatemalan refugee women have become actively involved in directing life in their camp communities, as well as preparing organized, collective returns. At times, it has been a slow and difficult process; at other times, creative and dynamic. The experience has provided a diversity of opportunities for the women, such as learning to read and write, and to speak Spanish. Supported by resources from the UNHCR and a number of international cooperation agencies, some of the women have also been trained to teach literacy to other refugee women. All of this has led to the development of both consciousness and self-confidence.

A growing number of women participate in projects such as health and nutrition, family gardens and raising animals, traditional weaving to maintain their rich Mayan cultural heritage and larger cooperative production projects, including the cultivation of fruit for commercial markets. The women have demanded adequate technical training to carry out these tasks effectively and have been aided by local nongovernmental organizations.

Training to Eliminate Dependency

Many of the women participating in productive projects also have requested administrative training to enable them to carry out all aspects of their work, including financial management, without having to depend on refugee men. But taking on additional tasks often places an unbearable burden on women who must continue to look after their traditional responsibilities within the family. To manage, the women have sought time-saving measures such as cooperative, mechanized tortilla making and cooperative child care. These measures allow the women to participate more fully in political, organizational, productive and other important activities.

Throughout this process, the women have become increasingly conscious of their rights as women within Mayan culture. Non-Mayan women also probe gender issues from their *mestizo* standpoint and together they are deepening their organizational work. It is an ongoing and profound process, in which the women have come to understand the many subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which, traditionally, they have been marginalized from broader community participation and decision-making.

Women's Organizations Receive Less Funding

Over time, Guatemalan refugee women have built a number of organizations, with characteristics which vary according to the backgrounds and experiences of those involved. Such organizing has taken place with minimal material support. Traditional funding bodies have provided less resources for women's projects than for mixed or community projects, despite rhetoric about supporting women.

The first Guatemalan refugee women's organization to present a public face was the now well-known Mama Maquin, founded on May 25, 1990. Their name honours the memory of a Kekchi woman assassinated by the Guatemalan military in a 1978 massacre of indigenous peasants seeking land rights. Today, Mama Maquin represents about eight thousand refugee women from eight different indigenous groups who live in refugee camps in Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo. Mama Maquin played a vital role in the first and second organized returns, which took place in January 1993 and January 1994. The group represents 670 women returnees in the first return community, *Victoria 20 de enero*, located in the Quiche province, in northern Guatemala. Mama Maquin works primarily with the Permanent Commissions who are organizing returns to the northwestern zones of Guatemala.

Frances Arbour served as Program Coordinator for Guatemala and Mexico for Project Counselling Services for Latin American Refugees (1988-93)

At the beginning of the 1990s, another group of Guatemalan refugee women founded La Nueva Union, based primarily in Campeche. Slowly, they merged with a number of smaller refugee women's organizations in Chiapas, Quintana Roo and their original base in Campeche, to form the Union de Mujeres Guatemaltecas Para el Futuro de Guatemala in 1993. Together with the Permanent Commissions, many of the Union members are actively organizing the collective returns to northern Guatemala, particularly to the Petén and Alta Verapaz. From the beginning, this group has demanded to send their representatives with the special commissions seeking land options for the returnees. They believe that the women's perspective is particularly important in choosing where the return communities should be located, as well as what model of development and community organization should be implemented.

On November 26, 1993 about six hundred refugee women from the "Union de Mujeres" who identify more closely with the northern sector returns founded the newest Guatemalan refugee women's organization, "IXMUCANE." One of IXMUCANE's objectives is to organize in order to achieve full participation in the preparation for the returns to northern Guatemala, particularly to the Petén and Alta Verapaz. They are preparing themselves to participate in all the structures of their future communities in Guatemala.

"Madre Tierra," another Guatemalan refugee women's organization formally appeared in August 1993. Its members are primarily, although not exclusively, Mayan women whose political consciousness was raised during years of grass roots organizing, training health promoters and midwives, and participating in a variety of projects. The reflective work which accompanied these projects led the women to formally organize themselves in order to deepen their gender consciousness and strengthen their capacity to participate at all levels of community life. At their inauguration, they represented approximately eight hundred refugee women in the states of Quintana Roo, Campeche and Chiapas. Madre Tierra has continued to grow and is now participating actively in preparation for returns to the southern areas of Guatemala.

Women Strongly Represented Outside UNHCR Camps

While there are forty-three thousand refugees living in UNHCR-recognized camps in southern Mexico, at least three times as many Guatemalan refugees are dispersed outside those camps. Women make up the majority of these dispersed refugees. Their situation has always been precarious as the Mexican government and UNHCR have never formally recognized them as refugees and they have received only a minimum of international humanitarian assistance.

The dispersed refugees have also organized, forming the Association of Guatemalan Dispersed Refugees, known as ARDIGUA. Since its creation, women have held key leadership positions in ARDIGUA, and are strongly represented through a Women's Secretariat. The ARDIGUA women are in close contact with other Guatemalan refugee women's organizations and share with them a gender perspective. They are working primarily to organize collective returns to the southern areas of Guatemala.

The advances made by Guatemalan refugee women have not been easy. Many refugee men, accustomed to a traditional male dominated culture, have resisted the women's struggle to assume new roles and activities. However, as those activities have proved essential to organizing the collective return process, many men now welcome the new partnership. ■

Notes

1. This article is a revised version of a paper previously published in *Americas Update*, a publication of the Latin American Working Group and the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, under the title "From silence to vocal participation: Guatemalan women shape the refugee returns."

Youths and the Guatemalan Return Process

Linda Geggie

Many of the Guatemalan refugee youths who are now returning to Guatemala after spending their formative years in Mexico are finding the reintegration process very difficult. Others, still in Mexico, are choosing not to return. Some of those who have returned to Guatemala have decided that life in Mexico is preferable and have already moved back to Mexico or are planning to do so. In this report I explore why the return to Guatemala is so difficult for some youths and less so for others. I report the case of one youth in particular who speaks for many others who have decided to return, despite the difficulties of reintegration.

Displacement, Life Style and Identity

The majority of the Guatemalan refugees in Mexico have been living there for over ten years. This is a long period of time, particularly for youths who scarcely remember Guatemala. Living abroad has been a profound experience for all, but particularly for the younger generation, because the communities they grew up in were very different from the ones their parents knew.

At first many Guatemalan refugees settled in temporary camps just across the Mexican border in the state of Chiapas, but due to the Guatemalan government's accusations that these were bases for the guerillas, and the fact that on several occasions the Guatemalan army crossed into Mexican territory to attack these populations, the Mexican government chose to move the camps away from the border. Approximately twenty thousand refugees were moved north to the states of Campeche and Quintana Roo in the Yucatán region, while the majority remained in Chiapas.

The settlement process in Mexico had two consequences for community culture and lifestyle in the camps. Firstly, it led to the formation of new communities in which the families living together came from different linguistic and cultural groups in Guatemala. This served to fracture and undermine traditional language and culture. There are 127 different refugee camps in Mexico containing families from different origin communities. Second, dispersal led to communities being established in regions throughout Mexico. In some cases, the new communities were similar to those in Guatemala. In other cases, they were quite different. Despite this diversity, adult refugees have retained strong ties to the land and their home—Guatemala. This is not necessarily the case for their children in the refugee camps. Those who grew up in Mexico have little or no memory of life in Guatemala, and are less attached to their traditional culture. In some cases they may be more attached to Mexican society.

Refugees who were settled in Chiapas found land, environment and cultural conditions similar to what they had known in Guatemala. However, the camps in the states of Quintana Roo and Campeche, both within the Yucatán region of Mexico, are very different from those both in Chiapas and in Guatemala. There are only eight camps in Quintana Roo and Campeche. Yet their populations are quite large and ethnically mixed, including Kanjobal, Mam, Jakalteko, Kakchiquel, Chuj, K'eche, Usspanteco and Qeq'chi indigenous groups.

Youths who grew up in camps in the Yucatán region of Mexico face the most extreme challenges in reintegration. The Yucatán area of Mexico, with its huge tourist and North American influence, has an entirely different cultural framework and reality. This has had an enormous impact on the refugee populations living there, especially for the youths with little recollection of life in Guatemala. Refugees in the Yucatán have been exposed to a better standard of living. Some have worked in the tourist areas of Cozumel, Merida and glitzy Cancun. Others have found work as construction workers, gardeners, domestics, child care workers, or in the hotels or restaurants of the tourist areas. They have been exposed to Western rock and rap music, magazines, television, videos, movies and clothing styles. It is a completely different world which has changed their way of thinking and undermined their traditional identity and lifestyle.

In the camps in the Yucatán, many refugee youths between thirteen and twenty years of age have become "Mexicanized," adopting the dress, language and attitudes of the land where they grew up. This new identity has wide ramifications for youths who are returning, and for the reintegration process in Guatemala in general. The life they are returning to is essentially foreign.

The impact of life in the Yucatán region is clearly evident in the story of Ernestina, a young Guatemalan woman of eighteen years of age who has spent nearly all of her life in a refugee camp in Campeche. She returned to Guatemala in January 1993 and now lives with her family in *Victoria 20 de enero*, the community established by the first large group of returnees from Mexico.

Through Ernestina's Eyes

Ernestina is a Mam Mayan Indian. She was born in Barillas, Huehuetenango, into a family of ten. In 1980, her family fled the rising violence of the civil war in Guatemala. She recalls the moment

Linda Geggie belongs to the Environmental Youth Alliance in Victoria, British Columbia. From June to December 1993, she worked in Guatemala as a Human Rights Observer with Project Accompaniment Canada. For most of this time she lived in Victoria 20 de enero, *the community established by the first large group of refugees to return from Mexico.*

of flight: "We spent a lot of nights hiding in the forest, we did not sleep." The initial trauma of dislocation passed as the family slowly regained their security. They first lived for eight months in an area just across the Mexican border near the town of Puerto Rico. Later they were moved to a camp called Maya Tecun in Campeche state. They lived there for five years until they were relocated once again to a nearby camp, Santiago Domingo Castille, where they stayed until they returned to Guatemala. Ernestina spent thirteen of her eighteen years in Mexico. She says she did not remember very much about Guatemala, only the fact that they had to leave and hide in the mountains. In contrast, her life in Mexico remains ever present in her mind.

Ernestina looks and dresses differently from the older women in *Victoria 20 de enero*. As we sit drinking coffee, I look around her family's house. It is like the others in *Victoria*, with a dirt floor, no electricity, no running water, walls of assorted pieces of wood, boards and plastic, a fire to cook on, raised wooden beds with mosquito nets, and a latrine out back. It is basic living, but there are some things in the house that seem out of place in the middle of the Ixcan jungle.

We are listening to one of her many pop-techno-rap tapes on her ghetto blaster. There is a poster of the popular music group "Menudo" on the wall, sitting on the shelf is a basket of nail polishes of assorted colours, and in the corner, half buried by a sack of corn, sits a small television. Unlike her parents, coming back to Guatemala was not a happy move for Ernestina. She tells me that when she was in Mexico she lived in a house with a cement floor, electricity and running water. Cars and bicycles came right to the house. She lived with her family and worked as an education promoter. When her father told her they were returning back to Guatemala, her first reaction was to say 'No! She would stay in Mexico!'. The contrasts between her former life in Mexico and her current life in Guatemala are stark. Speaking of Mexico, Ernestina says,

> Here there are no places to go... the roads are bad. [There,] we had our own trucks, and there were buses, [so] we went to nearby towns. My friends could find work if they wanted, to clean, or look after children, they could earn five hundred *pesos* (equivalent of about US$170) per month, or they could work in construction of hotels, houses, or buildings. I was lucky, I was working as an education promoter, and I liked it a lot. Here there is no work, I went to look in Cantabal (a nearby commercial center). I could only find work in a restaurant for 250 *Quetzales* (about US$50) per month.

Differences in entertainment are important to a young woman like Ernestina. She notes,

> Here [in *Victoria*] there is nothing to do, but there [in Mexico] we had dances every Saturday night with lights, sound from big speakers and taped music, they went all night. They had all the popular music.

I ask her about the dances that they have in *Victoria* about once a month.

> Yes, they are fun, but it's purely *marimba* music, and we get bored of all the same songs, it does not go on very late either, since every one has to get up early to go work in the fields.

Ernestina is wearing a polka dot blouse and shorts, her hair is loose, not back in a braid like the majority of the indigenous women in the region. I ask her about clothes, and if she has a traditional *traje* (dress) like her mother. She tells me that she does, but she does not wear it or like it.

> I used to wear it before, but when we were in Mexico we were embarrassed to wear our traditional clothes, they didn't like it, they thought it was strange and people would stare at us so we changed to Mexican style.

The children in Ernestina's family rarely speak their Mayan language, Mam.

> My mother cannot speak *Castellano* (Spanish), so we speak Mam with her. But my younger brothers and sisters don't answer me when I speak to them in Mam.

I ask her why this is, and she tells me that the kids are embarrassed to speak their native language, that other kids would not understand them in the camps in Mexico and would tease them. I ask Ernestina if she thinks it is important to keep their Mam culture, and she says

> Yes, of course it's important. When we were in Mexico in the camps people would come and talk to us, people from the church I think, they would talk to us about Guatemala, talk to us about how important it is to remember our customs and our language. We should remember, it's part of us.

Ernestina's decision to return with her family was difficult for her. She did not want to be separated from her family—although her older brother and his wife were going to stay—or from her friends. Most of her friends did not want to return and stayed in Mexico. On the other hand, she notes that

> My parents really wanted to return. They are accustomed to Guatemala, this is where they were born, and where they want to be, but I have adapted to Mexican life style and I wanted to stay. When I first got here from Guatemala I saw the mud and the sticks and the life, and I wanted to cry, I wanted to go back. I think I still do, but I remember that when we first got to Mexico, my older sisters, and my parents were really upset, they missed the jungle, and the rivers, they missed Guatemala a lot.

Ernestina says she is going to give the experiment in returning some time, time to get used to *Victoria*, to Guatemala, and to her new life. She hopes there will be a chance to work as an education promoter next year, and that maybe she will meet someone and get married. She jokes that maybe, if and when she can get a gas-powered electricity generator, she will be able to watch television once again.

Youth and the Future of the Return Community

Ernestina's is not an isolated case among the youth that returned from the Yucatán region of Mexico. Many others share her difficulties in fitting

into the relatively isolated agrarian lifestyle. In contrast, returnees from Chiapas seem to be happier at home and have more fully embraced the spirit of the return. They had not been influenced by the tourist areas and their lifestyle in Chiapas was not that different from Guatemala.

When I visited a camp called *Porvenir* (the future) in Chiapas, I discovered that the majority of youths were returning with their families. Later, talking to people in the return community of *Victoria 20 de enero* in Guatemala, it was evident that the youths from the Chiapas camps were committed to marriage, finding land and to staying. Many were becoming involved in the youth group CODAJUGUA. This group was started in the camps in Mexico, and is beginning to network with other youth groups in Guatemala. Their principle aim is to stop forced military recruitment by the Guatemalan army. They are also trying to organize youth activities in the community, such as team sports, tournaments and workshops on poetry, writing, music and art. Although they are well organized, it is a struggle due to lack of resources.

These youth activists will be a strong voice in the popular movement for a more just and democratic Guatemala. There is little doubt that the new generation is critical to change. Yet, finding a balance between the new and the old is going to be a struggle. The culture and identity changes which they bring with them from Mexico will be both a source of strength and a potential distraction. They will need to find ways to retain elements of their traditional Mayan heritage while entering into the politics and economics of a more integrated "global" world. Western consumer culture will be a particular challenge to finding this balance. It is important that the diversity and special needs of youths among the return communities be recognized. By understanding and supporting their views, outsiders can contribute to the solidarity behind a successful return and the quest for justice and democracy in Guatemala. ■

Immigration and Refugee Board
Convention Refugee Determination Division
Claims Process Period: January 1 – December 31, 1993

Regional Summary

	Ottawa/Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	B.C.	National
Claims heard to completion (includes cases before 1993)	1,513	7,899	15,049	562	1,141	26,164
Decisions rendered	1,507	7,955	14,453	561	1,073	25,549
Claims rejected	472	3,503	6,534	199	740	11,448
Claims upheld	1,035	4,452	7,919	362	333	14,101
Withdrawn/abandoned	173	1,186	3,238	51	356	5,004
Decisions pending *	153	553	2,143	37	263	3,149
Claims pending **	1,565	5,603	10,385	288	2,111	19,952
—% Share (total pending)	8	28	52	1	11	

** Decisions pending include all claims heard to completion for which no decision had been rendered by the end of the reporting period.*

*** Claims pending include all claims referred to the Convention Refugee Determination Division that have not been finalized (i.e. by a positive or negative decision or by withdrawal or abandonment) as of the end of the reporting period.*

Summary by Major Source Countries

	Country of Alleged Persecution	Claims Heard to Completion	Claims Withdrawn/ Abandoned	Claims Decided	Convention Refugee Status Yes	No	Accept.%
1	Sri Lanka	4,780	222	4,703	3,725	978	79.2
2	Somalia	2,348	125	2,338	2,229	109	95.3
3	Iran	1,178	130	1,132	800	332	70.7
4	Pakistan	1,147	395	1,117	375	742	33.6
5	Israel	1,077	303	886	157	729	17.7
6	India	928	256	868	226	642	26.0
7	USSR	829	237	797	294	503	36.9
8	Lebanon	819	127	869	313	556	36.0
9	China	800	99	890	180	710	20.2
10	Russia	774	108	684	412	272	60.2
11	Romania	635	81	588	264	324	44.9
12	Peru	596	40	567	397	170	70.0
13	El Salvador	556	145	655	150	505	22.9
14	Bangladesh	554	114	558	282	276	50.5
15	Guatemala	506	112	521	291	230	55.9
16	Haiti	470	23	466	333	133	71.5
17	Ukraine	444	58	388	224	164	57.7
18	Ghana	421	238	475	63	412	13.3
19	Moldova	400	15	316	208	108	65.8
20	Zaire	389	24	428	285	143	66.6
21	Nigeria	367	144	351	64	287	18.2
22	Yugoslavia	357	325	300	271	29	90.3
23	Sudan	289	18	290	262	28	90.3
24	Argentina	284	84	296	42	254	14.2
25	Cuba	283	40	264	186	78	70.5
Top-25 Countries		**21,231**	**3,463**	**20,747**	**12,033**	**8,714**	**58.0**
Total		**26,164**	**5,004**	**25,549**	**14,101**	**11,448**	**55.2**

Source: Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa, News Release, February 28, 1994.

/A.S.A

Community Development, Peace and Canadian Bilateral Aid in El Salvador

Lisa Kowalchuk and Liisa L. North[1]

Is Canadian development assistance building peace in El Salvador? The Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA's) current aid program was certainly designed to support the country's ambitious peace process, inaugurated by the signing of the Chapultepec Accords in January 1992. Those accords, in turn, were intended not only to end El Salvador's twelve-year civil war but also to eradicate its causes.

It is generally agreed that the civil war derived from a development model that denied the majority of the population access to the minimum resources required to satisfy basic human needs and a political system that repressed all peaceful efforts to bring about social justice. Consequently, in addition to essential reforms intended to reduce the size of military and security forces and bring them under civilian control, the Chapultepec Accords included a broad range of reforms to civilian institutions: in the political realm, electoral and judicial systems, and in the socioeconomic realm, land tenure and labour-capital relations.

To what extent had the accords been implemented as of the fall of 1993? Ironically, despite the many problems encountered in the implementation of the military-security clauses, many observers of the peace process were convinced that "it will be easier to overcome the structural problems in the military than those in the judicial system" (LCHR 1993, 4) and the civilian arena in general. Such reforms, after all, challenge the traditional structures of political power and socioeconomic privilege in the country. Despite the supervision and encouragement of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL), implementation has turned out to be difficult and uneven.

Perhaps most ominously, rightist death squads have begun to function again. In the fall of 1993, church officials reported an average of twelve death squad style killings per month while ONUSAL stated that it viewed the peace process "with deep concern" since "serious violations have become more acute." (*The Globe and Mail* 23 October 1993, A14). Thus, while many people were returning to El Salvador after years of exile, others continued to leave, seeking external refuge.

It is within this context that CIDA's program in El Salvador must be analyzed. Following a brief description of our criteria for evaluating what may be considered peace building assistance, we will turn to the community development part of the Canadian program. Concluding remarks will deal with the poor fit between economic structural adjustment policies and peace building.

The Criteria for Evaluating Peace Building Assistance

Eight interrelated criteria derived from the work of Canada-Caribbean-Central America Policy Alternatives (CAPA) guide our assessment of Canada's contribution to peace in El Salvador. These criteria are consistent with the text of the peace accords[2] as well as the analyses of the contributors to Robert Miller's *Aid as Peace-Maker*. To promote peace, David Close argues, development assistance must "undermine the structures that created the original conflict" (Close 1992, 31; North 1990). In specific terms, to promote peace, we propose that international assistance must:

1. help countervail the power of entrenched civilian and military elites by supporting those social forces that are promoting long term peace;
2. support the reduction of socioeconomic inequalities;
3. promote the political participation of marginalized groups, especially women;
4. be formulated in consultation with local organizations with relevant knowledge and experience;
5. rely on the participation of recipients in defining and executing the projects financed;
6. promote the reconciliation of historical antagonists;
7. decrease—or at least not deepen—dependency on technologies and production inputs that have to be imported; and
8. foster environmental sustainability.

The Canadian Assistance Program

Following the January 1992 Accords, Canada created a $5 million "interim" development assistance fund for El Salvador. That fund, a "bridge" to a new five year program scheduled to begin this year, had two main components: $2.6 million for "democratic development and human rights," designated for government institutions created by the peace accords and nongovernmental organizations that worked to ensure a genuine implementation of the accords; and $2.3 million for new kinds of community development projects.

The latter, our focus here, was added to the existing "Programme of Support for Community Development" (PADECO) administered by the Canadian Hunger Foundation (CHF).[3] For the most part, it financed projects in the former conflict zones: communities of repatriates, the internally displaced, ex-combatants of the rebel organizations, and economically marginalized people. Lisa Kowalchuk visited five of the twenty PADECO

Lisa Kowalchuk is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology, and Liisa L. North is a professor in the Department of Political Science at York University.

projects during the summer of 1993 and our analysis is confined to them.

Nueva Esperanza and Ciudad Romero, both located in the western department of Usulután, are communities in which PADECO provided support for repatriated refugees attempting to rebuild a livelihood destroyed by the civil war. Two and a half hours from the capital city, the last 45 minutes of which are negotiable only in a four-wheel drive vehicle, Nueva Esperanza is a small community founded by some three hundred refugees who repatriated from Nicaragua where they had been since the early 1980s. The $226,000 delivered by the CHF financed house construction, the purchase of dairy cattle, and the planting of fruit and other trees. The housing project consisted of 54 identical, modest, four room, cement-bricked buildings constructed with locally available materials. The collectively owned and locally available livestock purchased with the Canadian funds were expected to reproduce themselves. Milk production, still at a modest level in the summer of 1993, served the community's own consumption needs, but eventually the sale of surplus milk and beef was planned. Limes, plantains, oranges and other fruit had been planted and it was anticipated that the trees, though intended to produce mainly for community consumption, would yield a marketable surplus within a couple of years.

About half a kilometre from Nueva Esperanza, Ciudad Romero is a community of almost nine hundred people, most of whom repatriated from Panama. Its $200,000 donation was used solely for housing. Indicative of the CHF's flexibility, the initially designated amount was doubled when more people than anticipated arrived in the community. While this project does not contribute to income generation (as the project in Nueva Esperanza does), it is responding to an essential component of the reintegration of returning refugees.

In the communities of San Jerónimo and Sisiguaya, in the departments of San Vicente and Usulután respectively, PADECO supports income generating activities for cooperatives of former FMLN combatants. A CHF-administered donation of $96,423 has purchased beef and dairy cattle in San Jerónimo. A donation of $98,340 to a thirty-five member cooperative of ex-combatants—the "31 Diciembre"—financed the commercialization of salt in Sisiguaya, benefitting 210 persons. The funds purchased a warehouse to store the salt and equipment to grind and iodize it. Part of the donation was earmarked to contract the services of the Institute of Technology, Self-Management and Environment (ITAMA)[4] for technical training and a study of the environmental impact of the salt production enterprise. Like the project in Nueva Esperanza, these projects also helped to redress the economic marginalization of sectors of society that emerged from the civil war with few options for economic self-sufficiency.

In all three of these cases, PADECO was supporting existing cooperative responses to employment creation, income generation or the housing deficit. Another project, the Cooperative Services Central, designated funds to promote cooperativism as an alternative among individual small scale producers. This project involved training in the management of cooperative financing, marketing and input purchases for agricultural production among 170 beneficiaries in five neighbouring communities in the department of Cabañas. The communities varied in their levels of prosperity, with Bañadero (the poorest, with high levels of illiteracy) at one extreme and Rojas (with many brick houses, including some with trucks in their driveways) at the other.

The $98,000 provided to the Cooperative Services Central by PADECO served as "seed capital"—a substitute for bank loans which, as individuals, the recipients had virtually no hope of obtaining—to finance the purchase of inputs and to clear land for cultivation. The recipients were encouraged to think of the funds as loans (rather than donations) for the cultivation of the individual plots that they either rented or, much more rarely, owned. In each community, cooperative members organized themselves into small groups of six or seven to supervise loan repayment. A small proportion of the donation was earmarked to pay the expenses of consultants from the Salvadorean Institute of Cooperative Education and Consulting Services (ISEAC). They gave seminars to the co-op members in loan management and made weekly supervisory visits to each community.

Evaluation

Overall, the CHF program lived up to its billing as a genuine community development program, and it satisfies most of our criteria for peace building development. Cooperatives respond to the problems faced by El Salvador's majority of underemployed, and small producers represent a significant proportion of the program's beneficiaries. At a recent conference on cooperativism and human rights, it was pointed out that the country's fifteen hundred existing cooperatives have come to generate some 25 percent of national income, and have the additional advantage of being labour-intensive (*Diario Latino* 17 August 1993, 24). Environmental considerations were being taken into account in the CHF projects, with appropriate technologies introduced and training provided. In addition, the utilization of local rather than imported production inputs in the projects conserves economic multiplier effects for domestic benefit. Furthermore, the CHF's declared emphasis on the full participation of recipients in devising and implementing their projects was evident in practice. This not only promotes the self-sustainability of the projects but also ensures that they address the real needs of the beneficiaries. Finally, by giving priority to communities in the former conflict zones, the PADECO program contributed to the productive reintegration of ex-combatants and refugees upon which post-conflict reconciliation depends.

However, a serious shortcoming of the PADECO program arises from the CHF's failure to fully consult with or to fund the local umbrella organizations to which many of the recipient communities belong. The CHF's policy of avoiding local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) almost entirely is intended to promote the recipients' capacity to manage their own affairs. The CHF also argues that funds often tend to get caught up in the bureaucracies of the NGOs or face delays in delivery due to project saturation.[5]

As legitimate as these reasons may be, by-passing the local NGOs as a general policy is counter-productive. Many of the recipient communities rely on those NGOs and are consequently less likely to reach self-sustainability without their continued support. To provide that support, the NGOs also require funding. It costs money to pay agronomists and community development experts who can, for example, promote women's participation and literacy or train the bookkeepers and treasurers of new cooperatives.

Nor is funding the only issue. Equally problematic is the CHF's insufficient consultation with the Salvadorean NGOs who have a history of working with marginalized groups. This may diminish the developmental impact of projects at both the community and regional levels. For example, a member of ITAMA finds the intervention of foreign donors in this community disruptive of its internal social relations. The "31 Diciembre" cooperative of ex-combatants was assigned control of the salt production facilities, as a condition for receiving support from the European Economic Community. However, according to the ITAMA critic, the salt works used to be "the lifeblood" of the civilians in Sisiguaya. With foreign funding designated only for ex-combatants, civilians and their cooperatives could be left without assistance, a situation which could possible lead to the emergence of greater inequality and the disruption of the community's development.[6] Moreover, local NGOs could have assisted in ensuring that women —now conspicuously absent among the participants—benefitted from the project. Had the CHF consulted more carefully with ITAMA on possible alternatives, the Canadian agency would have been introduced to their argument for greater coordination among the several cooperatives in the community. Commenting on a similar dilemma, a researcher employed by the "Fundación 16 Enero" to develop reintegration programs for ex-combatants, suggested community banks for the receipt of foreign donations so that former combatants would be treated as integral members of the community and not as a privileged sect.

The CHF policy also leads to lost opportunities: its projects are not articulated within the broader visions of regional development toward which many of the Salvadorean organizations are working. For example, PADECO funded recipients Neuva Esperanza and Lempa Mar are members of the Cooperative and Community Coordination for the Integral Development of the Coast (CODECOSTA), an association of communities that promotes the "integral development" of some twenty communities and cooperatives in Usulután. CODECOSTA has coordinated joint efforts to construct and use infrastructure for health care and education; encouraged the sharing of machinery and ideas; and developed a dairy project in which several communities in the zone participate.[7] Yet, CODECOSTA has not been supported or consulted by the CHF.

Clearly, the perspectives of CODECOSTA and similar NGOs on regional development should be taken into account by foreign donors. As a consultant to the Jesuit Development Service explained, the coordination of production, consumption and marketing among communities can avoid the duplication of efforts, and can maximize and share the advantages that some areas might have with respect to topography, irrigation and the like.[8]

The CHF's political rationale for avoiding local NGOs also has to be examined. The Foundation asserts that direct funding circumvents accusations by the Salvadorean government that it supports the left.[9] But if international donors do not support El Salvador's beleaguered progressive forces, the peace process is imperiled. The message of democratic inclusion must be reiterated to the recalcitrant sectors of the country's elite which have recently reactivated the death squads that killed thousands of labour, peasant and cooperative leaders in the 1980s. Mario López, the founding director of ITAMA and the Vice-President of its Board of Directors, was assassinated on December 9, 1993. Mr. López was only one of several FMLN leaders and candidates for political office to be assassinated in the fall of 1993.

Structural Adjustment Conditionality

Canadian development assistance is conditioned on the adoption of structural adjustment policies by recipient countries. These typically involve the reduction of state subsidies to productive sectors, cutbacks in social programs such as education and health, the privatization of public enterprises, and the liberalization of trade, foreign investment and financial markets. In El Salvador, these policies are threatening to undermine the peace process, a fact that has not escaped the attention of the Secretary General of the United Nations and the former mediator of the Salvadorean peace negotiations (de Soto et al. 1993, para 95).

How may these policies contradict peace building projects? If credit programs to small farmers are slashed in the name of fiscal austerity, the potential development of the cooperative sector that CIDA has funded may be undercut. If the market is flooded with imported grains as a consequence of trade liberalization, displaced grain producers will easily outnumber the members of the fruit, cattle and dairy cooperatives supported by CIDA funds. If public education, including adult education is not made more accessible in the rural areas of El Salva-

dor, the possibilities of democratization and development are prejudiced. If no concerted large scale programs are undertaken to provide employment to both rebel ex-combatants and demobilized soldiers of the Salvadorean armed forces, new waves of violence may destroy all efforts to construct a more democratic and economically viable society.

Moreover, the economic policies championed by international financial institutions and government donors favour precisely those elite groups that have resisted democratic reforms in the past and continue to resist the full implementation of the peace accords today. Their most recalcitrant members continued to finance death squads to eliminate their political opponents.[10] The rich, who were getting richer with these policies, were already sending their children to private schools and to study abroad so they had no stake in improving the public education system upon which the future democratic development of the country depends. The privatization of banks has allowed rampant currency speculation. Income taxes were cut—supposedly to favour investment—while consumer taxes that hit the poor were increased. This, when by all accounts, more money in the hands of the wealthy favours luxury imports and capital export (Rosenberg 1992).

It needs to be stressed that the value of imports was more than twice the value of exports in 1992 and, significantly, the proportion of consumer durables in the import mix also doubled. A balance of payments crisis was avoided only due to the high level of emigrants' remittances. Remittances reached US$718 million and represented 123 percent of exports in 1992, in contrast to 67 percent of exports in 1991 (Arriola 1992, 4). It was those remittances, rather than a reactivation of the national economy, that sustained the poorer sectors in particular. The sustainability of such as system is questionable since most observers expect remittance levels to decrease over time.

Overall, the macroeconomic and structural adjustment policies generate results that contradict two of our criteria for peace building assistance: the power of entrenched elites is reinforced instead of curtailed; and social inequalities are increasing instead of being reduced. It should be stressed that the new inequalities generated by structural adjustment policies were appearing in the country with the most skewed income distribution profile in a region notorious for inequality. While El Salvador's rich wanted more, in 1990, 52 percent of the country's population was indigent and another 19 percent could not satisfy its basic needs (FLASCO 1992, 10). International funding will amount to little more than temporary "welfare relief" unless public policy favours the poor and the marginalized instead of imposing an austerity that the elites themselves do not practice.

The structural adjustment policies pursued in Nicaragua, after the Sandinistas lost the national elections of February 1990, were a primary cause of that country's descent into renewed armed conflict and refugee flight to neighbouring countries. We fear that El Salvador will follow in Nicaragua's sad footsteps unless the current opportunities for building peace are used to their full potential. That means creating an economic and social policy framework that favours democratization, socially viable development and the full complement of human rights.

Notes

1. The authors wish to thank the many individuals—too many to identify in this small space—in El Salvador and Canada who assisted our research. The support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Small Grants Programme and the York University Faculty of Arts Research Grant Programme made possible Lisa Kowalchuk's summer 1993 field work in El Salvador. This article is a shortened version of a longer work. "Canadian Assistance in El Salvador: A Contribution to Peace Building?" an Occasional Paper by *Canada-Caribbean-Central America Policy Alternatives* (CAPA). Toronto, 1993.
2. The text of all the peace agreements (there were several negotiated over two years) can be found in *El Salvador Agreements: The Path to Peace*. New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, July 1992.
3. For an analysis of the Democratic Development and Human Rights Fund, see the work from which this article is derived, as cited in footnote 1.
4. The names of institutions are translated into English but their Spanish acronyms are given.
5. Interview with CHF staff, San Salvador, 6 July 1993.
6. Interview with a member of ITAMA, San Salvador, 25 August 1993.
7. Interview with Armando Martínez, at the office of CODECOSTA, San Salvador, 27 August 1993.
8. Interview, San Salvador, 25 June 1993.
9. Interviews with CHF staff in San Salvador, 6 July 1993.
10. Their past involvement has been documented in the report of the Commission on the Truth and also in the documents recently released by the U.S. State Department, Defence Department, and Central Intelligence Agency under Congressional pressure (Krauss 1993, 4A).

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Canadian Consortia Supports Guatemalan Return

Barbara Zerter

During the early 1980s, almost two hundred thousand Guatemalans fled to Mexico to escape their own government's scorched earth policy. Of these, some forty-five thousand are officially recognized as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and are living in camps in southern Mexico. It is estimated that another one hundred and fifty thousand Guatemalans are dispersed throughout Mexico without being officially recognized either by the UNHCR or by the Mexican authorities. Refugee leaders indicate that many of these refugees wish to return to Guatemala and that consequently, they have initiated a return process which may take up to five years to complete. Although some refugees have returned to Guatemala in individual family groups, many Guatemalan refugees formed new communities while in the camps. The members of each new community now wish to return to Guatemala together.

A collective return is a complex process requiring a great deal of planning, organization and complex negotiation with the Guatemalan authorities regarding the lands on which the refugees will resettle. In some cases the refugees will return to lands they previously owned while in other cases new lands must be allocated or purchased. In addition, negotiations must take place with the Guatemalan military, which still views the refugees as counter-insurgents—an attitude that threatens the returnees' security.

Canada supports the refugees' desire to return home through funds provided by a consortia of thirteen Canadian international development organizations and the humanities funds of three unions. Consortia participants include: the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP), the Jesuit Centre for Social Justice and Faith, Oxfam Canada, the Anglican Church in Canada, Inter Pares, CUSO, Save the Children Canada, the United Church of Canada, Project Accompaniment, the Canadian Autoworkers Social Justice Fund, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund, and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Humanity Fund, with Horizons of Friendship as the lead agency.

The Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Fund (R and R) of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) matched the funds provided by the consortia members. In 1992-93, the consortia funded an initial phase of the repatriation in which twenty-five hundred refugees returned to the Quiche region of Guatemala. This initial return took place on January 20, 1993. As another twelve thousand Guatemalans proposed to return the following year, the consortia approved a second phase of support to the refugees in June of 1993.

All the participants in the consortia are members of the Central America Monitoring Group (CAMG) and have extensive programming experience with refugees and the displaced in Central America.

The Mexican/Central American component of the program is being coordinated through the Project Counselling Services for Latin American Refugees (PCS). PCS provides the direct contact between the Canadian consortia and the refugee and Guatemalan organizations working with the exiles.

In Mexico, the work of organizing and preparing for the refugees' return to Guatemala is being carried out by their own organizations. These are the Permanent Commissions of Guatemalan Refugees (CCPP) and the Association of Dispersed Guatemalan Refugees (ARDIGUA).

In Guatemala, the returning refugees are being assisted in the reestablishment of their communities by a number of Guatemalan nongovernmental and church organizations which include the Coordination of Guatemalan NGOs, Cooperatives for the Accompaniment of People Affected by the Armed Conflict, the Protestant Churches through CIEDEG and various diocese of the Roman Catholic Church.

The consortia has not limited its participation in the return process to financial support. As members of the CAMG, all members participated in monitoring the situation both in Mexico and in Guatemala, preparing information for the media, briefing parliamentary delegations and responding to violations of agreements regarding the repatriation. Field visits by consortia members were made to both Mexico and Guatemala to acquire first hand knowledge of conditions in the refugee camps and in the repatriated communities respectively, as well as to meet with the different actors in the return process.

An important component of this initiative is the funding of an ongoing Canadian accompaniment program through Project Accompaniment or Project "A." Recent complications in Mexico due to the situation in Chiapas

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Barbara Zerter works with a Canadian NGO, Horizons of Friendship, in Cobourg, Ontario.

as well as an uncertain sociopolitical environment in Guatemala, where civilian rule is still very much in the shadow of the military, make the presence of international observers essential for the security of the refugees, both during the return process as well as in their initial resettlement in new communities.

A full evaluation by all members of the consortia is presently in progress. However, some preliminary observations can be made. For instance, the Canadian consortia provided the Guatemalan refugees with timely and substantial support. This support was instrumental in consolidating their fledgling organizations and establishing the structures necessary to effectively carry out the many different aspects of the return and resettlement program. Project "A" provided well trained accompaniers and was recognized for its excellent coordination with refugee leaders. (See Beth Abbott in this issue).

Internally, this collaboration provided the members of the consortia with the opportunity to strengthen their working relations. In addition, the fact that the Canadian NGOs involved the Canadian Embassy in some aspects of the return, helped build official understanding of and commitment to the return. A twenty-seven minute video on the first return sponsored by the consortia and shown on national television also helped to raise Canadian public awareness of the issue. One final observation is that at an international level, consortia support encouraged the ongoing dialogue with the UNHCR and other governmental bodies involved in the refugee return process.

Conditions in Mexico's Chiapas state as well as inside Guatemala are being carefully monitored given the many large scale returns still to take place. Once the evaluation by the consortia members is completed, new funding options for a possible Phase III will be considered within a broader perspective of continuing Canadian support for the Guatemalan refugees' dream of returning home. ◘

Project Accompaniment: A Canadian Response

Beth Abbott

International accompaniment is important... without international accompaniment, the people are like worms the army can just step on...
—Guatemalan refugee in Mexico awaiting return to the Petén

Project Accompaniment is a national network which was formed so that Canadians could offer a coordinated response to the requests for international accompaniment by the Guatemalan refugees. The work of Project "A" in the 1990s grew out of the relationships built between Canadian individuals and groups and the Guatemalan refugee community in Mexico throughout the 1980s. The church community in British Columbia, for example, has been a particularly important sector offering many forms of accompaniment for over a decade now.

Through Project "A," Canadians from coast to coast have come to understand that accompaniment involves our physical presence with the refugees together with development of dedicated and informed support in Canada. It means continued exchanges between Guatemalans and Canadians based on mutual support in efforts for social justice. It means, most immediately, attentive international vigilance and support for the refugees, both those returning home, and those remaining for the time being in Mexico.

In planning their return to Guatemala, the refugees' representatives (known as the Permanent Commissions) clearly outlined the basic conditions they would need to successfully carry the process forward. One of these conditions was our presence while they were still in the camps, as they journeyed home, and perhaps most importantly, after they had returned. Guatemalan refugees are returning to a country where violence and repression are a daily fact of life. Many returnees are resettling in the most highly militarized regions of Guatemala; regions which have never stopped being "home" despite the years in Mexico. Through Project Accompaniment, a growing number of Canadians are ensuring that the refugees' right to return home is respected. The Project Accompaniment network is supported (financially and in many other ways) by the major national churches in Canada as well as by numerous nongovernmental organizations which work for social justice in Guatemala and Mexico. In rural communities, large cities, and everywhere in between across Canada, Project "A" members are actively engaged in:

Emergency response. The project continues to build a network with the capacity to respond to acts of intimidation, violence or injustice committed against the refugee population, the returned refugees, or the international accompaniers;

Education. The project produces and distributes educational materials about the human rights situation in Guatemala and the refugees' return from Mexico;

Lobbying and advocacy. The network monitors and encourages fulfilment of the October 1992 agreement outlining the refugees' right to return. It encourages the Canadian government to play a supportive and productive role in the refugee return; and

Physical accompaniment. The project trains and prepares Canadians to physically accompany the refugees as they organize for return, make the trip home and resettle in their communities. All volunteer accompaniers are supported by a group or community in Canada which helps them to raise funds, prepare for their accompaniment stay, and develop follow-up plans. ◘

Beth Abbott works with Project Accompaniment in Halifax (3rd Floor, 3115 Veith Street Halifax, N.S. B3K 3G9).

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Power, Conflict and the Environment: Recent Literature

Barry S. Levitt

In the late twentieth century, we have finally come to realize that environmental issues are central to the forces that generate many Third World civil wars, ethnic conflicts and refugee flows. Yet, few detailed studies have been carried out to clarify the relationship between social and economic power, conflict and the environment.

One recent work which provides such detailed insight is *Environment Under Fire*, by Daniel Faber (1993). Faber, a Professor of Sociology at Northeastern University in Boston, was a founder of both the Environmental Project on Central America (EPOCA) and the international journal *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*. His latest writing effectively broadens the perception of the economic crisis and social conflict facing Central America today, to include both social and environmental aspects.

Faber emphasizes a historical perspective, in which colonialism is defined to include the colonization of nature. After the colonial period in Central America, U.S. hegemony and capitalist development each continued to facilitate the joint exploitation of natural resources and human beings. Faber characterizes the region as embodying a "functional dualism," in that a small but wealthy sector, in concert with multinational capital, benefits from the extractive and agro-export industries, which in turn depends upon an underdeveloped subsistence sector to provide an enormous "reserve army" of semi-proletariat labour.

Dualism, and the enormous power differential between social classes that it perpetuates, has allowed the development process to unload the environmental costs of production onto the politically and economically weak. Monocultures over extensive tracts of land reduces soil fertility, and changes rain and drainage patterns. Most importantly, large, mechanized farms dislocate labour to hillsides and marginal lands. Clearing the forest and farming these lands may lead to severe environmental damage, particularly through erosion of hillsides. Social conflict is widespread under these circumstances. Poor farmers who flee such a precarious existence are both "ecological refugees" and "social refugees." As the ecological basis for small and intermediate farms, and their diversified production are undermined, rural communities disintegrate, and large numbers of people are forced to move.

Faber focuses, in particular, on the cotton and beef industries, two sectors which are typical of the destructive export-oriented development of Central America. Cotton production has required the increasing use of powerful chemical pesticides, often with complete disregard for the health of agricultural workers and surrounding communities, as well as to the eventual consumers of these agricultural products. Similarly, cattle production is a major contributor to the appalling deforestation of Central America. This environmental degradation, coupled with the forced eviction of peasants to make room for cattle grazing lands, has contributed to the region's refugee problem.

Further exacerbating the plight of "ecological refugees" is the damage caused by civil war and the militarization of society. Faber vehemently denounces the role of the U.S. in causing and exacerbating military conflict in the region, and addresses the multiple social effects of these practices, such as rapid urbanization, social displacement, and the exploitation of women and child labour. As well, he conveys a sense of the damage to the physical environment caused by "scorched earth" military campaigns (e.g., Guatemala), large scale bombings involving the use of napalm and white phosphorous (e.g., El Salvador), strategic deforestation and forced resettlement. All of these have significant consequences in terms of human migration.

The author contrasts these practices with those of a regime which he believes placed a significant emphasis on environmental issues; the FSLN (Sandinista) government of Nicaragua, in power between 1979 and 1990. Faber admits the mistakes of the FSLN (e.g., early attempts at land reform which created large state farms and displaced existing communities), but focuses mostly on their environmental successes. These policies alleviated at least a part of the social dislocation caused by the revolutionary upheaval and the U.S.-backed Contras.

Faber concludes his book with an analysis of the relationship between U.S. prosperity (both historical and contemporary) and the "externalization" of the cost of environmental degradation arising from this prosperity onto Central America. He argues that economic globalization and liberalization in general, and structural adjustment programs in particular, are further exacerbating the environmental damage of the Central American region (and implicitly increasing the number of "environmental refugees"). As such, the issue of power within the international system must be central to an understanding of the crises faced by the peoples of Central America.

The value of Faber's analysis becomes even more apparent when compared to other recent writings on this topic. For example, the February 1993 issue of *Scientific American* featured an article entitled "Environmental Change and Violent Conflict," coauthored by T.F. Homer-Dixon and the other directors of the Project on Environmental Change and Acute Conflict,

Barry Levitt is a graduate student in the Department of Political Science, York University.

jointly sponsored by the University of Toronto and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The article begins with the premise that scarcity of resources is the root cause of many internal conflicts within Third World countries. Environmental degradation, population growth and unequal distribution of resources can exacerbate these scarcities, and violent conflict is often the result. Social upheaval and large-scale human migration are by-products of these conflicts.

While this article is easily accessible to most readers, it contains a number of simplifications that seem unjustified. First, the primary problem is identified as "scarcity," and unequal distribution of resources is seen as merely one aspect of this. There is a fundamental difference between natural scarcity, and poverty caused by highly unequal consumption patterns within and among societies. This distinction is not made. Second, resource scarcity and environmental degradation are portrayed mainly as causes of social conflict and human migration, and seldom depicted as outcomes of conflict and migration, which they often are. Third, the international dimension, specifically the historical and contemporary power differential among states and regions, is almost completely ignored.

By contrast, *Environment Under Fire* provides an excellent overview of the social, political and economic aspects of environmental degradation. Out of necessity, Faber's work does not address all the various sites of environmental problems, however, he illustrates the general trends and tendencies effectively, by using well selected areas of focus. ■

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Book Reviews: On Flight and Exile

W. George Lovell

Allan F. Burns, *Maya in Exile: Guatemalans in Florida.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Tables. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. xlvii, 208 pp. Paper. $14.95 (US). ISBN 1-56639-062-2.

Norita Vlach, *The Quetzal in Flight: Guatemalan Refugee Families in the United States.* Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992. Tables. Figures. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xxii, 175 pp. Cloth. $42.95 (US). ISBN 0-275-93979-0.

Civil war has raged in Guatemala, off and on, for the better part of three decades. Armed confrontation between government security forces and guerrilla insurgents was sporadic in the 1960s, lulled somewhat in the 1970s, and reached levels of horrific intensity in the 1980s. The statistics are chilling: some one hundred thousand killed, forty thousand "disappeared" (more than any country of Latin America), over two hundred thousand refugees in Mexico alone, and an estimated one million people displaced internally, out of a national population of between eight million and nine million, during the holocaust years of the early 1980s. Statistics, of course, afford only a remote, impersonal glimpse of a tragedy that continues to unfold. Violence in Guatemala is also responsible for the appearance of displaced Guatemalans on the contemporary American scene: thousands of Guatemalans, many of them Maya Indians, now live and work in Florida and in California, picking fruit and vegetables in the fields near Indiantown and Immokalee, cleaning houses, serving food and sewing garments in Los Angeles and in San Francisco. Accounting for the Guatemalan presence in two very different U.S. settings is the worthy goal of the recent books by Allan F. Burns and Norita Vlach.

Burns describes his book as "a mix of applied research and advocacy," one that "combines a traditional social science approach with a dialogic, interpretive style" (pp 19-20). A professor of anthropology and Latin American studies at the University of Florida, Burns focuses on how the Kanjobal Maya refugees have adapted to life far from their native Guatemala in aptly named Indiantown, Florida. Chapter One situates the Maya in cultural and historical context, outlining the deteriorating sequence of events that caused them to flee their homeland in the early 1980s. Chapter Two informs us that by the end of that decade, some fifteen to twenty thousand Mayas had taken up residence, for the most part illegally, throughout Florida; an estimated five thousand in Indiantown. Chapter Three examines aspects of Maya social life in Indiantown, with Burns revealing a vibrant and proud sense of community. Chapters Four and Five document the economic activities of Maya workers, charting their uneasy coexistence in and around Indiantown alongside other migrant workers, especially Mexicans and Haitians. In Chapter Six the characteristics of American Maya identity as opposed to Guatemalan Maya identity are explored, with Burns observing that differences are most likely to emerge in relation to residence, work, leadership, religion and communication. Chapter Seven provides Burns with a platform to demonstrate his expertise in the field of visual anthropology, for in addition to authoring texts on Maya life in exile, Burns has produced four video programs on the subject. His concluding chapter, "Always Maya," confirms what dozens of ethnographic studies argue, that the Maya are strategic innovators skilled in the art of making changes to preserve essentials.

W. George Lovell is a member of the Department of Geography, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

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Book Reviews: On Flight and Exile

W. George Lovell

Allan F. Burns, *Maya in Exile: Guatemalans in Florida*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Tables. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. xlvii, 208 pp. Paper. $14.95 (US). ISBN 1-56639-062-2.

Norita Vlach, *The Quetzal in Flight: Guatemalan Refugee Families in the United States*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1992. Tables. Figures. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xxii, 175 pp. Cloth. $42.95 (US). ISBN 0-275-93979-0.

Civil war has raged in Guatemala, off and on, for the better part of three decades. Armed confrontation between government security forces and guerrilla insurgents was sporadic in the 1960s, lulled somewhat in the 1970s, and reached levels of horrific intensity in the 1980s. The statistics are chilling: some one hundred thousand killed, forty thousand "disappeared" (more than any country of Latin America), over two hundred thousand refugees in Mexico alone, and an estimated one million people displaced internally, out of a national population of between eight million and nine million, during the holocaust years of the early 1980s. Statistics, of course, afford only a remote, impersonal glimpse of a tragedy that continues to unfold. Violence in Guatemala is also responsible for the appearance of displaced Guatemalans on the contemporary American scene: thousands of Guatemalans, many of them Maya Indians, now live and work in Florida and in California, picking fruit and vegetables in the fields near Indiantown and Immokalee, cleaning houses, serving food and sewing garments in Los Angeles and in San Francisco. Accounting for the Guatemalan presence in two very different U.S. settings is the worthy goal of the recent books by Allan F. Burns and Norita Vlach.

Burns describes his book as "a mix of applied research and advocacy," one that "combines a traditional social science approach with a dialogic, interpretive style" (pp 19-20). A professor of anthropology and Latin American studies at the University of Florida, Burns focuses on how the Kanjobal Maya refugees have adapted to life far from their native Guatemala in aptly named Indiantown, Florida. Chapter One situates the Maya in cultural and historical context, outlining the deteriorating sequence of events that caused them to flee their homeland in the early 1980s. Chapter Two informs us that by the end of that decade, some fifteen to twenty thousand Mayas had taken up residence, for the most part illegally, throughout Florida; an estimated five thousand in Indiantown. Chapter Three examines aspects of Maya social life in Indiantown, with Burns revealing a vibrant and proud sense of community. Chapters Four and Five document the economic activities of Maya workers, charting their uneasy coexistence in and around Indiantown alongside other migrant workers, especially Mexicans and Haitians. In Chapter Six the characteristics of American Maya identity as opposed to Guatemalan Maya identity are explored, with Burns observing that differences are most likely to emerge in relation to residence, work, leadership, religion and communication. Chapter Seven provides Burns with a platform to demonstrate his expertise in the field of visual anthropology, for in addition to authoring texts on Maya life in exile, Burns has produced four video programs on the subject. His concluding chapter, "Always Maya," confirms what dozens of ethnographic studies argue, that the Maya are strategic innovators skilled in the art of making changes to preserve essentials.

W. George Lovell is a member of the Department of Geography, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

A distinctive feature of Burns' writing style is to allow the protagonists to speak for themselves. Maya voices, among others, are heard throughout in the first person singular, which means that the reader also becomes a privileged listener. Much of what is narrated reverberates for some time, testimony to Burns' sensitive rapport with disparate individuals—the young and the old, male and female, the long-established and the newly arrived—with whom Burns easily enters into conversation.

The predominantly rural, agricultural occupations of Guatemalans in Indiantown are replaced in Norita Vlach's volume by the challenges of making ends meet while living in exile in the urban Bay Area of San Francisco. Vlach, who teaches social work at San José State University and is herself of Guatemalan lineage, states that her book

> has two objectives: (1) examination of motives for migration to the United States of Guatemalan families with teenagers and (2) exploration of the processes of psychological change and adaptation that take place within these families during the early period of resettlement (p. xv).

In the first chapter, Vlach presents a theoretical overview of migration literature, distinguishing between approaches categorized as "historical -structural" and "acculturational/ phenomenological" in nature. The second chapter, ninety pages in length and the core of the book, examines the case specifics of six different families, documenting Guatemalan migration to the United States with an eclectic, almost dizzying array of research strategies. Vlach sifts through the elaborate details of her fieldwork to furnish, in the final chapter, a conclusion which concisely integrates the general with the particular, and the theoretical with the empirical.

Vlach's talents are displayed at their best in Chapter Two. Here she combines the technical skills of a tireless social scientist with the empathy of an ethnographer who refuses to be detached from the tragic lot of the individuals being studied. With artistic economy and warm humanity, Vlach pares down the sad, painful stories of her subjects to capture, in a handful of words, what their disrupted lives existentially represent: conflict, adventure and death; success and sacrifice; control and freedom; assimilation and loss of identity; family duty, patriotism and obligation; solidarity, discipline and progress. Her text lends itself to several interpretive modes: it could be read just as easily in terms Oscar Lewis (1961) would label "culture of poverty," or in terms Nancy Farriss (1984) would consider "the collective enterprise of survival." And Vlach is just as disposed to derive meaning from one of her informant's dreams as to measure family characteristics by resorting to tests and questionnaires.

Burns and Vlach have added a crucial North American dimension to our understanding of the Guatemalan refugee situation. Along with Beatriz Manz (1988) and the late Myrna Mack (AVANCSO 1992), their work documents a Central American diaspora now so geographically diffuse as to register on the landscape here in Canada, thousands of miles from their original home (Wright 1993). The Guatemalans who live among us continue to do so not simply for reasons of economic opportunity but because of legitimate concerns for the safety of themselves and their families, should they ever return home. ■

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Book Review: On State Violence in Guatemala

Lisa Kowalchuk

Robert M. Carmack (ed.), *Harvest of Violence: The Maya Indians and the Guatemalan Crisis*. London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988. 334 pp.

Harvest of Violence documents the impact of Guatemalan state terror on that country's indigenous peoples during the 1980s. The explicit intention of the book was to dispel the gross misconceptions among U.S. policy makers and voters of the Reagan administration concerning the civil war in Guatemala. Six years after it was published, the book continues to provide an indispensable account of the social, cultural and economic repercussions of genocidal counterinsurgency in Guatemala.

The contributors to *Harvest of Violence*, mostly anthropologists, rightly claim a special credibility based on years and even decades of experience researching and living with the Maya Indians in Guatemala. They reveal a depth of knowledge and trust unattained by foreign journalists or the Guatemalan government and military officials upon whom U.S. policy makers relied for information. The authenticity of their grim accounts comes from the forceful intrusion of state violence into the authors' own lives. They witnessed deaths and disappearances of their indigenous informants and experienced mounting danger to themselves. The escalating violence and repression caught some by surprise. Robert Carmack recalls his sudden realization in the early 1980s "that many, perhaps most, of the... Indians and *ladinos* being killed in Guatemala were innocent." The counterinsurgency campaign was also destroying the material and cultural conditions of many Maya communities indirectly. It was inevitable that the authors' otherwise traditional ethnographic research would become dramatically reoriented and politicized.

Lisa Kowalchuk is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology, York University.

The book is organized according to the levels of violence experienced by indigenous communities—reflecting the Guatemalan army's "colour coding" of the central and western highlands according to the level of suspected guerrilla activity. The book documents the "red zones" of generalized violence, where the military's scorched earth policy wiped out entire communities in the early 1980s; the "pink" and "yellow zones" where violence was applied selectively against Mayan peasants; and the "green zones" of indirect violence. A fourth section deals with the experience of Indians forced to flee their places of origin, displaced both internally and across the border into Chiapas, Mexico.

The contributors to *Harvest of Violence* usually manage to marry an analytical focus with an informal language and largely narrative style that make their essays readily accessible to those outside their discipline. One of the analytically strongest pieces in the collection is Carol Smith's account of the economic and cultural devastation that counterinsurgency has wrought on a Mayan community removed from the worst of the army's direct violence. Smith captures the complexity of the long-standing economic interdependence of the Guatemalan indigenous communities, and the inextricability of their cultural and material vitality. In the community of Totonicapán, Smith demonstrates that the decline in regional demand for traditional clothing, now a dangerous marker of ethnic identity, is destroying a means of indigenous livelihood. The military's system of civil patrols has further sapped the income earning capacity of all adult males, and introduced suspicion and disharmony to a once solidary community.

The introductory and concluding chapters situate the case studies in the broader social, historical and political contexts. Among the misconceptions maintained by the Reagan administration which Carmack and Adams directly confront, was the belief that the indigenous peoples were accidental victims of violence. Their accounts clearly show that the indigenous peoples were deliberate targets of the Guatemalan government's counterinsurgency campaign. Given that the explicit objective *Harvest of Violence* is to promote a change in U.S. policy toward Guatemala, the one shortcoming of the work is its failure to delineate that policy, beyond a few unsystematic allusions. The assumption that even American readers will already be familiar with the history of U.S. military support to Guatemala is not necessarily a safe one. ■

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