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The Hour of God?
People in Guatemala Confronting Political Evangelicalism and Counterinsurgency (1976–1990)

Veronica Melander

UPPSALA 1999
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People in Guatemala Confronting Political Evangelicalism and Counterinsurgency (1976–1990)

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Printed edition of doctoral dissertation presented to the Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University, 1998

ABSTRACT


This dissertation is focused on one of many aspects of religion and politics in Guatemala in recent history (1976–1990). This period is characterized by unequal wealth distribution, ethnic divisions, civil war, and U.S. influence. It is a contemporary mission history examining missionary efforts directed from the United States, Guatemalan responses, and indigenous initiatives.

The problem concerns a movement within Protestant evangelicalism, which in this study is called Political Evangelicalism, and its relationship to the counterinsurgency war which the Guatemalan military waged against guerrillas, political opposition, and the Mayan majority. The problem centers on the following interrelated questions: How did Political Evangelicalism appear in Guatemala and how did it develop? How did agents of Political Evangelicalism act? What kind of discourse was employed to legitimize armed and structural violence? What was the relationship between Political Evangelicalism and counterinsurgency strategy?

Political Evangelicalism must be reflected through different actors and aspects of Guatemalan conflicts to be understood. Therefore, Political Evangelicalism is placed in the broader context of the Guatemalan situation and its relation to the United States. This is a chronological study describing the role and development of Political Evangelicalism on three levels: the relationship between the United States and Guatemala; Guatemala on the national level; and an in-depth study of the Ixil people. The focal point is on the Guatemalan national level. A wide array of empirical material is employed, including interviews, unpublished documents, official documents, booklets, articles, and so on.

Keywords: Guatemala, Ixil, Mission history, Counterinsurgency, Strategic hamlets, Efraín Ríos Montt, Evangelicalism, Political Evangelicalism, Fundamentalism, Dominion theology, Church growth

Veronica Melander, Department of Theology, Uppsala University, Box 1604, SE-751 46 Uppsala, Sweden.

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To Allan and Linnéa
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At the end of 1996, the Guatemalan peace accords, signed by the government and the united guerrilla front URNG, ended thirty-six years of civil war. The precipitating crisis had its origin in the ouster of a democratically elected government in a coup d'état supported by the CIA in 1954. In the war that followed, religious forces became inextricably involved, both in support of the status quo and in promotion of reformist and revolutionary changes—or in other words, in support of the accelerating exploitation and oppression of the people and the struggle for survival, respectively.

Maintaining that religious forces were directly involved on the government side of the Guatemalan counterinsurgency war should not be so controversial anymore, since the Guatemalan Truth Commission, which presented its results at the end of January, 1999, reached the same conclusion.

According to the Truth Commission, both churches and the CIA, among other actors, directly participated in the war in which about 200,000 Guatemalans were killed or disappeared. Of the human rights atrocities investigated by the commission, 93 percent are attributed to governmental military forces and three percent to guerrilla groups. There are no proof concerning the remaining four percent. The human rights violations peaked in 1982 and 1983, during the government of the evangelical dictator, General Efraín Ríos Montt, who is accused of genocide on Mayan Indian groups.

That the former counterinsurgency war still harvests its victims became obvious when Guatemalan bishop Msgr. Juan Gerardi was killed in April, 1998, after his presentation of the conclusions about the human rights abuses made by the REMHI project (Recuperation of the Memory of the History) initiated by the Guatemalan Roman Catholic Church. The REMHI report accused the Guatemalan military of being behind the overwhelming quantity of human rights abuses. While many circumstances point to military officers as agents behind the murder of Msgr. Gerardi, the government avoids investigation of the evidence.

The situation in Guatemala captured my interest in the mid-1980s, when groups within churches and popular organizations desperately tried to convince the world that the counterinsurgency war continued despite the democratization process. During my first visit to Central America in 1985, I learned
about the Ríos Montt government and about how religious forces were used for promoting U.S. and indigenous elite interests in Guatemala and other Central American states.

My curiosity was also promoted by the fact that Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s experienced a large influx of partly the same U.S. evangelical parochurch organizations as Central America. Naturally, the effects of those movements in Sweden informed my perspective on the U.S. evangelical influx to Guatemala.

The first proposal I made for my Ph.D. dissertation, when entering the postgraduate program at the Faculty of Theology in Uppsala, concerned the U.S. religious right and national security in Guatemala. Since then the perspective changed considerably, for example, into attributing a more important role for endogenous Guatemalan causes behind the growth of conservative evangelicalism in the country. Finally I opted for a focus on what I call “Political Evangelicalism” and the interaction between indigenous Guatemalan and U.S. forces in the development of Political Evangelicalism in Guatemala. I also decided to include a local case study on the Ixils, one of the Mayan groups most hard hit by the army’s violence. Coinciding with the counterinsurgency war, a large number of Ixils started to convert to evangelical Protestantism. This situation opens for questions about people and culture, survival strategies, and so on.

When starting to develop an objective for my Ph.D. I was not sure as to what area within religious studies I would choose for making my application to the post-graduate program. There were various possibilities. Finally I opted for mission studies, because I found it to be an interesting context for my study. In Uppsala, mission studies is located within the department of history of Christianity, which means that the framework basically is theories and methods from science of history.

I define my study as contemporary history and consequently I view my sources as sources in a historical sense, also when oral. They have to be examined in accord with the rules of source criticism. My use of sources and literature follows the criterias that we generally use within mission studies in Uppsala. This implies that in the dividing line between sources and literature, I consider the function of the text within my study, not the genre of the text itself. The study is marked by the conviction that a chronological framework, close to empirical findings—as well as a broad perspective, which includes actors on different levels—can give new contributions to the study of religion and politics generally.

The present volume is a slightly revised edition of the Ph.D. dissertation, defended at the Faculty of Theology in Uppsala on May 22, 1998. The first part of the title, *The Hour of God?*, hints at the New Testament term *kairos*, which is an essential clue for understanding how different Christian groups in Guatemala interpreted the Christian mission and how this related to politics. *Kairos* means a special, crucial time in history, when opportunities are laid
bare, and there is an openness for change. *Kairos* is a proper time, according to that understanding of history, when God’s designs are said to be at stake and the humans are welcomed to choose their future paths. It is a time to choose living by the Grace of God and turning away from sin. Christians in Guatemala had different interpretations of the meaning of this conversion. It could mean taking a stand against oppression in favor of socio-economic and political change, or submitting to the Guatemalan army and the United States. The title of the study thus hints at a focal point where Christianity crossed into the arena of politics in the Guatemalan conflict.

The writing of this dissertation has been supported in various ways. I wish to express my profound gratitude to various persons, especially to Sigbert Axelson who has given most encouraging scholarly and moral support. Without his help, I would probably not have been able to bring this stimulating but also demanding project to an end. Carl F. Hallencréutz has continued to give valuable comments on the manuscript also after his retirement. Ove Gustafsson and Ulf Carmesund have been stimulating interlocutors in our common efforts to analyze influences from the New Religious Political Right in different parts of the world. Horacio de Marsilio and Björn Hagelin read most of the manuscript and have given valuable remarks. Alf Tergel was involved in a later stage in his new capacity as Professor of mission studies and also commented on the manuscript. Scott Erickson and Margaret Knipe helped me to correct the English language. This project could not have been fulfilled without the help of all Guatemalans whom I interviewed and others who helped me with contacts and analysis of the situation. Because of the security situation in Guatemala I withhold the names. I also received considerable help from U.S. colleagues studying the New Religious Political Right in the United States.

Finally I wish to thank Erik Åsard for relevant critique as faculty opponent at my defense, the seminary of mission studies for useful comments, colleagues from the Latin American solidarity movements for being interlocutors during the years, friends and family for patience. My gratitude is also expressed to the organizations and foundations that financially supported my on-site research in Guatemala: Folke Bernadotte’s Memorial Fund, Tage Erlander’s Memorial Fund, Lars Hiertha’s Memorial Fund, Gustaf Leander Foundation, Jonas Nordenson’s Memorial Fund, Church of Sweden Mission, and the Sykar Foundation.

Rio de Janeiro, April 1999

*Veronica Melander*
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Relevance of the Study

It is a Sunday afternoon of the early 1990s in the small town of Santa Maria Nebaj in the highlands of Guatemala. A quiet lull makes its appearance after the tumult of the morning's market. But suddenly the silence is broken. Fast and rhythmic music is rumbling from a loud-speaker. Soon there is competition. People speaking in tongues, sermons, and songs are resounding through loud-speakers from different evangelical churches around the town. By and by also the bells of the Catholic Church begin to resonate, but are easily swamped by the loud-speakers. In Nebaj the churches are located only a stone's throw from each other. I pass the one crowded hall after the other. It is easy to conclude that more inhabitants of Nebaj spend their afternoon in evangelical services than in the Catholic Mass.

Only a few years earlier, not many residents of Nebaj had been evangelicals, and a large part of the population had supported the guerrilla movement Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, EGP, in the struggle against the Guatemalan army. The Guatemalan army forced the Catholic Church from the area, occupied the church buildings, burnt most of the villages, and killed the people who did not manage to take refuge. It was then that the evangelical churches started to grow in this area of the Guatemalan highlands, which is inhabited by the Ixil people.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Protestant growth in Guatemala was more dramatic than in any other Latin American country. In 1970, only a few percent of the population was Protestant, while the number rose to about 25–

1 The term "evangelical" is usually applied to Protestant revival movements as from the eighteenth century Methodist revival. What evangelical movements have in common is the emphasis on personal conversion and to become born again. As from the increased conflicts concerning conservatism and liberalism within Protestantism from the 1960s and 1970s, a distinction has been made between ecumenicals lining up with the World Council of Churches and the evangelicals, supporting the more conservative Lausanne movement. In this study "evangelical" should be seen as a translation of the Spanish evangélico, when applied to Guatemalans. In Latin America all Protestants, sometimes with exception of Lutherans and Episcopalians, call themselves evangélicos. The conflict that in the English (or Swedish) language has been expressed as a conflict between "ecumenicals" and "evangelicals" has been very tense in Latin America, but the term evangélico is not an expression signifying a taking of stand in this conflict. It is more inclusive.
30 percent in 1990. While the Catholic Church denounced the competition as part of a strategy from the United States, some U.S. missionaries interpreted it as a “God’s hour for Guatemala.” According to their view, Guatemala as a nation would be blessed when at least half of the population had turned to God, by converting to the evangelical faith.

The evangelical movement has grown within all social segments of Guatemala. The conservative evangelical tendency has been dominant. The same tendency is obvious in many other Latin American countries, even if Guatemala has been frequently singled out as a special case, because of the conservatism of the evangelical movement and its involvement in politics. Because of the important role of religion in the country, this issue turned out to be among the most delicate and high-ranking political questions during the conflicts of the 1980s.

A study about evangelicalism and politics would be interesting to conduct in all Latin American countries. There are two reasons why such a study is especially relevant to Guatemala, however. First, about 60 percent of the population is indigenous Mayan. Consequently the Guatemalan conflicts have been more complex than in the other Central American countries where indigenous populations have been minorities. The Maya religion in Guatemala goes far beyond what used to be called “Folk Catholicism.” On the religious level the country thus is a scene for a triangle drama with the Maya religion, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

Secondly, the short military dictatorship of the evangelical General Efraín Ríos Montt, as well as the democratically-elected evangelical President Jorge Serrano Elías, have highlighted the role of evangelicalism in Guatemalan politics. Ríos Montt was the first Protestant president in Guatemala, coming to power through a coup d’état. During his time in power from March 1982 to August 1983, he preached about conversion to God and moral strengthening. During Ríos Montt’s short stay in power, the government waged a counterinsurgency war in the countryside. The death toll was approximately 16,000 people, most of whom were Mayas.

Ríos Montt was counseled by the elders in his church, Verbo Christian Ministries, usually known as the Verbo Church. This church—like some other churches and religious organizations in Guatemala and the United States, supported by the Reagan administration and the New Religious Political Right—tried to convince the international opinion that the situation in Guatemala drastically improved during the time of Ríos Montt. However, human rights organizations, media in the Western world, and many church organizations, were not swayed. There was a stream of refugees from Guatemala to Mexico. The refugees told about massacred villages and an immense number of human rights abuses.

On August 8, 1983, Ríos Montt was ousted by the army in a palace coup. According to the army, he had threatened the secular state by disregarding the principle of separation of church and state. He had given conservative evan-
gelical interest groups too much influence in the shaping of the politics of the Guatemalan government. It must be noted that Guatemala officially is a secular state since the liberal reforms of 1871.

Ríos Montt was twice prevented from running for the presidency (1990 and 1995), since the Guatemalan constitution from 1985 did not allow perpetrators of a coup d'état to run for presidency. In the election of 1990, another evangelical, Jorge Serrano Elías, won the contest. He was ousted in 1993 when he tried to make a "self coup" of the same kind as President Fujimori had done the year before in Peru. In short, contemporary history illustrates an intricate interaction of counterinsurgency and evangelicalism.

The Objective

The purpose of this investigation is to study the relation between evangelicalism and counterinsurgency in Guatemala. The reason why it is interesting to explore the interactions of religion to counterinsurgency is because the latter relates to the basic political conflicts in the country. Both subtle piety and brutal violence are at stake. Counterinsurgency is a military strategy that has been refined mainly by France and the United States during the 1940s and 1950s to fight resistance movements in the Third World. Counterinsurgency is a strategy aimed at keeping the status quo in a situation when a regime or political system lacks legitimacy and is confronted not only with armed opposition, but principally by an extensive political opposition. In a situation like this fighting the opposition only by regular military means and repression are not successful. Instead a wide array of political, ideological, cultural and psychological measures must be taken to complement the military means in an effort to generate an appearance of public consent. Thus, counterinsurgency strategy is drawn on an ancient insight that even a repressive regime needs to create an aura of legitimacy. In reality, of course, this is not political legitimacy but "popular consent" through violence, humiliation and death. In conclusion, counterinsurgency dissolves a traditional distinction between what belongs to the military and the civilian sphere, respectively.

The relation between religion and counterinsurgency could in principle be studied in many different ways. One could for instance study how army chaplains are used to strengthen the psychological capabilities of the armed forces, or how religious organizations are used for intelligence purposes. These two areas are consciously left outside this study, however. One reason is that is was impossible because of the political situation to study these matters during the years I did field work in Guatemala. The most important reason, however, is that these aspects are present in all kinds of wars. I wanted to focus on the special characteristics of counterinsurgency war that distinguish it from other kinds of wars, namely the relatively higher importance of the political and ideological dimension.
This study can obviously not deal with all evangelicals. Instead I focus on what I call "Political Evangelicalism." The term rose from an effort to differentiate among the various evangelical groups. I looked for a term that could fill some of the same purposes as "fundamentalism," "anti-secularism," "anti-modernism," "integrism," and so on. At the same time I wanted a more narrow and clear definition of evangelical movements in Guatemala which are proponents of political views explicitly based on distinct expressions of religious values. This would be the only criteria. I did not want to discuss the different interpretations of the Bible, localization on the political right-wing left-wing scale, and so on, as a part of the definition of the term.

Within Political Evangelicalism I intend to capture an expression of evangelicalism as applied to the implementation of religious principles in society. At one end of a scale are evangelical movements with an explicit evangelical or Christian political program. At the other end are evangelical movements without an explicit political agenda, but that want to create a mass base for evangelical politics through the promotion of evangelical growth in a country. The term thus includes the New Religious Political Right in the United States, but is broader. It also includes U.S. missionary movements that may be more liberal in their home country, but act differently abroad, when confronting a majority of non-Protestants and a state that is not influenced by Protestant values. To define some movements as Political Evangelicalism is not to suggest that others do not play a political role. It is just that a political purpose is explicitly stated within Political Evangelicalism.

The problem concerns Political Evangelicalism and its relationship to counterinsurgency in Guatemala. It centers on the following interrelated questions: How did Political Evangelicalism appear in Guatemala and how did it develop? How did agents of Political Evangelicalism act? What kind of language was employed to legitimize armed and structural violence? What was the relationship between Political Evangelicalism and counterinsurgency strategy?

The organizations in focus are: First, those that have been close to the evangelical presidents/presidential candidates, including the Verbo Church, where Ríos Montt is a member, and Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network; second, what I call the Frontier Mission Movement, above all expressed in the work of Overseas Crusades in Guatemala.

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2 The term "political" has been used before in combination with, for instance, Islam and Hinduism. The main inspiration to the term comes from Eva Hellman's use of the term "political Hinduism," even if I define Political Evangelicalism a little bit different. Eva Hellman defines within political Hinduism movements that have "formulated political goals for the protection of the Hindus and Hinduism." The different movements within political Hinduism are seen along a scale with promotion of Hindu interests at one end and implementation of Hindu principles in society at the other end. E. Hellman 1993:10.
The Scholarly Discussion on Evangelicalism in Latin America

On the Issue of Fundamentalism

There exists no direct predecessor to this study, while many studies deal with related issues. Therefore the following review on previous research necessarily must be highly selective, and will only mention some of the problems that recent research has been preoccupied with. A first area of research that concerns this study is the efforts made to analyze the global emergence of politically aggressive, militant, but not necessarily armed, religious movements that challenge the secular state or secularism as an ideology. As is well-known, the term "fundamentalism" frequently has been used by both researchers and journalists in descriptions and analyses of this phenomenon. "Fundamentalism" has been removed from its original context, the fundamentalist-liberal controversy within North American Protestantism, to be applied to movements in other religious traditions that seem to demonstrate similarities.

In Catholic countries the corresponding term "integrism" or "integralism," pointing to the conservative reaction against modernism within the Catholic Church, sometimes also is used for comparative purposes. An example is the book by Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God. The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in the Modern World*, in which integrist movements within Judaism, Islam and Christianity are compared. These kinds of studies do not necessarily focus on Latin America, but are relevant for the discussion of the rise of Latin American evangelicalism.

The most comprehensive studies on what is called "fundamentalism" have been made by the Chicago fundamentalist project, directed by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby. The results have been published in a long array of books and articles, including six volumes containing case studies from different religions around the world, which are compared and analyzed. Evangelicalism in Latin America, especially in Guatemala, is included as well as Christian fundamentalism in the United States.4

The Chicago fundamentalist project, as expressed in the six volume series, has a broad purpose and includes the whole socio-economic and cultural arena. The study deals with "modern religious fundamentalism," which is defined as resistance against modernity. It is emphasized that in spite of this fact the movements studied are themselves modern movements. They do not resist parts of modernity that are instrumental to their own purposes, like technology and mass media. The project also includes what are called "fundamentalist-like" movements and leaves the issue of definition rather open to the different authors of the case studies.

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3 G. Kepel 1993.
In the first Chicago project Latin American case study, Pablo Deiros investigates the fundamentalist impulse in both indigenous churches and in the ones planted by foreign missions. This impulse influences also some churches that otherwise might be called evangelical or Pentecostal. What characterizes the fundamentalist impulse is its legalistic morality, “a fervid and exclusionary emotionalism,” and sympathy for the political right. According to Deiros, Latin American fundamentalism is a product both of North American missionaries and indigenous forces.

The Latin American case studies in the Chicago project demonstrate widely different views on the nature of fundamentalism, and sometimes the term is not even mentioned. In the concluding chapters of the fifth volume, in which Guatemalan fundamentalism is compared with fundamentalist movements in other parts of the world, the Guatemalan phenomenon indiscriminately is called sometimes “Pentecostal,” and sometimes “Protestant.” This rather loosely defined entity is compared with, for instance, the Algerian FIS, Gaza Hamas, Gush Emunim, equivalents within Hinduism, and so on, which are empirically recognizable entities. The comparisons illustrate the problems involved with the use of the term “fundamentalism” on the international level, not least when Latin America is involved. This fact is also discussed by some of the authors involved in the Chicago project.

One of them is Mark Juergensmeyer, who discusses problems concerning “antifundamentalism,” a fear of fundamentalism, which in some cases have resulted in the same kind of human rights violations as fundamentalism. Juergensmeyer maintains that it is possible to use the term “fundamentalism” in an academic context, but is disturbed by the pejorative resonance and thinks that it is problematic to use it in a non-Western context. In the monograph *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* Juergensmeyer has chosen a different point of departure and talks about “religious nationalism” versus “secular nationalism.” He points out that secular nations also can demonstrate strong restrictions concerning freedom of expression, the same way as frequently connected with religious nationalism. This book does not include any case study on Latin America, however.

Jay Harris has, from a Jewish perspective, criticized the extended use of the term “fundamentalism” in a noteworthy article in another comparative fundamentalist study. One problem with the term is that it is usually used as a label for movements that are against “modernity,” a largely meaningless construct in his view. When “fundamentalism” is discussed, “modernity” usually implies everything that is good in society seen from a secular North American pers-

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6 P.A. Deiros 1991. The other Latin American case studies included in the Chicago fundamentalist project are: J.E. Maldonado 1993; S. Rose and Q. Schultze 1993; D. Stoll 1994; and D.H. Levine 1995. All of them focus on Protestantism, except the last one, who also includes Catholicism.
7 M. Juergensmeyer 1995.
8 M. Juergensmeyer 1993.
spective. Harris also points out that resistance against modernity in fundamentalist studies frequently is connected to anti-pluralism, contrary to the fact that the emergence of modernity in Europe was not connected to pluralism. His criticism is well argued.

Also in the volume *Questioning the Secular State. The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics*, edited by David Westerlund, the problems with the term “fundamentalism,” when applied to supposed resistance movements against modernity, are discussed. The movements that usually are included in “fundamentalism” are not against modernity as such, but secular modernity or modernism. Consequently the term “anti-secularism” is used in this volume as a preferred alternative. In the included case study on Guatemala, Virginia Garrard-Burnett interprets the growing influence of both evangelicalism and Catholicism in Guatemala within a framework of resacralization.

In 1993, an issue of the Spanish Jesuit periodical *Estudios Eclesiasticos* was dedicated to a comparative study on “fundamentalism,” including Islam, Judaism, Catholicism and Protestantism. Also here “fundamentalism” is seen as resistance against modernity, but the approach is more inclusive, also discussing “fundamentalism” as a psychological attitude, which is not necessarily religious. The problems involved with the term fundamentalism is part of the background that led me to search for the term Political Evangelicalism. When applied in this dissertation fundamentalism is used in the traditional North American sense.

**On Protestantism and Social Change in Latin America**

There seems to be an inherent contradiction in research about the growth of evangelicalism in Latin America. On the one hand, evangelicalism is seen as a “fundamentalist” or “fundamentalist-like” movement, implying resistance against modernity as is the case in the Chicago project. On the other hand evangelicalism is seen as a social reform movement struggling for modernity,

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9 J.M. Harris 1994.
10 D. Westerlund, ed. 1996.
11 V. Garrard-Burnett 1996.
13 Ibid.
14 This means that fundamentalism is seen as one of the major wings inside the evangelical movement, in which the other major wing consists of Pentecostals and charismatics. This should not necessarily be seen as a stand against other more inclusive applications of fundamentalism, only that the traditional sense fit better with my purposes. Even if the border lines are blurred, in my view it is still necessary to distinguish between non-charismatic fundamentalists on one hand and charismatic movements on the other hand.

In Guatemala most of the groups on both sides share a common dispensationalist heritage. However, they have different ways to relate to the Bible and to their own faith. Fundamentalism is an “intellectual” tradition in its own way. The written word, and to believe in pure doctrine, is important. The charismatic movements and churches on the other hand emphasize the emotional dimension and the personal relationship to God. They are not limited to pure Biblical doctrine, but their world is inhabited by revelations and prophesies in addition to the Bible.
implying pluralism and democracy, against the Catholic monopolies that have counteracted the benefits of modern society. The apparent contradiction is sometimes resolved by the application of an interpretation of Weberian theory, implying that the socio-economic and cultural sphere be separated from the political sphere.

The most well-known case of such an application is the monograph by David Martin: *Tongues of Fire. The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America.* According to Martin, one should not be confused by the political conservatism of evangelicals, and their support for right-wing dictators like Ríos Montt in Guatemala and Pinochet in Chile. They may be conservative politically but play a more long-term progressive role on the socio-economic and cultural level, helping to bring about capitalism and democracy. Martin expects Pentecostalism in Latin America to be a third Protestant reformation, bringing about the same kinds of changes as the sixteenth century reformation in Europe and the eighteenth century Methodist revival in England. This is due to a Protestant cultural logic, which among other things brings about a peaceful psyche in contrast to the Latin ideals of male machismo and militarism. Martin puts his argument into a theory of secularization implying that the more peaceful North American pattern of secularization crosses the more violent Latin pattern, which is characterized by strong antagonism between religion and secularism. The result may be that the violent tendencies in Latin America can be neutralized, he maintains.¹⁶

Thus, evangelicalism in Latin America in recent research has been interpreted both as modernist and anti-modernist, as part of a process of secularization or resacralization. One explanation could be that different researchers deal with different evangelical movements. It is noteworthy, however, that what most have in mind is what they call “Pentecostalism.” Another explanation is the different meanings of “modernism,” “modernity,” and “modernization,” and that they are applied in different ways.

In Latin America “modernity” and “modernization” do not necessarily have the same positive resonance as in Europe and North America, because the blessings that they are supposed to bestow have been conspicuous by their absence. Neither is pluralism and democracy seen as necessary consequences of secularism. Many Latin Americans connect modernization with U.S. influence and dependency capitalism, which has caused socio-economic and political crises. As is well-known, one of the important critiques expressed by liberation theologians against European and North American theology has been on the adjustment of the theology to what is supposed to be the “modern” human being, with all its implications.

Starting in a long Catholic tradition of using Weber in the reversed way, Brazilian sociologist Michael Löwy claims a negative elective affinity between

¹⁵ D. Martin 1990.
¹⁶ Ibid. His theory of secularization is presented in D. Martin 1978.
Catholicism and capitalism. The negative affinity to capitalism embodied in liberation Christianity is related to its ability to criticize modernity and address the problems of dependency capitalism and massive poverty in Latin America, according to Löwy.¹⁷

Löwy maintains that evangelicalism on the other hand, can encourage the support of political forces committed to the capitalist ethos of individual self-promotion. He refers to Chilean sociologist Claudio Véliz, who has pointed out that by converting to evangelicalism people join a religion that seems to be closely related to a culture of industrial capitalism. This attracts people, because this culture seems to be able to bring prosperity. Löwy concludes that this does not imply that it is religion by itself that promotes a capitalist development. Most Latin American Pentecostals have few possibilities of upward mobility, in his view.¹⁸

According to Guillermo Cook, the socio-economic crisis in Latin America undermines the Protestant work ethic. Working-class Protestants as well as peasant Protestants meet growing difficulties to survive economically. Also lower middle-class Protestants have become impoverished in increasing numbers. These developments put them in the same precarious situation as their Catholic neighbors. In New Face of the Church in Latin America, edited by Cook, it is demonstrated that the situation of Latin American evangelicals, and their responses to the socio-economic crisis, have many similarities with the reactions of the Catholics.¹⁹

Researchers such as Cecilia Loreto Mariz, Maria Das Dores Campo Machado, and Carol Ann Drogus, have discovered both similarities and differences between Pentecostal movements and the Catholic base communities in Brazil. In spite of their different ideologies, the long-term social and political effects of the ideologies may not be so different, due to the fact that both foster self-esteem, leadership skills, literacy, provide support networks, and so on. Both movements empower women, but in different ways. While the Catholic base communities focus on women's access to public life, the Pentecostal movements focus on domestication of the men, encouraging them to turn away from vices like alcohol, and assume their family responsibilities. Both religious movements provide a middle road for the emancipation of women, in between Western feminism and traditional Latin American gender roles.²⁰

Harvey Cox sees a struggle between two tendencies within the Pentecostal movement in Latin America and in the world generally. He calls them "fundamentalism" and "experimentalism," the former based on doctrine and the

¹⁷ M. Löwy 1996.
¹⁸ Ibid. Claudio Véliz does not seem to share the views of Löwy concerning modernity and dependency capitalism. See for example C. Véliz 1994.
²⁰ See for example C. Mariz 1994; C.L. Mariz and M. Das Dores Campo Machado 1997; and C.A. Drogus 1997. See also E. Brusco 1996, about how conversion to Protestantism can be a conversion from machismo, by getting the men to stop drinking alcohol and save their money for the family.
latter one on experience. The Catholic Basic Christian Communities are also on the side of experimentalism. Thereby he emphasizes similarities between the Catholic base communities and Pentecostalism in Latin America. The principal dividing line is not between different Christian confessions. 21

Endogenous or Exogenous Causes to Protestant Growth

Another theme to introduce is the question of whether the rapid growth of Latin American Protestantism is a result of endogenous or exogenous causes. Recent research emphasizes that evangelical growth in Latin America must be explained by endogenous factors. Scholars do not agree, however, on the extent of U.S. influence in shaping evangelicalism, nor on its consequences.

The Ph.D. dissertation by Virginia Garrard-Burnett from 1986 demonstrated that Protestantism in Guatemala started to grow only when it had begun to take on indigenous Guatemalan characteristics. 22 Before the 1960s, Protestantism did not find a foothold within larger sectors of the Guatemalan population, because the North American missionaries presented it intertwined with North American culture. It was not until Protestantism was released from this connection and was presented as an indigenous alternative by indigenous pastors that it started to grow among larger sectors in the society.

Other studies on Protestantism or evangelicalism in Guatemala have demonstrated the relation between the Maya culture and the faith of evangelical Mayas. An example is the investigations made by David G. Scotchmer, who has used the theory by Clifford Geertz to interpret conversion to Protestantism in the Mayan group Mam as a cultural revitalization. 23 According to Scotchmer, the highland Mayas of Guatemala confront three dilemmas: the struggle to believe in a situation of religious change, the struggle to understand in a situation of cultural pluralism, and the struggle to survive when landless and subject to political oppression and ethnic division. By studying important religious symbols within Mam Protestantism (both Presbyterian and Pentecostal) from the context of the believers, Scotchmer concludes that Maya Protestantism provides its believers with a possibility to reconstruct a meaningful worldview and working ethos in a situation characterized by structures and constraints beyond their control. 24

The study from CSUCA: Protestantismos y Procesos Sociales en Centroamérica emphasizes the endogenous variable behind Protestant growth in Central America and maintains that the exogenous variable frequently has been overemphasized. 25 The same orientation is visible in Algo más que Opio. Una lectura antropológica del pentecostalismo latinoamericano y caribeño, which at-

23 D.G. Scotchmer 1991; see also for example D.G. Scotchmer 1993.
24 Ibid.
tempts to approach Pentecostalism with more balance and respect than those viewing it as a technique for political manipulation.26

While the above studies do not deny influences from the United States, the introduction to the compilation of articles in *Coming of Age. Protestantism in Contemporary Latin America* is more polemic against what is called “the political explanation,” implying cultural manipulation by foreign missionaries and the U.S. religious right.27 This explanation was ranked last in a list of probable explanations to Protestant growth, and it was also maintained that this is an explanation attractive to the political left.28

In another recent compilation of articles, Edward Cleary, himself a Catholic, acknowledges that there is a heavy-handed North American influence among some Protestant movements in Latin America, but not among those major Pentecostal groups discussed in the compilation.29 Cleary points out that Catholics who criticize North American funding of Protestants in Latin America seldom mention the heavy financing the Catholic Church in Latin America has received from abroad.30

In the monograph *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?,* David Stoll dedicates a large part of his study to the work of the U.S. religious right in Latin America.31 He argues that while the work of these organizations means a politicizing, which also threatens the Latin American evangelicals themselves, they are not the cause of evangelical growth. Stoll instead finds the cause in the short comings of the Catholic Church, not least of all the theology of liberation, in addressing the problems of the poor. Liberation theology represents an intellectual opposition culture with a broad agenda for social reform. Poor people who turn to Pentecostal churches define their needs differently, however, and they are attracted to Pentecostalism because these churches have been successful in improving the life situation of many of their members. Stoll concludes that the social and political role of Latin American evangelicalism is not easily predictable, but has a potential to be a base for social reformation. At the same time Stoll wants to point to the dangers when evangelicals let themselves be manipulated by the government of the United States.32

In his *Historia del Protestantismo en América Latina,* Jean-Pierre Bastian weighs both endogenous and exogenous variables. According to Bastian, Protestantism has experienced a rapid growth and splintering since the end of the 1950s, and has at the same time lost its liberal civic and democratic cultural

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27 D. R. Miller, ed. 1994. The book is a result of a research conference on Protestantism in Latin America. The explanations for Protestant growth in the introduction is a summary of the address made by Sheldon Annis.
28 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 D. Stoll 1990.
32 Ibid. The view that Protestantism may promote a social reformation is also given in V. Garrard-Burnett and D. Stoll, ed. 1993.
origins. Protestantism has been Latin Americanized, implying that it is a part of the popular corporate culture. This explains the political behavior of Protestants as clients to authoritarian regimes.33

Bastian thus follows the line from Christian Lalive D’Epinay’s classic from the 1960s on Chilean Pentecostalism, Haven of the Masses. A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile.34 In this study, the author maintains that urban Pentecostalism reproduces the patron-client relations from the countryside, implying an hierarchic structure of the congregation. The other classic from the 1960s, usually mentioned as a counterpart to Lalive D’Epinay, is Emilio Willems’ Follower’s of the New Faith. Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile. Willems interprets Pentecostalism as a social protest related to the problems of modernization.

Timothy Steigenga has made a noteworthy contribution analyzing Protestantism, social and political control in Guatemala. He uses the theoretical framework by Joel. S. Migdal concerning weak states and strong societies in the Third World. According to Steigenga, conversion to Protestantism in Guatemala is an alternative survival strategy, and as such it has been useful for the state in its efforts to increase social control and strengthen state autonomy from strong societal actors, such as the Catholic Church. Because Protestant churches were able to provide a survival strategy in the conflict zones, and at the same time frequently were apolitical and anticommunist, Protestantism was especially attractive to use as a method for the state to expand its social control.36

As examples of different kinds of studies that focus mainly on U.S. influence on Latin American Protestantism, the following can be mentioned. José Marin Gonzales has studied the work of the missionary agency Summer Institute of Linguistics in Peru. This organization has been a part of the Peruvian internal colonization of the Amazon region, implying a development strategy evolved in the name of national integration with the aim to control the population economically, socially, politically, and culturally.37

Exporting the American Gospel. Global Christian Fundamentalism examines the spread of Christian fundamentalism around the world as a cultural influence exported from the United States.38 The authors argue, in explicit contradiction to David Martin, that global Christian fundamentalism contains Protestant influences that have encouraged authoritarianism, cultural intolerance, and identification of U.S. interests with God’s interests. The chapter on Guatemala discusses both Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism. It argues that the same economic factors that make Central America dependent on North

33 J. Bastian 1990.
34 C. Lalive D’Epinay 1969.
35 E. Willems 1967.
American television, make the evangelicals in Guatemala dependent on the media production by North American evangelicals.\textsuperscript{39}

I have mentioned this scholarly discussion on evangelicalism in Latin America to make it clear that this dissertation has its own features and cannot be directly related to previous research. At the same time the previous research serves as an important background and demonstrates that it is not appropriate, or possible, to make generalizations about the political and socio-economic role of Latin American evangelicalism.

Methodological Considerations

Points of Departure

In my view, the study of endogenous factors behind the growth of evangelicalism in Latin America is an important and relevant scholarly concern. These kinds of studies put the people involved, usually the poor, at a center stage and demonstrate how conversion to evangelicalism can be a highly relevant response to a socio-economic and political development that severely threatens their existence. This research also shows the enormous creativity and ability of poor people to reshape their "sacred canopy" to fit with their own purposes.

Still, in my view, endogenous variables have been overemphasized in recent research about evangelicalism in Latin America. This is especially problematic when it comes to their role in politics. The socio-economic situation in Latin America, especially in Central America and Guatemala, cannot be isolated from the United States and from the international economic system. Neither can politics and religion be severed, which both are related to socio-economic developments. This means that religion and politics must be put into a broader context, counting with the interplay between local history and world system—or if one wants, the forces of globalization. An actor's perspective must be complemented by a system perspective.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. Concerning the terms "neo-Pentecostal" and "charismatic": Sometimes I use the term "charismatic" to include all charismatic groups in the real sense of the word, in contradiction to non-charismatic. In general, however, "charismatic" is applied to movements within the Catholic Church and the Protestant mainstream churches with origins in the charismatic renewal of the 1960s. It is possible to use also "neo-Pentecostal" in this sense, but I reserve this term for new church establishments; that is, when charismatic movements have gone so far as to break away from the old churches to establish new ones. These churches organize themselves in what both they themselves and researchers have called "independent churches," in contradistinction to denominations. In practice this distinction is not always obvious. Independent churches frequently turn out to not be independent at all, in the real sense of the word. In this context, however, independent is used to describe a kind of church organization, where there in theory or in a juridical sense is no authority above the local congregation. This is the Pentecostal way of church organizing. However, in relation to recent established independent churches, old Pentecostal churches, like Assemblies of God or Full Gospel Church of God, look more like denominations.
In addition, when it comes to Guatemala, religion must be understood in relation to counterinsurgency, which has involved the whole society and the state in Guatemala, together with the state, political society, and parts of civil society in the United States. Thus, religion, regardless of the form, was related to the counterinsurgency endeavor in Guatemala to its detriment or benefit.

To understand Political Evangelicalism it must be reflected through different actors and aspects of the Guatemalan conflict. It is not until actions and language of Political Evangelicalism are seen in relation to other actors, including other evangelicals, that it becomes possible to see the political role of Political Evangelicalism. Therefore I have placed it into a broad perspective on the situation in Guatemala and its relation to the United States.

I have opted for a chronological framework as the best way to present the analysis. This way it is possible to see changes over time. The study can thus be seen as a “contemporary history.” It deals with political and religious events in recent times, but from the assumption that they are related to a more long-term historical perspective concerning the people and their physical environment, the character of the Guatemalan nation-state, and socio-economic structures.

The demarcations of time in the study are 1976 and 1990. The year 1976 marks the devastating Guatemalan earthquake, which resulted in an increased influx of foreign organizations, including religious ones, to help in the reconstruction work, and a resulting Protestant growth. The year 1990 marks the end of the Christian Democratic government of Vinicio Cerezo, who in January 1991 handed over the power to the first elected Protestant president in Guatemala. On the international scene it marks the end of the Cold War.

The study is made on three levels: the United States in relation to Guatemala; Guatemala on the national level; and a local study on the Ixil area. The focal point is on the Guatemalan national level. This allows for the study of the interactions between Political Evangelicalism and counterinsurgency on different levels. The Ixil area is one of the regions in Guatemala hardest hit by the war. At this local level, traditional military means are dominant in counterinsurgency. On higher levels the role of the political-ideological dimension increases, while military means decrease.

There is an additional reason to include a local case study. There is a tendency to exclude the Mayan majority’s perspectives when politics and religion are discussed on a general Guatemalan level, just as these have been excluded from national life. There were two possibilities to place the local study in the dissertation. It could be made as a separate section, coming after the chapters dealing with the general situation, or it could be incorporated as a parallel description following the same time periods as the other chapters. I opted for the second possibility. Thus, the events in the Ixil area directly reflect the general Guatemalan situation during every period of time.
The Field Work and the Material

The field work in Guatemala was carried out during four visits to the country between 1988 and 1994. Each visit lasted between three and four months. The first time I had only vague ideas about my future dissertation and concentrated mainly on getting to know the country and the different religious traditions. Then I returned in 1991, 1992 and 1994. During these years I also made several short visits to the United States to gather information.

The decision to let Political Evangelicalism become a leading theme did not arise until after the field study. I started out from more general ideas about “fundamentalism” and a “New Religious Political Right.” Interviews were made on a broad level with both Protestants, Catholics, and non-religious intellectuals to get to grasp on the relations between religious and political conflicts. One goal was to discover if there existed a group inside Guatemalan evangelicalism that could be a candidate for being a New Religious Political Right.

If asked if the interviews are quantitative or qualitative I must answer that they are qualitative, because they are definitively not quantitative. Still, to call them qualitative does not grasp their character. Most people would probably think of the way qualitative interviews are used in, for instance, cultural anthropology or psychology. In these cases interviews are used for example to get an in-depth view on how an individual feels about certain things. The interviews in this study instead should be seen within the context of “contemporary history.” This means that they are used as sources in a historical sense. Because of this, the length and the content in the interviews differs depending on what kind of information I wanted from that special person. Sometimes a fact about a single event could be the most important purpose of the interview. The interviews are thus valued in the same way as other sources, on criteria of source criticism.

The political situation in Guatemala posed special problems in relation to the interviews. Many times I was met with suspicion and not everybody wanted to speak with me. This is natural, considering that information, including research, always can be used in various ways in a war situation. At the time when I began my field work many organizations, including church organizations, were hiding their offices in the capital behind dense doors, without a sign telling what was inside, because of fear of the army and the death squads. Conservative evangelical leaders on the other hand were used to North American journalists asking uncomfortable questions, and I was frequently asked if I was a journalist. Within time the climate changed and became more open. In 1988, the dictatorship of Ríos Montt was a delicate issue about which most people did not want to talk. In 1994, people talked more openly about their political sympathies. The names of some of the persons interviewed are withheld. Maybe some of them would not object to having their names published, because the situation in Guatemala has
changed considerably during the recent years. Because I did not have the possibility to ask them, I prefer to withhold the names in every case when I am unsure.

The field work also included some participating observation. I went to services and masses in both the Catholic Church and different kinds of Protestant churches. This part of the field work is not very visible in the dissertation, but together with other observations, and conversations on streets, cafeterias, and so on, written down in my diaries, they form an important part of my understanding of the religious situation in Guatemala.

Another part of the work, equal in importance, was to collect written sources, published and unpublished. The kind of sources I was looking for are not found in traditional archives and libraries. They are a motley crowd of materials that I have got from organizations' offices and private collections. An especially important place to mention is the Instituto Federico Crowe in the capital of Guatemala. Founded by the former dean (Samuel Berberian) of the Faculty of Theology at the Protestant University Mariano Gálvez, this institute offers education, including theology, to individuals who did not finish the regular school system. The people who work at this institute seem to collect everything they find around them to put it into the archive. Here are files found on different churches and organizations and also on political matters, as well as collections of periodicals.

In the United States the Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico, can be mentioned as especially helpful. I visited this place in 1990 and copied material from the files about religious organizations in Guatemala. The same year I also visited the U.S. Center for World Mission, Pasadena, California, and the charismatic world evangelization congress in Indianapolis. At this congress a considerable amount of information from different organizations was available. Some of the material concerning U.S. policy in Central America I found in the Library of Congress in Washington and I also got some information from organizations in Washington and New York, concerned with U.S. policy in Central America. In the United States, as well as in Guatemala, I got considerable help from individuals.

Along with the interviews, the material consists of unpublished documents, such as letters, project applications and memoranda, official documents, pamphlets, booklets, articles from newspapers and periodicals, and so on. The reason why such a wide range of material is used is to reach to different levels of the population. To use different kinds of materials in a complementary way is also the only way to get information about the organizations and churches in focus of this study.

In addition to reference literature concerning developments of political events in Guatemala during the 1970s and 1980s, I used news reports on events. I chose *Inforpress Centroamericana*, a sixteen page weekly, as a base for information. I went through this magazine from 1976 to 1990, and I used it
to complement other sources and reference literature. The weekly is made by
the news bureau with the same name, located in Guatemala. It covers all of
Central America with an emphasis on economy and politics.

The Outline

The time periods are divided from 1976 to 1990 as follows:

1976–1982. From the earthquake in February 1976 until the coup that
brought Ríos Montt to power in March 1982. The earthquake was a catalyst
for a new wave of evangelical missionary efforts. This is a period of escalating
political crisis. The army rules behind a fragile “democratic” façade, with
elected cabinet and parliament in power as a result of constant election frauds.

1982–1985. This is a state of emergency period with the military dictatorships of

1986–1990. Political power was formally, but not de facto, handed over by
the army to democratically elected civilians in the beginning of 1986. This
period marks the time of the Christian Democratic government of President
Vinicio Cerezo.

The study begins with the present introduction, which is followed by a
background chapter giving an overview of U.S. counterinsurgency strategy
and the history of Guatemala. The first period (1976–1982) starts with Chap­
ter 3 (1976–1982) and describes the role of the United States in greater detail
than the other chapters. It includes a description of the religious mobilization
behind the presidency of Ronald Reagan which must be explained as a back­
ground to events in Guatemala. Chapter 4 (1976–1982) contains the first
section of the local study of the Ixil area in northern El Quiché. The Ixil
people are one of the Mayan groups that was hardest hit by army repression.
It was also in the northern El Quiché, in Ixçán to the north of Ixil, that the
guerrilla movement EGP started to operate during the 1970s.

discusses the evangelical mobilization during Ríos Montt’s short time in
power from March 1982 to August 1983. Chapter 6 (1983–1985) covers the
term of Catholic Gen. Mejía Víctores, who took the power from the evan­
gelicalism when the tide of the war turned against the guerrillas with a focus
on the Ríos Montt government.

The third period (1986–1990) starts with Chapter 8 (1986–1990), and
covers the term of the Christian Democratic government of Vinicio Cerezo
that was marked both by counterinsurgency and democratization. Chapter 9
(1986–1990) discusses evangelicalism and the efforts to rebuild civil society
within a context of continued armed confrontation. Chapter 10 contains con­
cluding remarks.
CHAPTER 2

Contexts in Historical Perspective

The History of U.S. Counterinsurgency

Introduction

From the end of the World War II until the fall of the Soviet Union, the principal rationale of U.S. foreign policy was to prevent expansion of Communism. This goal was expressed in the strategy of containment, first outlined by George Kennan in 1947. To begin with, Communist threats against U.S. interests were perceived as coming primarily from Europe and the Middle East. By the 1960s, however, resistance movements in the Third World generally were perceived as a part of the Communist threat against U.S. national security whether or not they were Communist. Maintaining stability in the Third World was a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy to prevent Communist expansion, because instability could be used and manipulated by the Soviet Union. Consequently, the United States supported existing orders in Third World countries even if implying colonialism and dictatorships. The new foreign policy orientation was especially related to developments in Cuba and Vietnam and coincided with decolonization and growth of resistance movements in the Third World generally.

With the Kennedy administration, counterinsurgency was incorporated into the military strategy of the United States as a weapon to fight resistance movements in the Third World. The reason was that conventional methods were not tools to combat guerrilla warfare. The core of the counterinsurgency strategy was to counter guerrilla movements by using similar tactics. Consequently, the counterinsurgency strategy was developed from theories about Third World revolutionary movements' modus operandi. The movements aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the population by promises of reforms. One factor for the extensive support was the widespread poverty. Guerrilla warfare was thus considered to include important components of political and ideological warfare, which sometimes could be even more important than the armed struggle. The revolutionary movements created mass organizations based on, for example, peasants, workers, women, and students. The political work of these organizations could be a larger threat to the established regime than the armed struggle.
Consequently, counterinsurgency strategy aimed at combating the revolutionary movements at all levels, by both military, political, ideological, psychological, economic and cultural means. The core of the strategy was to win the hearts and minds of the population using the same tools as the revolutionary movements. At the local level, a tactic was to isolate the population from the enemy, both by using small-unit military forces to directly attack the guerrillas, and to spread ideological propaganda, while at the same time introducing socio-economic improvements to fight poverty. On the national level, counterinsurgency aimed at increased legitimacy for the military and the established system, with some adjustments if needed. Within U.S. policy, counterinsurgency has also been labeled foreign internal defense. This means that counterinsurgency was directed at a perceived internal threat against the sovereign state friendly to the United States. Along with internal aggression, protecting national sovereignty was considered the responsibility of the military.

U.S. counterinsurgency strategy was developed during the Cold War. However, there is no reason to believe that it died with the fall of the Soviet Union. The strategy can be applied also in new scenarios with other characteristics. From a moral point of view, counterinsurgency can be defended as a way to reduce war fatalities. In contrast to conventional warfare, efforts are made to win the loyalty of a population by economic and political means, not exclusively by violence and coercion. However, the other side of the coin is that civil institutions become subordinated to military goals.

The Beginnings

Counterinsurgency was first developed by France and applied in Algeria and Indochina. It was incorporated in the military strategy of the United States above all with the Kennedy administration. At this time anti-guerrilla warfare in the Third World and especially in Latin America was prioritized as never before. This can be seen against the background of Cuba and Vietnam.

There was also another important starting point for U.S. counterinsurgency strategy: in the Philippines. In 1950, the United States aided the Philippines in the fight against the Huk movement. The strategy was to combine intelligence and psychological warfare operations with promises of political and economic reforms. A main part of the strategy was to announce democratic elections in 1951 as a complement to military warfare. In this way, the military could increase its legitimacy as a defender of democracy and together with promises of reforms the insurgency could be neutralized for the moment. The promised social economic reforms were never realized. Promise of reform was sufficient to quell the revolt. What the United States learned from this experience in the Philippines was the importance of political measures to win support for the established government and the use of aggressive small-unit tactics to defeat guerrillas using a similar strategy. 1

The high-level investigative mission to Saigon in October 1961, led by
Gen. Maxwell Taylor and economist Walt Rostow, was the beginning of the U.S. large-scale intervention in Vietnam. The previous year, both had written books, which would be highly significant for the development of counterinsurgency strategy. In *The Uncertain Trumpet*, Maxwell Taylor proposed a "Strategy of Flexible Response" to replace the former U.S. President Eisenhower's concept of "massive retaliation" in situations of guerrilla warfare in the Third World.\(^2\) With the Kennedy administration, the new doctrine of "flexible response" was formulated. The reason was that "massive retaliation" was not tactically practical for low-level conflicts in the Third World. The administration wanted a new concept that allowed for involvement in Third World conflicts to strengthen its allies without risking an escalation to a crisis between the nuclear superpowers.\(^3\)

President Kennedy was an enthusiastic supporter of these new ideas and to him counterinsurgency became as important as conventional warfare. During his term coordination between the Department of State, Pentagon, CIA, and USIA (U.S. Information Agency) began. Interagency committees were created with the purpose of coordinating political, economic, and psychological operations.\(^4\) At the beginning of 1962, President Kennedy established the Special Group with responsibility for counterinsurgency and with representatives for the different institutions. Maxwell Taylor was included and made responsible for developing the army's counter-guerrilla capabilities.\(^5\) Counterinsurgency was a controversial matter within the Pentagon, however. Most army officials gave priority to conventional warfare.\(^6\)

Economic development was an important and integrated part of counterinsurgency strategy. More generally, economic development was a measure to raise the GNP of Third World countries and in this way undermine popular support for revolutionary movements. More specifically, economic measures were integrated in counterinsurgency on the local level aimed at gaining the loyalty of the population and isolate it from the revolutionary movement. Walt Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto* from 1960 was instrumental in the development of economic theories aimed at countering Third World revolutions.\(^7\) According to him, Third World soci-

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2 See for example M. Klare and P. Kornbluh 1988:11.
5 C. Maechling Jr. 1988:25. Maechling served as director for international defense in politicomilitary affairs in the State Department and as staff director of the National Security Council's cabinet-level special group for counterinsurgency during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. He served on the staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and was a naval attaché in Latin America.
6 Counterinsurgency was mainly developed within CIA, the Special Forces, and the Marines, while the Army naturally was reluctant because its organization and skills corresponded to conventional warfare. See for example D.D. Avant 1994:76–101.

etries had to pass the same stages as the developed countries. Especially important in the Third World was to create an economic take-off and consequently the preconditions for the take-off.  

At the center of the counterinsurgency strategy in Vietnam was a strategic hamlet program. The rural population was forced to settle into concentrated villages, controlled by the military and linked together in a network. Supplies and equipment were provided by USAID. The purpose was to isolate the rural population from Viet Cong, which should be forced into isolated jungle areas. The strategic hamlets were related to a strategy of using civil defense militias. The strategic hamlets program was not a new idea, however. They were used for example by the Spaniards in the Cuban revolution 1895–1897, by the British at the end of the Boer war and in modified form in Malaysia, and by the French in Indochina.

Until the middle of the 1960s, counterinsurgency in Vietnam was focused on the strategic hamlet program. It turned out to be a failure, however. It did not manage to capture the loyalty of the peasant population. As is well-known, the nature of the war changed dramatically from 1965. In the armed escalation with strong U.S. involvement the pure military aspects came to dominate while political, ideological, cultural and economic measures withdrew in the background. According to Charles Maechling Jr., the most essential elements of “winning hearts and minds” were not present in the Vietnam War. The United States did not have the same interest in culture as the French.

Counterinsurgency in Latin America

Ironically the developments in the Caribbean perceived as threats by U.S. policy makers were directly caused by the policy of the United States. The Castro revolution in Cuba was inspired more by an anti-colonialist intention to stop U.S. influence than by Communism. In the beginning of the 1960s, Fidel Castro helped to establish guerrilla movements in Nicaragua and Guatemala. The background to those movements was also to be found in U.S. policy, however.

The U.S. intervention in Nicaragua dates back to the 1830s. Due to the extensive waterways, this country was considered to be best fit for construction of a canal. In 1912, President Zelaya was in disgrace because of his na-

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8 Rostow proposed five stages of economic growth, which he contrasted with the stages of Marx. They were: 1. The traditional society, 2. The preconditions for take-off, 3. The take-off, 4. The drive to maturity, 5. The age of mass-consumption. In addition, a sixth stage for the future was proposed: Beyond consumption. W.W. Rostow 1971. In July 1961 Rostow and Taylor made a joint effort to propose a strategy for the United States in Southeast Asia. They proposed that the United States should build up as much possible indigenous military, political, and economic strength in the area. At the same time the United States should prepare to intervene with military force if this would turn out to be necessary. W.J. Duiker 1994:262.
tionalism and the U.S. Marines landed with the intention of supporting a conservative coup against him and remained until 1933. Augusto Cesar Sandino started his peasant-based guerrilla movement with the purpose of forcing the U.S. Marines out of the country. The Marines left, but established the National Guard led by Anastasio Somoza. FSLN (Frente Sandinista Liberación Nacional) was established in 1961 to continue Sandino's struggle by ending U.S. influence now expressed in the Somoza dynasty.

In Guatemala, the CIA ousted the democratically-elected President Gen. Jacobo Arbenz from power in 1954, an event which ended a ten-year experiment of democracy in that country. In 1960, when Guatemalan territory was used for training of U.S. forces for the Bay of Pigs invasion, some Guatemalan military officers disapproved. They considered this as an interference with Guatemalan national sovereignty and attempted a coup against the military government. The coup attempt failed and these military officers, who were forced to flee, started the first guerrilla movement.

After the Cuban revolution, the U.S. policy in Latin America aimed at preventing repetitions in other countries by using both economic and military means. With the Alliance for Progress, economic development would be brought to Latin America. By improving the situation for the poor masses of Latin America, the base for revolutionary movements was considered to be undermined. The Alliance for Progress was accompanied by military-political developments. The Southern Command, with headquarters in the Panama Canal Zone, was heavily strengthened to take the responsibility for the training of the Latin American military organizations. At the Southern Command, the Latin American military officers were trained to fight resistance and to stimulate nation-building and economic development.

In August 1962, a document entitled U.S. Overseas Internal Defense Policy was published and made official policy of the Kennedy administration. The document proposed coordination of military and civilian efforts. The role of the USAID should be to help police and security organizations in the Third World, while the Pentagon should train military and paramilitary organizations and orient them toward nation-building and military civic action. The latter indicated that the local military forces should participate in projects like road construction, programs of literacy and health, and so on, to bring them closer to the population. This policy concerned Latin America as well as Vietnam.

In 1963, the U.S. Military Assistance Program was extended to include training and other kinds of military support to help the Latin American countries fighting guerrilla movements by themselves. The U.S. assistance was oriented toward internal defense within Latin American countries, which meant fighting the enemy within, such as guerrilla movements, revolts, and so on.

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To conclude, the U.S. policy meant that the Latin American military institutions should be involved in the political process and in economic development using all available means in counterinsurgency efforts against the internal enemy. This was the foundation for what has been known as the Latin American Doctrine of National Security. In the name of National Security, the military overthrew constitutional governments in country after country during the 1960s and 1970s starting in Brazil in 1964. 13 The first of the military coups in Latin America that can be related to these new efforts by the United States was the Peralta Azurdia coup in Guatemala in 1963, however. The same year the Central American military alliance CONDECA was established with the help of the United States. The Guatemalan coup was in continuity with events since 1954, but the counterinsurgency strategy and the Doctrine of National Security were not clearly outlined before 1963.

In the so-called National Security states, all civil affairs were subordinated to National Security. The issue went far beyond the struggle against guerrilla movements, however. In the first place, the ouster of constitutional governments was legitimized as their presence being a threat to National Security, because of their political orientation or because they could not handle the situation in the country. The main enemy of the state was its own population when beyond control, because then it was potentially vulnerable for Communist manipulation. The main friend of the state was the military institution, which could defend the security of the state when it was attacked by its own citizens. In the name of National Security everybody who questioned the existing order could be persecuted. National Security was defined in a way so that everybody who questioned the economic and political order was a potential threat to the state. Thus, National Security was a rationale for persecuting peasant movements, labor organizations, churches, student organizations, and so on, that struggled to change socio-economic and political structures. The National Security state thus meant a defense for the economic elite.

Policy makers in the United States agreed that the goal of the foreign policy toward Latin America was to promote democratic freedom as opposed to Communist totalitarianism. However, there were always different views in Congress concerning the question whether military assistance to dictators was the best way to promote democratic freedom. When Nelson Rockefeller, head of a Latin America commission ordered by President Nixon, presented his proposals to the Senate Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs in

13 According to Maechling, the innovations in form of military participation in development projects at first glance "may have appeared as a logical and indeed enlightened response to the new challenge. In practice, however, they inevitably led to unprecedented military involvement in the political process, especially in South and Central America. --- General Taylor's philosophy of 'getting the Army out of the barracks and into the life of the people' broke down the flimsy partition separating civilian and military authority. --- In the ensuing decade, many of the majors and colonels who had attended the U.S. Army School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone or the Inter-American Defense College in Washington during the 1960s helped overthrow constitutional governments all over Latin America." C. Maechling Jr. 1988:30–31.
1969, he received a rather rough treatment by chairman Senator Frank Church. According to Rockefeller:

a new type of military man is coming to the fore and often becoming a major force for constructive social change in the American republics. Motivated by increasing impatience with corruption, inefficiency, and a stagnant political order, the new military man is prepared to adapt his authoritarian tradition to the goals of social and economic progress.\(^\text{14}\)

Senator Church said that this kind of language reminded him of similar arguments that earlier were used to justify Fascist military dictatorships in Europe.\(^\text{15}\) To him, military assistance to foreign governments with the purpose of helping them to maintain internal security was "just a euphemism for maintaining internal order, and governments try to maintain internal order to keep themselves in control and prevent their own overthrow."\(^\text{16}\) The discussion on military assistance to Haiti is revealing concerning the different point of views:

Senator CHURCH. Do you think we should extend this kind of assistance, say, to the Government of Haiti?
Governor ROCKEFELLER. Well, I would say that basically it is essential that it be extended and that we cooperate with the training and the equipment hemispherewide.
Senator CHURCH. Then you would extend it to the Government of Haiti?
Governor ROCKEFELLER. Well, I would want to be a little closer as a nation to some of these governments so that while we are cooperating in helping them meet their problems, we are also talking to them on a very realistic basis about how they can take the steps to restore the democratic process.
Senator CHURCH. Do you think you can talk Papa "Doc" into restoring democracy in Haiti? [Laughter.]
Governor ROCKEFELLER. I will give you an answer and I think the answer is "Yes." – – –
Senator CHURCH. And the effect of this is to help such governments as the Haitian Government and other dictatorial governments stay in power. I do not see what that has to do either with the American tradition, which is based on the people's right to revolt against despotism, or with improving the quality of life for the people of the hemisphere.
Governor ROCKEFELLER. Senator, I have to challenge a basic assumption, that if we do not send aid and if we cut off our relations we are going to achieve the goal that you want, restoration of democracy. This, in my opinion, is the fundamental error made in this country as to how we achieve the goals of human dignity and freedom and opportunity which are our objectives.\(^\text{17}\)

It is noteworthy that Rockefeller through all the discussion wanted to intertwine military assistance with economic assistance, while Church tried to get him back to what he perceived to be the issue: military, not economic, assistance. Rockefeller thus represented the counterinsurgency orientation to inte-

\(^{14}\) N.A. Rockefeller 1969:86.
\(^{16}\) Ibid.:13.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.13–14.
grate military and civil assistance, while Church had a more traditional point of view and wanted to have them separated.

According to a widely spread rumor, the Rockefeller Report on Latin America proposed the promotion of Protestantism in Latin America, because the Catholic Church was no longer a reliable and loyal collaborator to the United States.\(^{18}\) This is not the case, however. Protestantism is not mentioned in the report and the Catholic Church is viewed rather positively and dealt with in relation to the military. According to the report, the Catholic Church, like the military is breaking with its past and is “moving rapidly to the forefront as forces for social, economic and political change.”\(^{19}\) The report also states that the church in some cases is vulnerable to subversive penetration.\(^{20}\) This was not unique to the church, however, and the Rockefeller Commission did not seem to be especially alarmed by this.\(^{21}\)

Still, there were reasons for Latin Americans to ask questions about the relation between Protestant mission and U.S. policy in Latin America. The military, political and economic efforts by the United States in the beginning of the 1960s coincided with a new wave of U.S. Protestant mission. The missionaries were alarmed by the developments in Cuba and shared the U.S. concerns of countering Communism in Latin America. Protestantism had been present in Latin America since the nineteenth century, but the early 1960s was a starting point for a larger presence. At this time a qualitative shift started to take place in evangelization methods. In Central America the fundamentalist Latin America Mission (LAM) was especially important. This organization had noticed the effectiveness in the Pentecostal way of involving all church members in evangelization. LAM created IINDEF (Instituto de Evangelización al Fondo, in English, Evangelism in Depth) with headquarters in Costa Rica, with the purpose of promoting Protestant growth by using Pentecostal evangelization methods. A large evangelization effort was made in all of Central America.

Important persons behind IINDEF were Kenneth Strachan and Jean Kessler. The latter, a Dutch theologian, wrote a doctoral dissertation about Protestant church growth in Peru and Chile, which was a pioneering work to elucidate factors with positive or negative effect on Protestant church growth.\(^{22}\) Kenneth Strachan, who was the general secretary of LAM, chiseled out the theological foundation of the church growth programs.\(^{23}\) The large

\(^{18}\) This view has been spread through numerous articles and books, both in Europe and Latin America.

\(^{19}\) N.A. Rockefeller 1969:84.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.:85.

\(^{21}\) In the Congress hearing the Catholic Church was discussed only in relation to population control. Birth control, implying distribution of contraceptives were seen as a sensitive, but important matter, because continued population growth would eat up the U.S. assistance. There were agreement that this must be brought out with great sensibility to not offend people and make them hostile to the United States. Rockefeller Report on Latin America 1970:51–52.

\(^{22}\) J. Kessler 1964.

\(^{23}\) K. Strachan 1968.
evangelization campaign organized by IINDEF in Guatemala in 1962 coincided with counterinsurgency against the first guerrillas. According to Virginia Garrard-Burnett, this was not by chance, because LAM was a "flagship" for a movement among conservative fundamentalists in the United States, who wanted to give the Third World a "spiritual" alternative to Communism.24

The growing Protestant involvement in Latin America clearly coincided with counterinsurgency efforts from the United States. So did also efforts from the Catholic Church, however. The large-scale construction of counterinsurgency capabilities in Latin America was brought out by the first Catholic president of the United States, and like the Protestants, Catholic missionaries were concerned about countering Communism. Before the closing of China, this country had been one of the largest Catholic mission fields in the world. From the 1950s, Catholic resources that no longer could be invested in China were reoriented to Latin America. In the 1960s, the Catholic Church was a major partner to USAID in the bringing about of development projects in Latin America.

Low Intensity Conflict and Low Intensity Warfare

With the Reagan administration, the term Low Intensity Warfare was used to describe different kinds of unconventional warfare, including counterinsurgency. This did not imply new developments of counterinsurgency strategy, however. Basically counterinsurgency of the 1980s was the same as had been developed during the first years of the 1960s. What was new within Low Intensity Warfare was instead proinsurgency. This meant to use all available means, military, political, ideological, psychological, cultural, economic, and so on, in support of counter-revolutions in the Third World. This implied to support anti-Communist guerrilla movements in efforts to overthrow governments considered to be hostile to the United States. The first case of U.S. proinsurgency was the support for the Nicaraguan Contras, who struggled to overthrow the Sandinista government that had came to power in the revolution of 1979. Then followed proinsurgency in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Angola. Other kinds of Low Intensity Warfare were peacetime contingency operations such as the invasion of Grenada and the missiles in Libya; terrorism counteraction; antidrug operations; and peacekeeping operations, for example as buffers between two sides.

Low Intensity Warfare was included in the doctrine of Low Intensity Conflict, which was fully developed during President Reagan's second term. In 1985, a Joint Low Intensity Conflict Project was established and in 1986 the Army/Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict (CLIC) was created.25

Intensity Conflict was based on the same Cold War world view as the classic counterinsurgency strategy, but was more extensive to fit with the new kinds of unconventional warfare.\textsuperscript{26} According to a definition adapted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1988, Low Intensity Conflict was a:

> Political-military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition among states. It frequently involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. Low Intensity Conflict ranges from subversion to the use of armed force. It is waged by a combination of means employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments. Low Intensity Conflicts are often localized, generally in the Third World, but contain regional and global security implications.\textsuperscript{27}

U.S. counterinsurgency strategy is certainly not the only element that has shaped the contemporary history of Guatemala. But it belongs to the most important factors. U.S. influence and construction of counterinsurgency capabilities in Latin America have created much of the framework and limits of internal Guatemalan politics.

A Synopsis of Guatemalan History since Independence from Spain

Introduction

Guatemala is not the largest, but is the most populated country in Central America. Its land area is on 108,000 square kilometers, about the same size as Serbia and Montenegro (102,000 square kilometers) to make a European comparison. The population today is about 11 million. About half of the Guatemalan population is under 16 years of age. Life expectancy at birth is 65 years. The adult literacy rate for 1990 was 47 percent for females and 63 percent for males. These numbers are lower for the Mayan population. During the last decades, life expectancy and literacy rate have grown considerably. At the same time poverty has increased. One of the indications of the increased poverty in Guatemala as in other Latin American countries, is the return of cholera, which disappeared in Latin America during the first half of the twentieth century. In Guatemala 15,000 cases were reported in 1992. In the late 1980s, more than half of Guatemalan families earned less than the

\textsuperscript{26} The term Low Intensity Conflict was older than the Reagan administration, but not employed as doctrine until his term. The academic debate by researchers related to the policy making process shows that there was no unity as how to use the term. The theories about Low Intensity Conflict were not necessarily developed within the east-west context. The term was employed in studies about a wide range of low level conflicts in world history. See for example S. C. Sarkesian, ed. 1980; and S. C. Sarkesian and W. L. Scully 1981.

\textsuperscript{27} H.L. Dixon, June 1989:23.
cost of a basic food basket. About one third of the children under five showed some signs on malnutrition.\textsuperscript{28}

Guatemala is very diversified concerning geography and climate. Basically there are four different geographical zones in the country, each with different kinds of agricultural production. The fertile lowlands of the Pacific coast region are covered with vast plantations producing sugarcane, cotton, and above all coffee. The eastern part of the country, oriente, has been a center for banana production since the beginning of the century. The western highlands, altiplano, have mountain tops up to 4,000 meters and are the home for most of the Mayan population. Traditionally they cultivate staple crops, above all corn. Vast coffee plantations are located also in these highlands. The tropical forest zone in northern Guatemala is a settlement zone and a focus of interest for national and multinational companies because of minerals, oil, and wood.

The Mayan population provides the plantations in the highlands and the Pacific coast with the seasonal labor force needed for the harvest of crops like coffee. In harvest times thus a large seasonal migration takes place when people from the highlands move to the coast. The rest of the year these Mayas cultivate their own subsistence crops on increasingly smaller plots of land called milpas (cornfields). The Pacific coast and the highlands are thus integrated in a production system of latifundios (large cash crop estates owned by landlords) and minifundios (small subsistence crop farming). The coffee plantations are dependent on a large amount of seasonal labor for the harvest. This labor is provided by the impoverished Mayan population, who are forced to look for additional income. The poverty of the Mayas consequently has a function within this system.

While coffee plantations usually are owned by Guatemalans or naturalized foreigners, the banana enclave in the east has been controlled by U.S. or multinational companies. In contrast to the coffee plantations, the banana plantations have relied on full-time employment provided by Ladinos and Afro-Americans imported from the Caribbean. During the last decades the power and influence of U.S. banana interests have decreased and since the 1970s, the political conflicts have been more centered around the latifundio/minifundio system connected to the coffee economy.

There are twenty-two indigenous ethnic groups in Guatemala, the largest ones being K’iche, Kaqchikel, Q’eqchi’ and Mam. In addition there are the Afro-Guatemalan population, the Garifunas, on the Atlantic coast. A deep division separates the indigenous population, which identify themselves with the traditional Maya culture, and the Ladinos, which identify with the “white” Western culture. Many Ladinos view the difference in terms of race and consequently despise the Mayas as inferiors. The difference is clearly cultural, however. Many Ladinos are as much Indians as the Mayas, while others are Mestizos. Important cultural differences between those two groups are

\textsuperscript{28} The statistics concerning the situation of the Guatemalan population are taken from A. Sundelin 1995.
maternal language, Spanish or indigenous, and clothes, western or traditional. Ladinos are Mayas, or descendants of Mayas, who have entered a process of ladinoization, meaning to be culturally westernized. Ladinoization can be defined in different ways, however. To an increasing extent, Mayas are bilingual and most men have dropped the traditional costume, even if they put some cultural indicators on their Western clothes. Still, they identify themselves as Mayas in contrast to Ladinos. To a large extent, the Maya identity is centered around women. A family in which the mother and the daughters dress in western clothes will barely pass as Maya, while Maya men are allowed a higher degree of westernization.

The Mayas make up about 60 percent of the Guatemalan population. They are the discriminated majority while economic and political power is in the hands of Ladinos. Also most Ladinos are poor, however, while some Mayas have extensive properties. It is clear that a racist division exists at the same time as the cultural division between Ladinos and Mayas. Poor Ladinos usually look more like Mayas, while people have more European features on the higher levels of the social ladder. This is also due to immigration related to the agrarian capitalist expansion. The Guatemalan economic and political elite to a large extent consists of descendants of European and North American immigrants who have arrived in Guatemala during the last hundred years. Among them are Spaniards, Italians, Germans, and so on.

The situation in Guatemala characterized by mass poverty, large class differences, and ethnic division has its background in the Spanish Empire with its system of control and exploitation of nature and people. However, the maintenance of these structures has to do with developments after independence from Spain in 1821, basically the expanding agrarian capitalism and the efforts to create a Guatemalan nation-state. The maintenance of agrarian capitalism in recent history is related to the creation of the counterinsurgency state from 1954. The periods of time after independence can be divided into the following: 1821–1838 was basically a liberal period including the formation of the United Provinces of Central America in 1923. The period 1839–1965 was a conservative reaction followed by some interim years until the liberal era from 1871–1944 (with a Unionist parenthesis in the 1920s) when Guatemala became an agrarian capitalist “banana republic.” The revolutionary period 1944–1954 was characterized by democracy and social and economic reforms. Then followed the counterinsurgency state with origins in the 1954 coup and fully implemented from 1963. The end of the counterinsurgency state may be set to 1990, 1993, or 1996.

From Liberal Modernization to Counterinsurgency State

During the late 1820s and the beginning of the 1830s the archbishop and the Catholic religious orders were expelled from Guatemala and the properties of the Catholic Church, including the vast landholdings, were confiscated. This
policy continued during liberal President Mariano Gálvez (1831–1838), who wanted to limit the power of the Catholic Church and create a secular state. He introduced religious freedom. Civil marriage was established and the cemeteries secularized. Like other Latin American liberals, Mariano Gálvez was a modernist, who tried to break with the colonial past and introduce ideas from the Enlightenment. The Catholic Church was seen as the largest adversary to this policy and was treated accordingly. The liberal program included economic modernization, which meant promoting the cultivation of crops demanded on the international market, mainly coffee. This included the creation of modern plantations replacing the estates of the Spanish era. In addition it encouraged elimination of collective forms of property ownership and promoted European immigration. The policy to diversify cash-crop cultivation had to do with a need of replacing indigo. During the Spanish era, Guatemala had been the world-leading exporter of indigo, but faced severe competition from the international market at the end of the eighteenth century.29

A conservative revolt by Rafael Carrera in 1839 reversed the liberal reforms and established theocracy. Carrera's revolt obtained popular support, including Mayan communities whose communally-held lands were threatened by the liberal reform policies. His reign between 1839 to 1865 was founded on support from the Catholic clergy, who now regained power, England and landlords who exported dyestuffs for the English textile industry. The red dyestuff cochineal replaced indigo. Coffee production increased, but its larger expansion was delayed until the liberals returned to power with Justo Rufino Barrios in 1871. At that time, the most profound changes to transform Guatemala to a modern coffee producing agrarian capitalist state took place. Liberal policies were re-implemented. They included equal individual rights for all citizens (which in practice did not include women and Mayas), separation between church and state, freedom of religion, civil marriage, and so on. The Catholic Church was seen as a major hindrance to the development of agrarian capitalism, civil legislation, and the whole project to create an independent Guatemalan nation-state.

In Latin America, only Mexico could compete with the persecution of the Catholic Church that took place in Guatemala during the liberal era from 1871 to 1944. Catholic orders were forbidden to work in the country and the church lost all its properties. The Guatemalan Catholic Church was severely weakened institutionally and lost almost all its power. The harsh negative stand against the Catholic Church by the liberal presidents must be seen against the background of Carrera's theocracy. They wanted to make sure that the conservatives never would regain power and reestablish the old institutions from the Spanish Empire.

The properties confiscated from the Catholic Church were used for the expanding coffee production. European and North American immigration was encouraged to take part in this expansion. Labor for the plantations was provided by the Mayan communities through different forms of forced labor laws. In 1877, a new agricultural law eliminated all kinds of collective land properties. Thus, the Mayan community properties were opened up for exploitation by coffee growers. The law was used with a certain amount of caution, however, to avoid repeating the mistakes of the 1830s, when the liberals had been ousted with the help of popular resistance. The Mayas began to experience gradual erosion in their land ownership during the 1870s, but at dissimilar times in different communities. This explains why they could not mobilize any effective resistance against this development. Mayan communities struggled for their land, but did not join efforts with other communities.

Justo Rufino Barrios had a positive view on Protestantism, which he wanted to use as a force to break the power of the Catholic Church. Like other liberals, he saw a connection between Protestantism and the economic progress in Northern Europe and the United States. Guatemala was not a concern for Protestant missionaries, however. It was not until Barrios personally had invited the Presbyterian missionary John Clark Hill that Guatemala got its first Protestant church in 1882. Protestant growth was very modest, though. The institutional weakness of the Catholic Church did not make the Guatemalan people Protestants. Instead there was leeway for the Mayan communities to mold Catholicism on their own terms.

With Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898–1920) agrarian capitalism took a new turn. During his term, Guatemala was opened up for U.S. economic interests. The banana empire established during this time paved the way for U.S. interests to subdue vast areas of land and monopolize banana production, electricity, railway transportation, ports, and certainly the banana fleet. At the center of this monopoly was the United Fruit Company, which almost owned the country and acquired extensive political influence. The last liberal dictator Jorge Ubico (1931–1944) confronted increasing political opposition. This made him even more loyal to the U.S. banana interests, because he was dependent on U.S. support.

In June 1944, Ubico left power because of a revolt within the army and the Guatemalan population. The nine years between March 1945 and June 1954 could have been a beginning of a profound change of the economic and political system in Guatemala. During this time, the presidents Juan José Arévalo (1945–1951) and Jacobo Arbenz (1951–1954) started a process to wrest Guatemala from being a banana republic to becoming a more independent modern state. This period became only a parenthesis in the history of Guatemala, however, because of the CIA coup in 1954.

When President Arévalo came to power after the democratic election of 1945, illiteracy in Guatemala was over 70 percent and 2 percent of the landowners owned 72 percent of the agricultural land of which less than 1 percent
was used. At the same time half of the landowners had plots which could not support a family. There was almost no industry in the country. The limited industries concerned beverages, foodstuffs, and textiles.30

President Arévalo was a philosophy professor and he called his ideology "spiritual socialism." He meant that the principal problem in Guatemala was of a spiritual nature. Arévalo came from the white middle class and was not concerned about structural changes on the countryside. However, he led Guatemala toward political democracy, promoting labor legislation and popular education. His main emphasis was to promote labor unions in the cities. Labor unions could grow also on the United Fruit plantations and on state-owned plantations. Arévalo had a more harsh policy against United Fruit than against national landlords, because the U.S. monopolies were seen as a threat to national independence.

In spite of the very moderate character of the reforms, the U.S. government, United Fruit, and the Guatemalan economic elite were concerned about what they considered to be growing Communist influence in Guatemala. Therefore they supported General Arbenz in the next election, because they hoped that he would reverse the political direction of Arévalo. But instead the Arbenz government intended more profound changes in Guatemala. Arbenz wanted to begin a land reform and to modernize the physical infrastructure of the country.

Arbenz' infrastructure program was directed against the North American monopolies. New roads, a new port, and a new hydroelectric power plant should compete with the U.S. monopolies in these areas. The land reform decree implemented from June 1952 stated that all uncultivated land belonging to properties larger than 672 acres should be expropriated. The former owners were compensated by the same amount as the taxation value. In June 1954 1,4 million acres had been expropriated and given to about 100,000 families on a private, individual basis. About 500,000 of Guatemala's 3 million inhabitants had benefited from the land reform.31

At this time, the reform projects were stopped by the coup. In a short time the new regime had covered up all tracks of the Guatemalan revolution and transformed the country to one of the most repressive and regressive states in Latin America. The land redistributed to landless peasants was taken back and given to its former owners. All political opposition was smashed, including the rural workers union, which had grown to between 150,000 and 190,000 members during Arbenz' term.32

The Eisenhower administration justified its support of the Guatemalan coup with the Communist threat considered to be expressed in Arbenz's land

32 According to P. Gleijeses 1991:172, the rural workers' union Confederación Nacional Campesina de Guatemala (CNCG) had 1,500 local departments and 150,000 to 190,000 members in February 1954. In May 1950 this union had only 25 local departments.
reform and his support for the Guatemalan Communist party (PGT), which was legalized in 1952. More direct economic interests were at stake, however. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA director Allen Dulles both had interests in the United Fruit Company, whose vast areas of uncultivated land was expropriated in the Guatemalan land reform.

The internal political opposition against Arbenz was small and would hardly have been successful without the support of the United States. Because of lack of popular support it had to look for help from a foreign protagonist. This opposition wanted to roll back the progress made by the revolution of 1944 concerning social security, labor unions, land reform and political democracy. It was an extreme right wing opposition that defended the privileges of the landlords. The moderate political forces in the country supported Arbenz as did the army. That the army finally withdrew support for Arbenz was mainly due to fear of the United States.

The Guatemalan opposition worked from exile in El Salvador where it was led by Ydigoras Fuentes and in Honduras where Castillo Armas was the leader. During the summer of 1953, when Eisenhower decided to organize the coup that would oust Arbenz, Castillo Armas was the target of support. At that time, Castillo Armas had already secured support from Somoza in Nicaragua and from the Guatemalan Archbishop Msgr. Mariano Rossell y Arellano. Few persons in the Eisenhower administration knew about the plans. The operation got the name PBSUCCESS and was led by the CIA's Directorate of Plans (DDP), which had covert operations responsibility. The operation involved waging psychological warfare and training the exile rebels in Honduras. It also aimed at isolating Guatemala so that the country would not get any support from other Latin American states.33

Finally the ground was prepared for the invasion of the 250 exile rebels. The Guatemalan army submitted, because of fear that a U.S. invasion would be the result if they resisted. Civilian politicians and leading military officers made an array of attempts to save what was possible from the 1944 revolution. The negotiations with U.S. Ambassador John Peurifoy aimed at extracting a promise to the United States that Arbenz would leave office and a new government would struggle against Communism. In exchange, Guatemala would be spared from Castillo Armas. However, in the course of events lasting from June to September 1954, Peurifoy outmaneuvered all attempts for a moderate alternative in Guatemala until Castillo Armas finally could take power in September.

The coup in 1954 meant the beginning of the Guatemalan counterinsurgency state, which would burst out completely in 1963 with the Peralta Azurdia regime. During his term, the Guatemalan security system was restructured with the help of the United States to be centered on internal defense. The arrival of the civil government of President Julio César Méndez Montenegro

33 P. Gleijeses 1991:221–222, 244, 267–278.
in 1966 did not mean democratization. Instead the government had the trappings of a civilian regime, but gave legitimacy to the continuation of military rule. The establishment of a civil government was in accordance with the counterinsurgency strategy to neutralize resistance by efforts to increase legitimacy of a regime. During President Montenegro’s term, an intensive counterinsurgency campaign was launched against the guerrillas in the provinces of Izabal and Zacapa in the eastern parts of Guatemala.

During the terms of Montenegro (1966–1970) and Gen. Arana Osorio (1970–1974), the security assistance from the United States heavily increased. In 1966, death squads operations started in Guatemala. Political adversaries disappeared never to be seen again or were found tortured and killed on garbage dumps. Both the Guatemalan military and the extreme right wing party Movimiento Liberación Nacional (MLN), which had its background in the 1954 coup, participated in the organizing of death squads.

Ethnic Division within the Guatemalan Nation-State

The division between Ladinos and Mayas in Guatemala has its background in the Spanish Empire, but the liberal era and the development of agrarian capitalism shaped its contemporary features. There were many ways to exploit and discriminate against the indigenous populations within the Spanish Empire. At the same time, the social policies developed by the Spanish crown guaranteed certain autonomy and some privileges for indigenous communities, which is the reason why they could continue to exist. In Guatemala this was not a contradiction. The main income the Spanish crown got from the area was from the tribute paid by indigenous communities. The Spanish way of handling the indigenous populations on community basis also meant that ethnic identity in Guatemala became connected to the community, usually defined by municipality, and not with language group. This was a way to remove the common denominators in the indigenous population and create divisions.

During the Spanish era, Ladino signified a Spanish-speaking Indian. This did not grant this person any better status. The main difference was between the whites and the non-whites.34 At the end of the nineteenth century, Ladino meant a person identifying with the Western or “national” Guatemalan culture, whether Indian or mestizo. Indígena, on the other hand, meant to identify with the indigenous culture. Between the two groups was a strong antagonism. Ladinos looked down on Mayas as second class citizens, while Mayas resisted Ladino customs.

Following Carol Smith’s analysis, this redefinition had to do with the agrarian capitalist development. To be indígena, or Indian, in Guatemala came to

34 Until the nineteenth century the term castas was applied to none-white groups in Latin America. In the thoughts of Spaniards, they were divided into many sub-groups formed by cultural prejudices more than biology. See J.C. Baroja 1979.
signify resistance to agrarian capitalism. The resistance was characterized by the maintenance of cultural and communal identity in a refusal to be integrated as plantation workers in a capitalist society. Those Indians who broke community bonds to accept work as plantation workers became Ladinos. The strength of this ethnic division was due to the fact that Mayas and Ladinos were assigned different roles in the agrarian capitalist society and thus moved into different classes. Ladinos moved into the Western highlands populated by indigenous people as instruments for the coffee economy and agents for debt peonage. They were merchants, alcohol suppliers, labor contractors, and for the first time they could become landlords. The Mayas, on the other hand, tried to defend their severely threatened community lands. When forced to be plantation workers they resisted the status of full proletarian. 35

Like the agrarian capitalism, the ethnic division was reinforced by the policies of the liberal presidents and had to do with efforts to create a modern capitalist nation-state. According to Rodolfo Stavenhagen, the general definitions of the Latin American nations were based on a negation of the indigenous cultures. Consequently the Mayas were seen as a threat against national integration and were held in contempt. With increasing racism at the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, the Mayas were also seen as a subordinate race. Some Latin American states promoted European immigration with the purpose of improving the racial composition in the country. 36

During Justo Rufino Barrios' term of office, all Guatemalans legally became citizens with equal rights in the Guatemalan state. The problem for the indigenous communities was that the individual rights guaranteed for all citizens did not include protection for communal properties. Consequently, the robbery of the Mayan lands could proceed without obstacles. Those who benefited from the liberal reforms were the Ladinos who obtained equal status with whites. But still, most Ladinos remained as poor as Mayas. While on paper the Ladinos and Mayas were guaranteed equal rights, they were treated as two different groups in the legal and political systems. When Ladinos moved into indigenous municipalities, they were not placed under jurisdiction of the indigenous mayor. Instead, a duplicate system of justice and politics was created, one for the Ladinos and one for the Mayas. Ladinos and Mayas were organized into two different classes, the latter subordinated to the former.

At least in one case during the term of Justo Rufino Barrios an indigenous community was labeled Ladino because of a Presidential decree. It was San Pedro Sacatepéquez in San Marcos and it happened in 1876. This demonstrates that it was not a free choice to be Ladino or Maya when living in an indigenous community. Most often, ladinoization took place when a person

moved from one area to another. It is worth noting that the transition to being Ladino in the case of San Pedro was expressed in change from traditional indigenous costume to Ladino clothes, that is, Western clothes. The principals in San Pedro Sacatepéquez had asked to be allowed to wear Ladino clothes. The presidential decree declared the indígenas of both sexes Ladinos, and allowed them to use the “costume that corresponds to the Ladino class.” Later this Ladino status was retaken by Jorge Ubico in 1935.

The constitution of 1945 included protection for indigenous communally held lands. According to Stavenhagen, also the land reform of 1952 was problematic from the indigenous perspective, however. It was oriented toward a capitalist development ideology, which contradicted the philosophy and cultural rights of the Mayas. In the constitution of 1965, the protection for indigenous land was removed. This situation opened up for new possibilities to steal land from the indigenous population and was a background to the severe conflicts about land that would arise in the 1970s.

Religion and Politics in the Twentieth Century

A number of North American Protestant denominations and organizations arrived in Guatemala during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. In 1902, the four denominations present divided the country in mission territories. The four denominations were the Presbyterian Church, the Central American Mission, the Nazarene Church and the Friends (Quakers). Anglicans and Lutherans were not included, because they only organized foreigners. In 1914, the Primitive Methodist Church was included in the agreement.

Most active of the missions in Guatemala was the Central American Mission, which was an interdenominational faith mission founded in 1888 by a group of Dallas businessmen led by Cyrus I. Scofield. He was the man behind the Scofield Reference Bible, which U.S. Protestant fundamentalists have considered to be normative for their interpretation of the Bible. In 1919, the Central American Mission missionary William Cameron Townsend started to preach on Kaqchikel and translate the New Testament to this language. This was the start for what would be the Wycliffe Bible Translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics.

In the 1930s, the Protestant denominations met competition from two Pentecostal churches: Assemblies of God and Full Gospel Church of God. Most converts to Pentecostalism came from other Protestant churches, not

38 Ibid.:117–118.
42 Ibid.:32.
from the Catholic Church, which led to conflicts with the churches involved in the territorial division from 1902. In 1935, the churches behind the territorial division formed an evangelical synod, partly as a response to the threat from the Pentecostal movements. In 1936, they formalized the territorial division from 1902 in a Comity Agreement.\(^{43}\)

Despite the support and protection by the liberal rulers, Protestant church growth was slow. Only a few percent of the Guatemalans became Protestants and only people from lower classes. Because everybody who was not a Catholic was considered to be an outsider, people from the upper class did not convert to Protestantism.\(^{44}\) To Guatemalan liberals, anticlericalism and a positive view on the political role of Protestantism did not imply conversion. But Protestants were positively viewed because they were representatives of North American culture and values.

The last liberal dictator, Jorge Ubico (1931–1944), did not share the same positive view on Protestants as his predecessors. He was the first liberal president in Guatemala who legislated against Protestant work.\(^{45}\) Possibly this had to do with his orientation toward Europe. Both during the II Empire and the Weimar Republic, a large part of the Guatemalan coffee export went to Germany. Ubico had personal sympathies with fascism and would probably have preferred to be allied with Hitler instead of the United States during the Second World War.

In 1936, a papal nuncio was sent to Guatemala, and the year after Ubico broke with the anticlerical church policy. In this year, Spanish Jesuits were allowed to enter Guatemala. In 1943, the North American Catholic Maryknoll missionary order, which had been forced to leave China, was allowed to start operations in Guatemala.\(^{46}\) These circumstances announced that the old conservative-liberal conflict now was passing away. New political alliances were created and the question about the power of the Catholic Church had lost its relevance.

However, as early as 1934 Ubico had been forced by U.S. policy to improve relations with the Protestant missionaries from the United States. The reason was that Hitler's rise caused the United States to pressure the Latin American states to assure their loyalty in case of war. Because of the strong German presence in Guatemala and the regime's pro-fascist sympathies, Ubico had to prove his loyalty to the United States if he was to stay in power. Because he was a dictator with very limited legitimacy within Guatemala, his power was dependent on U.S. support. The result was that he readily sold out the country to U.S. economic interests and also permitted U.S. Pentecostal missionaries to work in Guatemala.

During the revolutionary period 1944–1954, the Catholic Church ob-

\(^{43}\) Ibid.:78–81.
\(^{44}\) Ibid.:85.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.:110–111.
tained more freedom than during any time since 1871. Restrictions against foreign priests eased and Catholic orders could again start to work in Guatemala. The Catholic Church was still weak and confronted restrictions against its work. But the period witnessed Catholic restoration, which continued until present day. The Arévalo and Arbenz governments' relatively positive view of the Catholic Church coincided with efforts from the Vatican to modernize the Latin American Church. Large numbers of foreign priests were sent to Guatemala. Catholic efforts were made in the areas of education and the establishment of cooperatives. However, the revolutionary period was characterized by conflicts between the Guatemalan hierarchy and the policy of the Vatican.

The efforts from the Vatican went counter to Msgr. Mariano Rossell y Arellano, Guatemalan Archbishop since 1939. He strongly opposed the policy to send foreign priests to Guatemala. According to Bruce Calder, one of the causes was that the liberals' persecution of the church had been provoked partly by the foreign influence, mainly from Spain, within the church. The Archbishop thus was afraid that the new developments would cause renewed persecution in the future. Another reason was that the Archbishop wanted to keep control of the church and maintain his power. This was impossible with the growing numbers of priests, which presupposed an increased church administration. 47

After the land reform decree of 1952, Msgr. Rossell y Arellano allied himself with Castillo Armas, who promised to reward the Catholic Church for its political support in the overthrow of Arbenz. From January to March 1953, the Black Christ from the shrine in Esquipulas was moved around the country in a national pilgrimage against Communism organized by the Archbishop. On the day of the coup, U.S. airplanes bombarded Guatemala with flyers containing a sermon from the Archbishop in support of the coup.

The papal nuncio, Msgr. Genaro Verolino, took a different stand in relation to the Arbenz government. While the relations between the Archbishop and the government grew worse, the nuncio maintained good relations until the end. According to him, the land reform did not threaten the Catholic Church in Guatemala. The country had a land problem, and the law had positive aspects, according to the nuncio. Nor did the nuncio consider Guatemala to be under Communist control. In his opinion, the Catholic Church had to endure the situation until the term of Arbenz ended in 1957. This position was apparently not supported by any other Catholic priest, Guatemalan or foreign. 48

The relatively positive attitude toward the Catholic Church from the Arévalo and Arbenz governments did not mean that it was favored above the Protestant churches. The policy toward the churches was formed with an

emphasis on religious freedom. Still, both the work of the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches was circumscribed by restrictions formed from nationalistic concerns, mainly that of checking U.S. influence. But because of the privileged situation for Protestants during the liberal era, this new policy eased the situation for the Catholic Church and created tougher restrictions for Protestants.

Generally, the Protestant missionaries from the United States maintained good relations with Arévalo, one reason being the extensive Protestant influence he allowed in the national literacy campaign. They also supported the labor legislation of 1947. The situation changed with Arbenz. Most U.S. missionaries viewed the Arbenz government as Communist and they did not like the land reform. In 1953 and 1954, the Protestant missionaries lost their influence in the literacy campaign and the schools when new laws circumscribed foreign influence within the educational system in an effort to limit U.S. influence. At the same time as the Black Christ was brought around the country in the Catholic pilgrimage in early 1953, a U.S. healing evangelist, Tommy Lee Osborn held a campaign and reported 50,000 conversions in Guatemala. This number was clearly highly exaggerated. According to Virginia Garrard-Burnett, only 30,000 Guatemalans were Protestants in 1954.

U.S. Protestant missionaries supported the coup in 1954, but did not have the same high-level profile as the Catholic Church. Many Mayan Protestants viewed the situation differently, however. Members of the Presbyterian Church and the Central American Mission were among the most eager supporters of Arbenz' reforms. In the countryside many of them had benefited from the land reform and consequently were among the people who lost their recently-received land in 1954. According to Garrard-Burnett, this situation was not due to support for the land reform from Protestant denominations. But areas of Protestant influence coincided with areas where Arbenz' reforms had a strong impact. Protestants actively participated in local land reform committees and peasant leagues. This was especially true in the villages around lake Atitlán, where Mayan Protestant leaders also for the first time obtained public office in local elections. The Mayan Catholic brotherhoods, cofradias, on the other hand, were usually against land reform. For the cofradias the land reform echoed a long liberal tradition, whose reforms always had meant a threat against Mayan communal land ownership. Suspicions against the land reform were reinforced by the message given by the Catholic hierarchy against Communism.

The movement behind Castillo Arma's coup, Movimiento Democratico Nacional (MDN, which was the origin to Movimiento Liberación Nacional, MLN) mixed its political message with Catholic language in a way similar to

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the Spanish falangists. The rebel force had the cross and sword as its banner. Catholic doctrine and social action were seen as a weapon which could be used against opposition considered to be Communist. The Catholic Church was awarded for its support for the coup, but not to the extent Castillo Armas had promised the archbishop. The Catholic Church regained legal status, allowing for land ownership, freedom for religious orders and foreign priests to work in the country, and right for the church to perform civil marriages. But freedom of religion was maintained and also Protestant organizations could continue to expand their work. Guatemala continued to be a secular state, but the Catholic Church was seen as a major force to guarantee legitimacy for the counterrevolution and control of the population. The lay organization Catholic Action expanded its work and was promoted as a force to instill doctrinal purity and anti-Communism.

Ten years after Arbenz’ land reform, the Guatemalan Catholic hierarchy had lost its unconditional hostility against land reform and cautiously asked for ways to promote a more just distribution of land. This did not imply that Msgr. Rosselly Arellano had become less anti-Communist than in the 1950s, but now the climate concerning these issues had changed. The Cuban revolution and the social unrest in all of Latin America demonstrated the need for economic improvements for the poor majority. For the Guatemalan Catholic Church as well as for the Kennedy administration in the United States, changes were needed to avoid Communist revolutions. The discussion concerning economic development necessarily touched on the land distribution. A solution to the agrarian question was seen as a necessary condition to promote a capitalist development including industrialization. Also papal social encyclicals could be interpreted in support of land reform. In Guatemala the landlords strengthened their role after 1954 and made all such attempts impossible. The Catholic hierarchy kept a low profile on the issue to not come into conflict with the wealthy elite.

The radicalization that took place among some Catholic priests and nuns in Guatemala during the 1960s partly can be explained from the frustrations they felt because of concrete experiences of failures in development projects. After 1954, and even more in the 1960s, the large influx of foreign priests and religious orders in Guatemala corresponded to both the efforts from the Popes to promote change within the Guatemalan Catholic Church and from the United States to counter Communism through development efforts. A large number of the foreign priests came from Spain and the United States. When involved in development projects, they intended to work for improving the situation of the poor without confronting power structures. This approach turned out to be impossible to a large extent. The situation encouraged some members of religious orders to join the guerrillas, the most well-known being Thomas and Marjorie Melville from the United States. The experience of Thomas Melville was that his social projects never would be successful because of political reasons. Very few Catholic priests turned to the guerrillas in
the 1960s, though. Most tried to find other ways for change. Thomas Melville, who was a Maryknoll priest, received both denunciations and sympathies from colleagues. According to José Luis Chea, by 1967, members of the Maryknoll order in Guatemala, inspired by papal encyclicals had taken the posture that structural changes were needed, but had not specified the means to be used. Probably many of them, and also members of the hierarchy, sympathized with the Melvilles even if they themselves did not join the guerrillas.53

Another kind of radicalization took place among indigenous Guatemalan diocesan priests. This movement did not arise from disenchantment because of experiences within development projects on the countryside, but rather because of frustrations over conservatism within the institutional church reinforced by foreign clergy and foreign religious orders. The direct cause was the Vatican appointment of the Archbishop Msgr. Casariego, an arch conservative Spaniard, to cardinal in 1968. In protest against this appointment, Conferencia de Sacerdotes Diocesanos en Guatemala, COSDEGUA, was established by diocesan priests. Those priests felt oppressed by the foreign clergy and wanted to work both for improvement of the status of the native Guatemalan diocesan priests and for social change. The movement opposed conservative church structures as an expression of colonialism. It corresponded to equivalents in other Latin American countries that were inspired by the French workers priests movement, among them the Third World Priests in Argentina. Like the other movements, COSDEGUA was urban-based and focused on the situation of the workers.54 The rise of liberation Christianity among the Mayas will be illustrated in the following section about the Ixil people.

The Ixil People between Subordination and Resistance
Religion and Politics in Ixil during the Spanish Era

Ixil is located in the northern part of El Quiché, in the mountain range of the Cuchumatanes.55 It is bordered by the rainforest region of Ixcán to the north. The municipality Uspantan, where Nobel prizewinner Rigoberta Menchú grew up, is situated to the east. To the west is the province of Huehuetenango. Ixil is 2,314 sq. km and the altitude above sea level ranges between 700 and

54 Ibid.:389–397.
55 Major studies conducted on the Ixil area include the following: J.S. Lincoln 1945, who took notes for a thesis, which never materialized because of the author’s death; B.N. Colby and P.L. van den Berghe 1969 and 1977, who conducted an anthropological study about the relations between Ixils and Ladinos from the point of view of the Ixil area as a plural society. They viewed cultural change in the Ixil area not as a cause of exogenous forces, but as a result of interaction between the two ethnic groups within a single society—a perspective that was rather new for the time; B.N. Colby and L.M. Colby 1981; A. Palomino 1972; H. Nachtigall 1978; and D. Stoll 1992 and 1993, which is the only major post-war study conducted on the Ixil region.
3,000 m. In 1964, no less than 92 percent of the population consisted of Ixils, while the remaining 8 percent were Ladinos. In addition, a few K’ichés live in the region. The population lives in the three municipalities of Nebaj, Cotzal and Chajul, whose towns are located at between 1,700 and 1,900 m above sea level. The distance between the Guatemalan capital and Nebaj is 240 km, while it is 85 km between the department capital Santa Cruz del Quiché and Nebaj. Because of the mountains and the altitude it takes about three to four hours to drive these 85 km.\(^{56}\) The fertility of the land varies a great deal, one cause being the large differences in altitude. Traditional agriculture with milpa (corn cultivation for domestic consumption) is the staple food for survival for the majority of the Ixils.

The Ixil people have inhabited the region for at least 1,400 years.\(^{57}\) There exist different opinions among researchers about the exact time of the conquest of the Ixil country by the kingdom of Quiché. The Quiché kingdom was established in the thirteenth century, and its last capital was Utatlán, close to the present department capital Santa Cruz del Quiché. The Ixil region was probably conquered in the beginning of the fifteenth century. The area had neither important economic nor strategic significance to Quiché and the control exercised over the Ixil region was probably loose and indirect.\(^{58}\)

The army of the kingdom of Quiché was defeated by Pedro Alvarado in two large battles close to Quetzaltenango in the year 1524. In the second of these battles, the Quiché King Tecún Umán was killed. However, in spite of this fact, a great part of the highlands, including the Ixil region, continued resistance. The military power remaining in the Quiché kingdom was concentrated in Uspantán which was allied with the Ixil region, Cunén, and perhaps some Qʼeqchiʼ to the northeast.\(^{59}\) In 1530, this northern alliance was defeated by the Spaniards.\(^{60}\) This was a catastrophe for the Ixil people. Many of them were killed either in the war or by the new diseases brought in by the Spanish conquerors.\(^{61}\)

It was not until about 30 years after the Spanish conquest that the Roman Catholic Church established a permanent presence in the Ixil region. In the Quiché town of Sacapulas, south of the Ixil region, the Dominicans established a monastery that exercised jurisdiction over the Ixil region. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the population was concentrated to larger communities to facilitate administration and political control by the Spaniards. The population centers were Nebaj, Chajul, Cotzal and Ilom. Ixils who lived too far from these centers were seen as barbarians, rebels or vagabonds. This concentration, congregación or reducción, of the people also meant that

\(^{56}\) B.N. Colby and P.N. van den Berghe 1969:26–27.
\(^{57}\) D. Stoll 1992:1, referring to archeologists.
\(^{60}\) Ibid.:60.
\(^{61}\) See for example W.G. Lovell 1985.
they became more vulnerable to epidemics because of the increased population densities.62

The Spanish colonization meant a conquest of both people and territory and implied new relationships between the tillers and the land. The Spaniards imposed the Western concept of private ownership of the land which consequently could be bought and sold just as any other commodity. I did not find any exact information about relations between the Ixils and the land in pre-Columbian times. However, even today Ixils, living in accordance with traditional customs, give prayers to God before making any encroachment on nature. The purpose of the prayers is to ask for forgiveness for exploiting nature and to explain that the infringement is made only because of necessary human needs, not with the intention to destroy nature. In contrast to Western values, the traditional Ixil values do not imply that nature is something to exploit or struggle against as far as I understand them.

It is likely that the main form of land rights among the Ixils before the Spanish conquest was that the community entitled the land and distributed and redistributed it to individuals. Peasants in the Quiché kingdom generally adhered to this system. It is not clear if the right to private property in the Western sense existed in the Quiché kingdom before the Spaniards. Individual land entitlements existed however. The Quiché kings became powerful landlords with extensive personal holdings and patrilinear inheritance, aided greatly by conquests of territory in wars. Selling and buying of land did not exist before the Spaniards however.63

The Spanish hunger for land did not affect the Ixils as much as many other indigenous groups. No Spanish *hacienda* was established in the area. Neither the Quiché kingdom nor the Spaniards found the Ixil region to be of economic significance. The only return for the Spaniards was the tribute they could squeeze out of the Ixils. The Dominican mission was instrumental in the control of the Ixils in the *reducciones* and for exacting tribute. The tribute also implied that there was an interest from the Spanish crown to preserve the Ixil communities. Like many other Mayan communities, the Ixils continued to redistribute their community-owned land to individuals. This system was favored by the Spaniards as the best way to guarantee subordination and tribute.64

At the time of conquest in 1530 the Ixil population was about 20,000 to 25,000 according to researchers’ estimates. These figures are based on the information that 4,000–5,000 Ixil soldiers struggled against the Spaniards.65 However, at the end of the seventeenth century, it seems that only 2,000 Ixils were left.66 In 1740, the population had further decreased to about 1,000

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63 J.C. Cambranes 1992:18–20, 26–28. According to him, the class struggles in the Quiché kingdom were both profound and complex, 56ff.
66 Ibid.
persons. The figures cannot be seen as exact however, because it is unclear how many Ixils fled into the mountains to avoid taxation.

George Lovell points to the numerous epidemics as the most important factor behind the demographic collapse in the Cuchumatán region, including the Ixil region. He listed 22 epidemics in the Cuchumatán Highlands between 1550 and 1819. Several of them lasted for years. When the vaccination against smallpox was initiated in Guatemala in 1804 the Maya population started to grow. In the middle of the nineteenth century the population in the Ixil country had grown to 6,700 inhabitants.

During the eighteenth century the power and influence both of the Spaniards and the Roman Catholic Church gradually decreased and the resistance by Mayas increased in all of Guatemala. Revolts became more common because of the decline of the colonial power. This situation also affected the Ixil people who revolted in 1799. From the eighteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century the influence of the colonial powers and later the Guatemalan national rulers was minimal in the area. The physically and politically isolated Ixil region now became even more independent, and the Ixils did not even bother to pay taxes to the central government. In fact, the Ixils did not pay taxes to the central government until 1899.

During the second half of the eighteenth century the Dominicans turned over church authority in the Ixil region to other priests. However, from then on the church had a very weak influence and the priests were not more than tolerated.

Thanks to the isolation and independence of the Ixil region, many cultural practices of the Ixils survived, while other Mayan groups lost their cultural heritage. Priests were stationed in the Ixil region during the whole of the nineteenth century, but were without influence on the Ixils. The official Roman Catholic Church continued to play a very marginal role in the Ixil area during the first half of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the century only three Catholic priests were working in the department of El Quiché. The priest in Sacapulas to the south of Nebaj had the responsibility for the whole

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67 Ibid. According to Colby and van den Berghe, there were 984 individuals. This figure is used also by D. Stoll 1992:42. W.G. Lovell 1985:343 gives the higher figure 1,188 for the population of Nebaj only 20 years later, however. Both figures are estimations made from the number of tribute payers.
68 See for example D. Stoll 1993:29.
70 The indigenous population was highly prioritized in the vaccination campaigns. In 1807, 348 persons in Nebaj were vaccinated, which shows that the campaign reached the Ixil region at an early stage. W.G. Lovell 1985:161-162. The reasons behind the vaccinations were not necessarily humanitarian. They can be related to the Spanish interest to keep up the number of tribute payers.
72 The information that the Ixils did not pay taxes until 1899 is given in B.N. Colby and P.L. van den Berghe 1977:86.
73 Ibid.:80–84.
74 Ibid.:84.
area up to the Mexican border including the Ixil region. Conflicts between traditional religious practices and orthodox Catholicism increased in all of Guatemala after the year 1800, because of the weakening of the state. Even if Ixil was more independent than other parts of the country, the rise and fall of Catholicism in the nineteenth century here as in other areas reflected governmental changes: the turn from "liberal republic" to "theocratic republic" and back to "liberal republic" again, as described earlier.

On several occasions during the nineteenth century, the Ixils from Chajul accused Catholic priests of invoking witchcraft for bringing diseases on them. One Catholic priest from Nebaj reported that several accusations of this kind were provoked by the female witch Xelop from Chajul. Similar occurrences were reported among other Mayan groups during the nineteenth century. The Ixils thus tried to turn an instrument used by the Catholic Church for control (the witch charges) into an instrument in favor of their own interests. Already during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries people had begun to move out from the reducciones and return to their old ways of life, even if it was not possible for them to totally return to the life before the conquest. The return to old ways included religion. The pre-Columbian Ixil religion survived until present days, mixed with the Christianity that had been preached by the Dominicans.

In the 1960s, Colby and van den Berghe described the remote high god Q'esla Kub'a-l as the highest in the divine hierarchy in the Ixil religion. Behind him is the married couple Kub'a-l and Kucuc, the sun and the moon, who also are called Jesus and Mary. On a lower level in the Ixil pantheon the intermediate deities exist, for instance weather gods like the wind god. On the next level there is a group of supernaturals called angels from Spanish. On the lowest level in the hierarchy are the ancestral spirits. Most intermediate supernaturals have names from Spanish saints or angels. The saints occupy the sky, while the angels live in what is called "the world." Every angel inhabits a special geographical location. The existence of the lower level supernaturals is dependent on the human beings providing them with food, beverages, incense and candles. The behavior of intermediate supernaturals depends on the actions of the humans. Indirectly they cause both good fortune and misfortune. They can bring appropriate weather for the harvest or illnesses. All are dependent on the human's observance of the necessary rituals.

The description by Colby and van den Berghe can be questioned on some points. It can be discussed whether or not the Ixils view their supernaturals in a hierarchy this way. The role of the remote high god Q'esla Kub'a-l at the top of the hierarchy can also be discussed. The Ixils' view of the divine may rather

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77 These charges of witchcraft against Catholic priests are referred to by Lovell 1985:135.
78 W.G. Lovell 1985:84.
be seen in the tension between the opposites perceived in reality; like dark and
light, masculine and feminine, mountains and valleys, and so on. According
to this view, the different supernaturals are manifestations of one and the
same God or the same divine power. This image of God is not a male, but
androgyne or just a humane or living creature whatever life means. Colby and
Colby indirectly hint at this perception when they write:

...the honorific term Kucuukb'iaal, literally, “our mother(s), our father(s),” is
used primarily as a blanket term for all deities. The term Kubaal separately is
often used for gods, saints, other gods, mountain deities called aanhel, and the
Christian God. Kucu is used for Santa Maria and other female deities. Alone
Kubaal may stand for any deity, though it refers most often to the sun god,
Kubaal Q'i, or his Christian counterpart, Christ.80

To understand the role of the supernaturals in the Ixil religion one must look
at the philosophical framework. Reality is perceived in dichotomies between
heaven and earth, masculine and feminine, dark and light, hot and cold, and
so on. The ideal is harmony and balance between these opposites, which are
never absolute. This is also obvious in the relation to nature; that humans
should live in harmony with nature and try to avoid injurious activities.81

Today, Ixils, like other Mayas in Guatemala, frequently stress that their
traditional religion is monotheist. However, it can be discussed if the distinc-
tion between monotheism and polytheism is valid from a traditional Mayan
or Ixil point of view. If the divine is seen in the tension between the opposing
sides of reality and if God at the same time can be one and many, this pre-
sumes an epistemology differing from that based on the western simplistic
distinction between monotheism and polytheism. The emphasis on monothe-
ism among traditional Mayas is best explained as a defense against a Christi-
nity that has attacked the Mayan religion as polytheistic or incoherent.

The Dominican missionaries associated Jesus Christ with the sun god of
the Ixils. However, the Dominicans did not capture the essence of the Ixil
religion. Christ was not identified with the ultimate divine power, but with
one of its many manifestations. Thus, Christianity easily could be assimilated
as a part of the Ixil religion without affecting its most central views, but rather
embellishing them. The encounter between Christianity and the Ixil religion
did not occur on equal terms, because the Ixils were forced to accept Christi-
nity, at least outwardly. However, they did it in their own way by integrating
Christianity within their own philosophical framework. They could easily use
the names of the Catholic saints for their traditional supernaturals and per-

81 I did not have any possibility for any in-depth conversation with Ixils about traditional
religious views. To understand them, knowledge of the Ixil language is necessary, which I have
not. My understanding of the Ixil religion is formed by glimpses from Ixils together with conver-
sations with Mayas from other parts of Guatemala who have an academic background. The kind
of views on Maya religion reflected in Colby and Colby have been questioned by anthropologists
to an increasingly degree during recent years. See for example B. Tedlock 1982.
haps they rather easily also could incorporate some Catholic rituals, like the baptism and the mass. In the twentieth century, baptism and the mass have never sparked confrontation between traditional Ixil religion and orthodox Catholicism. These rituals are seen as natural parts of the Ixil tradition and they do not compete with Ixil ceremonies.

The traditional religious specialists, as Colby and Colby found in Nebaj, included an elected Ixil priest who determined on which days communal and cofradia religious ceremonies would be held, prayersayers who cured illnesses and prayed for good providence, and daykeepers or diviners who counted the days and made diagnoses. These three categories were still in evidence when I visited the Ixil region in the 1990s. Persons of both sexes can be religious specialists.

The daykeepers are in charge of the Ixil calendar. Before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Ixils, like other Mayas in Guatemala, used two different calendars. One of them had 365 days and was related to the year of the nature. The other one had the length of 260 days and was connected to what was perceived as the human year, the age of the human fetus before birth.

The Dominicans replaced the 365-day calendar with the Roman Catholic calendar. Different celebrations were connected to the feastdays of the saints replacing celebrations in the old religion. However, the Dominicans did not replace the 260-day calendar, which the Ixils have continued to use until the present and which is connected to many traditional rituals.

The Dominicans also organized the cofradias, saint societies, in the Ixil region. As in other places, the societies organized the celebrations for different saints. The formation of cofradias was an instrument used by the colonial administration for controlling the people and the Mayas were forced to participate. According to McCreery, as a result of the decline of church and state power in the 1830s, the Mayas increasingly refused to serve in the cofradias and these organizations declined. Neither did they join new church-regulated lay societies that the Roman Catholic Church tried to implement. Instead new "illegal" organizations appeared, outside the purview of the church. These new cofradias excluded the priests from most matters. Consequently the Mayas had co-opted an institution used by the colonial system into a tool for serving their own interests. The so-called civil-religious hierarchy, based on the cofradias, that was evident in the Ixil region and other Mayan areas during the first half of the twentieth century, was thus a product of events in the nineteenth century, maintains McCreery.

However, there was clearly a continuity between the old and the new cofradias when seen in relation to its function within the cargo system for career advancement. The civil-religious hierarchy rooted in the cofradias meant that these organizations provided the basis for advancement to both religious and

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civil careers. Young men entered the *cofradias* at the lowest rung in the hierarchy and then rose to gradually higher positions. The civil leadership of the community was elected among the high-ranking principals in the *cofradias*. The system implied that the old men held both religious and political power, it was a gerontocracy. The *cofradias*’ role was to protect both the culture and communal land holdings of the Mayas. At the same time these organizations reinforced the subordinate position of the Mayas as has been pointed out by many researchers.

The *cofradias* in the Ixil area, and throughout Guatemala, are responsible for arranging the homage and reverence to the saints in their charge. Some of the *cofradias* in Nebaj have been organized in pairs, where the one half is seen as male and the other as female. For instance, there have been two *cofradias* with responsibility for the “cross” having both male and female components. The same is true for the *cofradia* named “conception.” This does not imply that the women have been the leaders of the female *cofradias*. All of them have been ruled by men. The wives of the majordomos have participated more actively in the *cofradias* symbolizing the feminine component, however.

The Modernization of Ixil Country: An Internal Colonization within the Guatemalan Nation-State

In the 1890s, the Ixil region experienced dramatic changes as a result of increased coffee production. From the time of the liberal revolution in 1871 the ruling liberals strongly promoted coffee exports, pushing Guatemala onto the world market as an agrarian capitalist state.

The first impact of coffee as an export cash crop for the Mayas in Guatemala was labor recruitment. Coffee production is labor-intensive and the plantation owners demanded an indigenous labor force. In the first phase, the most pressing question for the plantation owners was labor, not expropriating land from the Mayas. Therefore labor contractors scoured the country in search of a labor force. Because most Mayas did not want to work on the plantations different forms of forced labor systems, *mandamiento* and debt peonage, developed.

The Mayas tried to resist the growing agrarian capitalist system. One example was the revolt in San Juan Ixcoy, a Quiche municipality neighboring the Ixil region. In 1898, the Mayan inhabitants killed Ladinos and labor contractors. However, the consequences were worse for the Mayas. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Ladinos’ militias, sent to put down revolts among the Mayas, succeeded in destroying hope for positive outcomes of uprisings. In the 1890s, the labor contractors arrived in the Ixil region, in spite of the

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86 Ibid.:86–87.
87 Stoll 1992:27.
very strong indigenous resistance against Ladino settlement in the area. Just as in other parts of the country, the first impact of the coffee economy for the Ixils was labor recruitment. However, soon Ladinos also arrived with the purpose of subduing land.88

There were two methods for expropriating Ixil lands. One way was to obtain the titles. By paying the central authorities, rich Ladinos could obtain titles. The other and more common way was to sell alcohol to the Mayas and loan cash at high interest rates. Thus, the Mayas were either robbed of the land or so hopelessly in debt that the land was used as collateral and subsequently lost. In 1895 there were only two licensed houses for alcohol in Nebaj. In the years of the coffee boom between 1915 and 1929 there was a proliferation of cantinas selling alcohol, at one time reaching almost 80. The Ixils lost much of their best land to pay-off debts.89 The method of making people alcoholics is an effective technique to impoverish them, in Europe and Africa as well as in the Americas.

The Ixils struggled to keep their land and there were many incidents and confrontations. In the beginning of the century, they struggled not only against the Ladinos expanding into the region, but also against other municipalities, among them Aguacatán and Chiantla. A large part of the territory which now belongs to these municipalities originally was the territory of the Ixils. Thus, the Ixils lost a lot of their land in the coffee boom at the turn of the century. However, the expansion of agrarian capitalism required even more land. During the 1920s, the most severe confrontations with big Ladino plantation owners occurred.90

The struggle for the municipal land was led by Ixil principals, leaders of the civil-religious hierarchy. The people viewed the leaders who were active at the turn of the century in mixed regard when the anthropologist Lincoln visited the area. Those acting as champions of the land were the same despots who collected taxes from the lower social classes. The same attitudes toward the principals were valid during Lincoln's stay. Two of the most influential principals in Nebaj at the end of the 1930s cast-off the Ixil customs and became ladinosized. Some of the principals were plantation owners or labor contractors, and they copied the methods of the Ladinos.91 Thus, the expansion of agrarian capitalism meant growing class differences among the Ixils. Even among the Ladinos there were large differences between classes. Most were small land-owners, while a few owned huge plantations.

In 1934, the dictator Jorge Ubico replaced debt peonage with a new system of forced labor for controlling the indigenous labor force. Maya men without

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90 Catholic priest D, interview April 12, 1994. For instance D. McCreery 1994:298, reports a riot in Ilom, Chajul in 1924, when a surveyor hired by outsiders to mark off a tract of land was put in the local jail by the Ixils, who tried to stop the Ladino's attempt to release him. The Guatemalan press interpreted the event in favor of the Ladinos as usual at the time.
remunerated employment had to work 100 days a year for a low salary, above all with construction of roads. Men with more than 60 cuadras of land avoided this. To escape, many people accepted to work for local plantation owners in exchange for loans. The result was that poor people lost the little land they had when they placed their holdings as security for the loans. The new laws rekindled the tensions between Ixils and Ladinos. The most serious conflict and outbreak of violence in the history of Nebaj before the war of the 1970s and 1980s happened in 1936. In the 1930s, a number of Ixils fled to the hills repeating their earlier behavior to escape taxes and forced labor. The Nebaj local authorities searched for these people in every corner of the region, making it more difficult to evade the authorities by fleeing into remote mountains.

In the early 1940s, there was still no real road connecting the Ixil region with Sacapulas and the department capital Santa Cruz del Quiché. The road was built in 1942 with forced labor and under heavy opposition from the Ixils. Because of their resistance, about one hundred Ixils were sent to Petén to perform other forced labor tasks, where almost everybody died and few returned to the Ixil country.

The construction of the road between Nebaj and Sacapulas reinforced the position of Nebaj as the leading “urban” center in the area where most of the Ladinos lived. During the nineteenth century the town of Cotzal had been the leading commercial center in the Ixil region. However, agrarian capitalism robbed the area of its best land which was lost to the Brol family, owner of the San Francisco plantation.

The growing influence of the Ladinos at the expense of the Ixils was also apparent in local governments. In the 1920s, the town halls in the three Ixil municipalities were taken over by Ladinos. All of the civil service jobs in the town halls were held by Ladinos, while the role of the Ixils was diminished. In 1932, elected mayors were replaced by intendentes appointed by Ubico, a system which lasted until the ouster of Ubico in 1944. Until the 1970s all mayors in Nebaj were Ladinos.

The so-called liberal era in Guatemala ended in 1944 when Ubico was ousted from power. The vagrancy laws were abolished and workers and peasants were allowed to organize trade unions. The governments of Arévalo and Arbenz encouraged education, and in 1952 the law concerning land reform was enacted.

The democratic period between 1944 and 1954 was significant for the Ixils. People in Cotzal and Chajul struggled successfully to retake their land from the largest plantations. With the new land reform law, 52 caballerías (2,343

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92 B.N. Colby and P.L. van den Berghe 1977:91; D. Stoll 1992:32; Catholic catechist D, interview April 24, 1994, who was talking from his own memories of this time.
94 Catholic catechist D, interview April 24, 1994.
hectares) were repossessed from the La Perla plantation in Chajul, and 86 caballerías (3,875 hectares) from the San Francisco plantation in Cotzal. These properties were expropriated and given to Ixil villages. However, nothing was expropriated in Nebaj. It was also during this period the first bilingual education for Ixils started, with severe resistance from the Ladino upper class. Earlier very few Ixil children had the opportunity to go to school.

The counterrevolution in 1954 ended the democratic era, and land reform in the Ixil region and throughout Guatemala. The land expropriated from the plantations was given back to its former owners. However, it was not possible to stem the efforts made on education, which would give lasting results. New Ixil leaders had emerged who were teachers and bilingual promoters. During the 1950s and 1960s the churches would increase their role in these efforts.

During the 1970s and 1980s the large coffee plantations occupied the most fertile land in the valleys of the Ixil area. The Brol family’s San Francisco plantation in Cotzal was the largest plantation in El Quiché. At its largest, it extended over 12,000 hectares, but in 1994 it had decreased to less than half that size. The next plantation in size in the Ixil area was the La Perla plantation in Chajul—owned by the Arenas—covering 3,466 hectares at the beginning of the 1980s. (During my last visit to the Ixil area in 1994, the owners had gone abroad and the plantation was in financial ruin.) Side by side with the cultivation of cash crops for export such as coffee and cardamom were the fincas de mozo, tracts of plantations rented to peasants for cultivating corn. The allotment of land assigned to export crops depended on the international market prices.

Many Ixil men, and sometimes whole families, work as seasonal laborers on the plantations in the area, but above all at the Pacific coast. They are employed by labor contractors, who work in the Ixil region for the benefit of the plantations. The rest of the year most Ixils cultivate their milpa on plots which usually yield less than a normal family’s subsistence requirements. A large number of workers emigrate to the coast in August. Then the people return in November, December or January. The system requires a great deal of cooperation among neighbors, because it is impossible to leave a village totally abandoned during the seasonal migration. The inhabitants have to make sure that some people will stay to watch over the village and take care of the animals.

In accordance with their tradition, most Ixils live scattered throughout the countryside. The town of Nebaj is the most “urbanized” population center in

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98 According to Fernando Brol, one of the three brothers who own the plantation, San Francisco was on 250 caballerías when as largest. In 1994, it had decreased to 90 caballerías. F. Brol, interview April 19, 1994. One caballeria is slightly less than 50 hectares. During the years I visited the Ixil area this plantation was in the center of several disputes, when municipals and individuals claimed land from the plantation.
the area. Two daily buses ran between Nebaj and Santa Cruz del Quiché and there was the only telephone in the area during the time of my visits. The school in Nebaj is the best equipped in the area, and includes high school. The Ladinos living in the Ixil region are concentrated in Nebaj. They dominate the center of the town, while most Ixils live on the outskirts. However, this does not mean that owners of the largest plantations live here. These owners abandoned the region for living in the capital many years ago, visiting their plantations only occasionally, when they arrive in their private aircraft for short stays.

The Return of Orthodox Christianity

If orthodox Catholicism and Protestantism are compared to the Ixil religion, based on traditional religious specialists and the cofradías, the two former appear as orthodox Christianity, with similar doctrines which are distant from the Ixil religion. Even if the Catholic-Protestant divergency has been important in Guatemala many times during the present century it should not be forgotten that both of them are Christian twin traditions springing from the same philosophical and theological roots. Catholic-Protestant contradictions have many times been superficial when compared to the deeper contradiction between Christianity and Maya religion. Consequently it is appropriate to group the twentieth century arrival of orthodox Catholicism and Protestantism in the Ixil area under the same heading—orthodox Christianity—when seen from Ixil perspective. At the same time it is necessary to point out that Catholicism had been present in the Ixil area for several hundred years and was integrated with the Ixil religion. Many Ixils were baptized as Catholics and had their own interpretation of their Catholic identity. This “old” non-orthodox Catholicism must be distinguished from the orthodox Catholicism that arrived in the twentieth century.

Orthodox Catholicism first returned to the Ixil area when the Ladinos settled there at the end of the nineteenth century. The new influx had little affect on the Ixils, however. Ladinos were orthodox Catholics, if interested in religion at all, while the Ixils continued to be “old” or “syncretic” Catholics. Followers of the religious traditions were divided along ethnic lines. This situation would not change until the 1950s. Encouraged by the Vatican, the Roman Catholic Church in all of Latin America increased its evangelization efforts in the 1950s. In Guatemala, after the coup d’état in 1954, this new wave of Catholic evangelization became strongly connected to the U.S. and Guatemalan efforts to stop what was considered to be Communism.

In 1955, the Catholic regular order of los Misioneros del Sagrado Corazón, MSC (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart)—which was founded as a missionary order in nineteenth century France—became responsible for evangelizing El Quiché. The province was at that time a part of the diocese of Sololá. However, El Quiché was considered as something of a mission territory until the
diocese of El Quiché was established in 1967. The Catholic Church considered the area to be almost non-evangelized. The MSC missionaries came from Spain, and between 1955 and 1973 all of the priests evangelizing in El Quiché belonged to this order. This facilitated unity in the pastoral approach.\textsuperscript{100}

The first MSC missionaries who came to El Quiché and the Ixil area were shocked by poverty, injustice, and by what they considered to be superstition. Their first period is marked by their attempts to exterminate “pagan” customs and to instill orthodox Catholic doctrine among the Ixils. The most obvious results of this work in the Ixil region were visible in Cotzal where two of the MSC priests—Faustino Villanueva and Juan Alonso, who both later would be killed by the army—almost eradicated costumbres and cofradías.\textsuperscript{101}

One of the major confrontations between orthodox Catholicism and traditional Ixil customs concerned questions about Christian marriage. Because most people in the Ixil area were baptized in the Catholic Church, baptism could not be the line of demarcation to distinguish “old” Catholicism from orthodox Catholicism. Instead the MSC priests required a period of instruction before marriage as well as before participation in the sacrament of communion. Still today in the 1990s, it is frequently the Christian marriage which marks the manifestation of conversion to orthodox Catholicism among the Ixils.\textsuperscript{102} Apparently young Ixil men considered that they had more to gain from Christian marriage than the young Ixil women. According to one source, many men in the 1960s tried to force their reluctant women to marry them in the church; an act that would be an important career step on the way to becoming a catechist.\textsuperscript{103}

However, the MSC priests were not alone in their evangelization efforts in El Quiché and in the Ixil region. Before the MSC missionaries, during the time of Arbenz in 1953, the first catechists involved with the Catholic Action movement came to El Quiché from Totonicapán.\textsuperscript{104} The initiative to form Catholic Action came from the Vatican, and it was also an official initiative from the Catholic Church that was the force behind the establishing of the movement in the Guatemalan highlands. However, in contrast to the situation in other parts of the country, the first Catholic Action board in Nebaj became closely involved with the Arbenz’ land reform committee. Thus, in spite of other intentions by the founders, in Nebaj the Catholic Action became an instrument for Ixils in their attempts to win back Ixil territory. This happened in a struggle against Ixil principals who sided with the Ladinos.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Y dieron la vida por El Quiché...} 1992:15,30–31.
\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Y dieron la vida por El Quiché...} 1992:29–30; Catholic priest H, interview June 3, 1992.
\textsuperscript{102} An Ixil man who was 88 years old in 1994, told me that his parents married in the church when they were young a very long time ago. This means that marriage not was entirely absent among the Ixils before the Catholic evangelization efforts in the 1950s. Traditional religious specialist, interview April 24, 1994.
\textsuperscript{103} Catholic priest D, interview, April 13, 1994.
\textsuperscript{104} Catholic priest H, interview June 3, 1992.
\textsuperscript{105} Catholic priest D, interviews April 12 and April 13, 1994.
Apparently some other principals and people from the *cofradias* participated together with Catholic Action in the land reform committee.\(^{106}\)

After the counterrevolution in 1954 all members in the Nebaj land reform committee were captured and taken to jail in Santa Cruz del Quiché.\(^{107}\) This included the whole Catholic Action board. Because of its involvement in the land reform efforts, the Catholic Action of Nebaj was targeted for repression by the Castillo Armas regime, which is not the case concerning the movement in other parts of rural Guatemala. Catholic Action in Nebaj was nearly eradicated. To survive, it changed its direction to becoming a closed, legalistic, and conservative movement in the 1960s. The main concern in the church during this time was the power struggle between Catholic Action and the *cofradias*. It was in this conservative form that Catholic Action spread from Nebaj to Cotzal and Chajul.\(^{108}\)

The growth of orthodox Catholicism among the Ixils did not mean that the division and antagonism between Ixils and Ladinos disappeared. The ethnic divisions continued to be the most important areas of conflict. This is obvious for instance in the election of 1966, which was analyzed by Colby and van den Berghe. In Nebaj, Partido Institucional Democratico, PID, became a Ladino party, while Partido Revolucionario, PR, became an Ixil party. However, in Chajul it was the other way around. The Catholic catechists in Chajul were so many and well-organized that they held control over the local government at the middle of the 1960s. PID was their party, while PR was a Ladino party. Also Cotzal was governed by an Ixil-dominated PID-administration.\(^{109}\) Obviously the conflict between Ixils and Ladinos was more important than different party ideologies. Now, when both Ixils and Ladinos could be orthodox Catholics the ethnic differences became visible in party politics.

No special studies about the history of the Catholic Action movement in the Ixil area have been made. However, the results of the studies made by Ricardo Falla, Douglas E. Brintnall and Kay B. Warren in other parts of the highlands seem to be relevant for the Ixil area, even if differences also exist. These studies indicate that the growth of Catholic Action was connected to a revolt against gerontocracy, in which younger men rebelled against the old order. This was fueled by anger directed at the principals who had accommodated the Ladinos and betrayed indigenous interests. The Catholic priests used the younger generation in their struggle against the *cofradias* and the traditional religion. At the same time these young catechists used the church as a force to serve their own ends, against the principals and their fathers who did not want to share power with them.\(^{110}\)

\(^{106}\) Catholic catechist D, interview April 24, 1994.
\(^{107}\) Ibid.
\(^{108}\) Catholic priest D, interview April 12 and April 13, 1994.
Catholic Action and Liberation Christianity

In the 1970s, a new movement was born inside Ixil's Catholic Action groups, similar to other Catholic Action movements in Guatemala. The movement can be called liberation Christianity and it gave expression to the struggle for changing social structures. This movement became more open-minded both to the perspective of class struggle—implying that the Ixils should work together with other Mayas and poor Ladinos to promote social and political change—and to Ixil traditionalism. The Ixil women played an important role in this new movement and they demanded a board for women in Catholic Action, which was established accordingly. Progressive priests and nuns from the Catholic regular orders promoted this movement through their work of "conscientization." But the role of priests and nuns should not be overestimated. The radicalization of Catholic Action happened whatever the will of the official representatives of the Catholic Church. The Ixil catechists did not need a priest to tell them about liberation. The radicalization of Catholic Action in the Ixil region had its roots in the Ixil people's increasing difficulties for economic survival at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. Catholic Action was part of a larger movement of popular organizing, which forged links to the growing organizing activities among plantation workers. In spite of the changing priorities, vestiges of the older, more conservative Catholic Action movement from the 1960s survived in the Ixil area during the 1970s.

It is important to note that the connection between Catholic Action and politics had started long before the new movement of the 1970s. Already in the 1950s there existed close relations between the Catholic Action and the Guatemalan Christian Democratic party (DCG), in the Ixil region and in other parts of the country. These two organizations have an intertwined history. The radicalization of Christian Democrat activists on the Guatemalan countryside, as well as the army's persecution of DCG activists of all ideological shades, parallel the history of Catholic Action.

After the 1954 coup d'état, there was a struggle among different political forces to control the Mayas and recruit them to different cadres. Parties such as the Christian Democrats tried to entice the Maya leaders. That is why the Christian Democratic party became strong in El Quiché. The party became very involved with Catholic Action and also received support from many priests. One of the priests who was considered to be especially involved with the Christian Democrats was Faustino Villanueva. He was accused of encouraging people to vote for this party.

In the beginning of the 1960s, when the USAID operated through the Catholic Church in Guatemala, the church in the Ixil region, including Catholic Action, also began to work with development projects. Catholic Action

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111 R. Bendaña, interview April 7, 1994.
started to teach in Spanish and became a strong movement in the 1960s. The movement worked to create cooperatives, build schools, provide health care, and with political training. The support for the Christian Democrats was very strong. In Nebaj, a local branch of the Christian Democratic party was established in 1965, and most of the members were Catholic Action catechists. However, at this time, the party was still illegal, and in the election of 1966 the local contests were still contests between PR and PID.

The First Phase of Protestantism in Ixil

The first Protestant presence in the Ixil region was Thomas Pullin, a missionary from the United States, who lived in Nebaj together with his family in the 1920s and 1930s. Pullin was a Pentecostal missionary, but worked for the Primitive Methodist Church charged with the responsibility for El Quiché from the comity agreement. The name of the church in Nebaj was Iglesia Evangelica Pentecostal (Evangelical Pentecostal Church). However, the Pullins had no success among the Ixils, but only among the Ladinos. The rich Ladino families went to the church, while there also existed a nucleus of poorer Ladinos in the church. When the Pullins left Nebaj in the 1930s most of their parishioners returned to the Catholic Church. Thomas Pullin continued to work in the department of El Quiché, increasingly involved with the Full Gospel Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), which he officially joined in 1944. However, he did not return to Nebaj and the mission there apparently did not leave any lasting results.

From the 1950s Protestantism has had a more permanent and growing presence in the Ixil region. At first progress was slow. In 1969, there were only 139 baptized converts in the area. At this time the population in the Ixil area totaled about 50,000 persons. The Protestant converts lived in Nebaj and Cotzal. As late as in 1978 there was still no Protestant church in Chajul. The Primitive Methodist Church and the Full Gospel Church of God were the only Protestant churches active in the area. The Primitive Methodist Church was administered by a U.S. missionary couple. According to local memories, this couple was more socially committed than the Pullins had been, and they worked with development projects in the villages. Another

114 D. Stoll 1992:49.
115 D. Stoll 1992:155; M. Son T. [1982]; Nebajeño C, interview April 26, 1994; Cf. R. Waldrop 1993:30. According to Waldrop, the church flourished also when the Pullins had left Nebaj in 1934.
117 According to the national census of 1964, there were 49,021 persons living in the Ixil area. Reported in D. Stoll 1993:49.

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U.S. missionary presence was Wycliffe Bible translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics that started to work in the Ixil area in 1953 with the declared purpose of translating the New Testament to Ixil.

Many of the first evangelical converts were neither Ixils nor really Ladinos. Instead they belonged to a third group that first appeared during the time of Ubico. These were the children to Ladino men and Ixil women. They viewed themselves as Ladinos, but did not really feel at home among them and were not totally accepted. They had no economic, social or religious presence in the Ladino world. They could speak Ixil, but did not participate in the social and cultural life of the Ixils. Other new organizations developed in this mixed group such as Alcoholics Anonymous and the first football team.119

In spite of the strong presence of U.S. missionaries in the Ixil area very few Ixils converted to evangelical churches before the war in the 1970s. A friendly relationship existed between Catholics and evangelicals. The Catholic priest in Nebaj during the 1970s and the U.S. missionaries in the Primitive Methodist Church had good relations. Between the Catholic priests and the U.S. missionaries of Summer Institute of Linguistics relations were more tense, apparently due to the more aggressive stand against Catholics by the Summer Institute of Linguistics.120

119 Catholic priest D, interview April 12, 1994.
120 The more aggressive stand against Catholicism by Summer Institute of Linguistics was clear, for instance, from R. Elliot, interview February 22, 1994.
CHAPTER 3


Introduction

The devastating earthquake on February 4, 1976, which killed 25,000 persons and left more than 1.25 million homeless, sparked off a wave of Protestant growth in Guatemala. Before the earthquake only a few percent of the Guatemalan population was Protestant. In a short period of time after the earthquake, the number of Protestants grew to 13 percent of the population.\(^1\) In 1980, Protestants made up about 18 percent.\(^2\) The methods used to derive these figures can be questioned, which is why they should not be seen as exact calculations. However, they show a clear tendency toward a strong Protestant growth. In 1980, the Protestants were divided within about 210 different denominations and independent churches. Most of all, the Pentecostal churches were growing. In 1960, Pentecostals made up 20 percent of the Protestants in Guatemala. In 1978, half of Guatemalan Protestants were Pentecostals.\(^3\)

It was not until the end of the 1970s that Protestantism began to have influence among the upper social classes in Guatemala. While the Pentecostal churches were growing on the countryside and in the marginal areas of the cities, the neo-Pentecostal churches were growing among the well-off in the cities. Among the largest Pentecostal churches were the Assemblies of God, Full Gospel Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)—both with roots in the United States—and Prince of Peace, which was indigenous to Guatemala. Many of the Pentecostal churches with domestic roots appeared because of divisions within the older denominations. Among the neo-Pentecostal churches, the Verbo Christian Ministries, Shekinah, and Living Water Teaching can be mentioned among the ones established by U.S. missions. El Shaddai and Christian Fraternity are independent Guatemalan churches, but still have strong influences coming from the United States. In addition, other churches with a longer history in the country were strongly influenced by neo-Pentecostalism. Among them are Elim, Calvary Church, Gateway of Heaven (Puerta del Cielo), and Rains of Grace (Lluvias de Gracia).

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\(^1\) V. Garrard-Burnett 1989:2–3.
After the earthquake a large amount of foreign organizations arrived in Guatemala to contribute with emergency aid, most of them Protestant organizations from the United States. Many Guatemalans describe this course of events as "an invasion of sects." One must examine the empirical evidence to see if it supports this view. Among the sources that give information about U.S. mission and Guatemalan church growth during the period dealt with in this chapter, the following must especially be mentioned. The directory from PROCADES from 1981 gives information about which Protestant churches and organizations operated in Guatemala around the time 1979 and 1980. The number of members in every denomination is noted, as well as information about which churches are national independent denominations and which have a mother organization in the United States or another country. The directory also gives an overview of the churches operating in every Guatemalan municipality.\(^4\) Related to this directory is the Guatemalan section of the MARC (the research department of World Vision) guide to world Christianity, which was edited by Clifton Holland, the director of PROCADES.\(^5\)

In 1982, the overview of the history of the Protestant churches in Guatemala, written by Virgilio Zapata, was published. In this volume a large number of churches and organizations are considered. Zapata gives account of their arrival or appearance in Guatemala, church divisions, and so on.\(^6\) Further, the *Mission Handbook* of MARC notes in which countries of the world different U.S. mission organizations operate. The handbook also gives the years when operations began, the number of missionaries, and the total incomes of the organizations.\(^7\)

The purpose of the four above-mentioned sources is to promote Christian faith. A fifth source, provided by the Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, has another purpose, namely to serve those who want to make critical analysis of the role of private organizations and the U.S. influence in Guatemala. In this directory private organizations with connections to the United States are listed, irrespective of their purposes, which could be, for instance, religious, developmental, educational, business, and so on. Different kinds of official aid from the U.S. government to private organizations are also registered.\(^8\)

When these directories are analyzed it becomes clear that the overwhelming Protestant church growth in Guatemala from 1976 to 1981 can be traced to denominations and independent churches, ones already operating there long before the earthquake. Many of the new churches were the result of splits from old ones, and only very few appeared as the result of church planting.

\(^4\) IINDEF, PROCADES, and SEPAL 1981. PROCADES stands for Proyecto Centroamericano de Estudios Socio-Religiosos and was set up by IINDEF (Instituto Internacional de Evangelización a Fondo).

\(^5\) C.L. Holland, ed. 1981.

\(^6\) V. Zapata Arceyuz 1982.

\(^7\) J. Siewert and S. Wilson, eds. 1986; W.D. Roberts and J.A. Siewert, eds. 1989.

\(^8\) The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center 1988.
efforts from the United States. However, after the earthquake, many of these churches spread to areas where they had no prior operations, and new congregations were established in these parts of the country. Many persons on the Guatemalan countryside, including Catholic priests and catechists, experienced these new congregations as newcomers in the villages. They thought that these bodies belonged to churches that were recently established in the country, while in fact they frequently had operated a long time in Guatemala. Most of the few new U.S. missions, which established Protestant congregations between 1976 and 1981, had rather limited fields of operations, mainly in the capital city. They cannot account for the increase in Protestant growth.\(^9\)

Another important fact is that the increased growth of Protestantism may have begun already before the earthquake. After an average annual growth of 18.3 percent between 1960 and 1964, the growth slowed to an annual average of 6 percent between 1964 and 1973. Then it increased again to 20 percent annually between 1974 and 1978.\(^10\) These figures point to the increased crisis after the presidential election of 1974 as another important factor in Protestant growth. Thus, to speak of a wave in Protestant growth after the earthquake implies that larger parts of the country were affected by a larger amount of Protestant churches, not that there were changes in the percentage of annual growth. To call this course of events an “invasion of sects” does not seem to be very appropriate.

However, employ a description of an “invasion” from the United States after the earthquake could be more appropriate when it comes to parachurch agencies, relief and development organizations, and so on. Many new organizations of this kind arrived during the years after the earthquake. Some of them were entirely dedicated to relief and development aid, while others took the chance to promote Protestant church growth by helping the churches already established in the country and mixing their evangelization efforts with relief support. The earthquake and the successive flow of foreign organizations and money were thus significant factors behind the opportunity for churches to expand their operations to more extensive areas of Guatemala, and to acquire more members for the churches. An expression frequently heard among non-Protestants in Guatemala is *lamina por anima*, meaning that the Protestants exchanged roofing for souls.\(^11\)

Through the National Reconstruction Committee, the Guatemalan army became responsible for coordinating the foreign aid that arrived after the

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\(^9\) This is true, for instance, concerning the following well-known organizations: Gospel Outreach, which established the Verbo Christian Ministries in the Guatemalan capital in 1976; Latin American Missionary Challenge, which organized Shekinah in the capital in 1979; and Living Water Teaching, which started its operations in Quetzaltenango in 1979.


\(^11\) There was also another logic behind relief aid and Protestant growth after the earthquake. According to Virginia Garrard-Burnett, many churches wanted to help their own members affected by the earthquake. One can imagine that this made membership in Protestant churches attractive. [V.Garrard-Burnett] V. Carroll Garrard 1986:185–186.
earthquake. During the coming years this committee continued to coordinate everything that was classified as a "national emergency." Basically, this meant military civic action projects related to the war. All religious and non-religious organizations bringing goods to Guatemala—for instance, food or construction materials—found themselves involved with the army, whatever they wished themselves.

However, the course of these events was not without contradictions. For many conservative churches in Guatemala, the earthquake also precipitated a minor openness for social and political concerns. Fundamentalists, who before the earthquake had maintained that the church should keep away from social concerns, now had to admit the impossibility of such a position, and they saw that the churches could gain from being more socially concerned.

The religious organizations from the United States that arrived in Guatemala after the earthquake maintained widely differing ideological and theological views. Except the many Catholic organizations with different positions, for instance, various Mennonite organizations and the Salvation Army had prominent roles. Among the Mennonites, as well as among the Catholics, there were those who sympathized with the theology of liberation, but also other conservative groups. Thus, the whole political spectrum was present among the North American organizations. But the influence of conservative religious organizations was significant on the Protestant side, and it became even more so at the end of the 1970s when the situation hardened in Guatemala. At this time many of the more moderate organizations were forced to close their operations and leave the country, while the conservative ones managed to stay.

It is important to note that many of the conservative parachurch agencies, which arrived in Guatemala during the years after the earthquake, were not parts of churches, neither in the United States nor in Guatemala. The work done by these agencies was not the result of democratic decisions inside the churches, but by some leaders, who often had strong political connections. They came from the "outside" and tried to influence the churches from above. Their work mainly was not to create new churches but to influence already existing ones. The same was true for the electronic church, which expanded its broadcasting in radio and television in Guatemala and all of Latin America during the 1970s and 1980s. The main purpose of the religious broadcasters and the parachurch agencies was not to create sects at the fringe of the society but to reach right into the mainstream of Christianity.

Many U.S. Protestant organizations in Guatemala also began operations in other Latin American countries. Protestant church growth, promoted by internal and external factors, is not unique to Guatemala as considerable growth has taken place in most Latin American countries. However, the impact of

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13 See for example L. Jones [1990] for the expansion of Christian broadcasting in the Americas.
Protestantism in Guatemala during the 1970s and 1980s has no parallel in any other Latin American country.

This chapter will first consider the political events in Guatemala from 1976 to 1982 and the role of Catholicism concerning the legitimization of, and protest against, persisting social structures and political violence. Then the discussion will turn to the United States and the U.S. foreign policy of the time, as well as the background to the organizations that can be included within Political Evangelicalism. The last part of the chapter deals with the religious background to Political Evangelicalism in Guatemala.

From Laugerud García to Lucas García

In Defense of "Private Initiative"

According to Cesar Sereseres, the political order in Guatemala was built on an alliance between big landowners on the countryside and the urban economic upper class. These groups were not primarily kept together because of anti-Communism, but by "private initiative," implying fear of state expansion. Their coalition with the army existed primarily for guaranteeing that the state kept away from an intervention in the economic sphere. According to Sereseres, the development of events in Guatemala is better understood from the perspective of "private initiative" than from the east-west perspective of "anti-Communism" and "revolution." 14

Sereseres's analysis of the ruling coalition in Guatemala is too stright forward in my view. However, it is interesting to note that he, a national security adviser during Reagan's presidency, found deeper causes to the problems in the country than the East-West conflict. Many Latin American experts close to the Reagan administration had a much deeper understanding of the problems in Guatemala and Latin America than those expressed in the Reagan administration's rhetoric to the public. 15

The most important aspects of protecting the "private initiative" concerned preventing a more extensive land reform, keeping taxes down, and stopping an effective labor legislation, that is, maintaining status quo in the country. The events in the 1970s, which led to a revolutionary situation in Guatemala, can be analyzed in the following way: changes on an economic level created a crisis, which led to social polarization. This polarization caused a political

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14 C. Sereseres 1985:104-105. When considering Sereseres' view on the ruling coalition to be too stright forward, I hint at the fact that it is difficult to separate landowners on the countryside from the urban economic upper class as different groups.

15 According to L. Schoultz 1987, Latin America was a grey zone in the east-west conflict and high-level officials in U.S. foreign policy paid more attention to areas like, for instance, the Middle East. Therefore the Latin American experts within the policy making process had to convince high-level officials that the situation in Latin America was an urgent threat to the security of the United States, if the continent would be brought to the top priority foreign policy issues. Consequently, they placed Latin America within the framework of the east-west conflict.
crisis, which produced a revolutionary crisis. Religion became deeply involved in these events. The following description of the economic and social crises is built basically on Gabriel Aguilera Peralta & Jorge Romero Imery, Edelberto Torres Rivas, and Susanne Jonas. 16

Economic and Social Crises

The economic crisis was caused by the form of capitalist modernization brought about from the 1950s through the 1970s, which created a rural subsistence crisis. This modernization primarily led to an expansion in export agriculture. Nontraditional agricultural products were introduced in addition to the old ones. Up to the 1970s this policy led to economic growth, while the negative effects still were not so visible. Yet, the expansion of this sector led to an acceleration in the expropriation of small peasant landholdings. Since there was no land reform, neither subsistence agriculture nor industrialization efforts would work. Because of the rural subsistence crisis there was no internal market for an import-substituting industrialization. For this reason the industrial sector experienced a decline in profits during the 1970s. Thus, Guatemala entered the 1980s engulfed in a process of de-industrialization. At the end of the 1970s external factors, like the breakdown of the Central American Common Market and the rise in oil prices, aggravated this crisis.

The social effects of the economic growth and crisis were that an increasingly powerful bourgeoisie controlled a larger part of Guatemala's resources. This bourgeoisie consisted of the old oligarchy of plantation owners and a newly emerging sector related to nontraditional agricultural export and industry, closely tied to transnational companies. Sectors of the Guatemalan army also made use of the opportunity to enter the bourgeoisie while in government. However, in the 1970s this social class was highly diversified in investments, and there was not a clear difference between landowners and industrialists. Consequently the bourgeoisie was multifunctional. It was not possible to make a distinction between a traditional landowner bourgeoisie and a progressive industrial bourgeoisie. Because of large foreign investments in the modernization of capitalism in Guatemala, the bourgeoisie never became national, and thereby tied to import-substitution and an interest to develop an internal market. Traditional agrarian exporting interests and the role of foreign capital were never questioned.

The ruling coalition consisted of the bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic-technical class below it. In the latter the army officers were the most visible, but civilian counterparts like professionals and politicians were also included. 17 Next in the hierarchy of social classes in Guatemala came the urban "intermediate strata" that occupied the space of the middle class, which no longer

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17 I use "the ruling coalition" and "the elite" as synonyms in this study. "The economic elite" on the other hand is used as a synonym to "the bourgeoisie."
existed in the traditional sense in the 1970s. However, it filled the same function as a traditional middle class in the sense of being a social and political buffer in society. This class included, for instance, professionals and state bureaucrats, people employed in non-value-generating jobs, for example in the state apparatus.  

At the other end of the social spectrum were the rural semiproletariat, the formal proletariat, and the urban informal proletariat. The expropriation of land from peasants for agro-export production, together with population growth, resulted in a semiproletariat on the countryside, meaning a labor force, which relied partially on waged labor and partially on subsistence agriculture. Peasants could not survive on their small plots but were forced to work on the plantations for economic reasons. By the early 1980s this group had grown to include 600,000 persons.

The formal proletariat included those who were employed full-time in rural and urban parts of the capitalist sectors of the economy. The urban informal proletariat was mainly made up of immigrants to shantytowns, who were employed by the "informal petty bourgeoisie" and whose salaries were not regulated by contracts or official minimum wage laws. Concerning women, there was a decline in female participation in the productive sectors of the economy and also in the percentage of women among professionals. The modern sectors of the economy—export-agriculture and industry—were also the sectors where women had the least access to work. As noted in Chapter 2, class exploitation and ethnic oppression in Guatemala were intertwined. Most of the people at the bottom of the social ladder were Mayas, while most in the upper classes were Ladininos. At the same time a division between poor and rich Mayas became visible in the 1970s.

Political and Revolutionary Crises

The political situation was aggravated after the election fraud in 1974, when the presidency was stolen from General Efraín Ríos Montt of the Christian Democratic Party and given to the official candidate General Kjell Laugerud García of Partido Institucional Democratico, PID. General Ríos Montt had become chief of staff of the Guatemalan army in 1973. According to the usual succession in the army the position as minister of defense or even as president would wait for him as a coronation of his career before retirement. However, Ríos Montt did not hold the position as chief of staff more than a few months. As early as July 1973 the Arana Osorio regime sent him in retreat as director of studies at the Inter-American School of Defense in Washington. Thus, his military career was over.

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18 The urban "intermediate strata" could also be called an "urban petty bourgeoisie."
19 The developments described in this section are common knowledge in Guatemala and are described in numerous books. See for example S. Jonas 1991; E. Torres-Rivas 1989; J. Dunkerley 1990; J. Painter 1989; and J. Simon 1987.
20 See for example J. Anfuso and D. Sczepanski 1986:60.
Exploring the issue further, we find that Ríos Montt attracted enemies both among the political right and the political left. Consequently there had been strong pressure on him to leave his position as commander-in-chief. The most spectacular incident was the massacre in Sansirisay in 1973 for which Ríos Montt was considered responsible. This was the first massacre on Mayas in Guatemala in the 1970s and it was a response to peasant's struggling to keep their land. Ríos Montt was not only responsible as commander-in-chief but was also accused of being present in Sansirisay, personally ordering the massacre.

But it is not very likely that the extremely corrupt Arana regime in power at that moment wanted to get rid of Ríos Montt because he ordered a massacre on Mayas. Rather this was a pretext to remove him. Ríos Montt was conside­red to be a dangerous person because he was seen as slightly more reformist and less corrupt than the other generals. Thus, it is more likely that Arana's fear of a coup d'etat or the risk that Ríos Montt would hinder election fraud were the reasons behind his removal.

Ríos Montt stayed in Washington only for about three months. He then returned to Guatemala, at this time as the presidential candidate for the Christian Democratic Party. It is common knowledge that Ríos Montt was the rightful winner of the presidential election of 1974 when he ran for the opposition coalition with the Christian Democrats and others. Because of election fraud the presidential post was given to the army's candidate General Kjell Laugerud García. To the disappointment of many Guatemalans, Ríos Montt did not stay in the country to struggle for his right to the presidency and for a political change. Despite many offers of help, he accepted another retreat position, this time as a military attaché in Spain.

The Laugerud regime wanted to get rid of all political competitors and thus killed the leaders of the political left and other opposition groups. But the violence did not stop here. It also entered the ruling coalition, politically expressed in the three parties Partido Institucional Democráti­co, PID (the party of the president), Movimiento Liberación Nacional, MLN (the party of Vice President Mario Sandóval Alarcon) and Central Auténtico Nacionalista, CAN (the party of former President Carlos Arana Osorio). The power strug­gles inside the ruling coalition were mainly about economic policies. Death squad battles between PID-MLN on one side and CAN on the other side followed.

In the months after the earthquake of February 1976, 50,000 persons mi­grated to the capital to join the hundreds of thousands of homeless people who lived there. The earthquake accelerated the formation of grassroots organizations on the countryside, mainly from the basis of self-help organiza­

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21 Democracia Cristiana built up the opposition coalition together with FURD and the cleanest sector of PR. The coalition was called Frente Nacional de Oposición, FNO, and Ríos Montt thus became presidential candidate for this coalition. C.R. Soto 1992:8–9.
tions and construction brigades that were formed for rebuilding the areas
damaged by the disaster. In May 1978, Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC)
appeared in public, short time after the shift in power from Kjell Laugerud to
Lucas García, in a new election fraud. CUC was a national peasant organiza-
tion including both Mayas and poor Ladinos, both subsistence peasants and
agricultural workers. It was repressed by the army from the moment the or-
ganization appeared. The first incident was the massacre at Panzós in Alta
Verapaz in May 1978. Seven hundred Q'eqchi' Indians had come to Panzós to
protest against land expropriations. The army killed over hundred of them
and dumped the bodies in mass graves.23 The event became a turning point,
which raised the consciousness of the Mayan population generally and led to
increased sympathies for the emerging guerrilla movements. In 1975, two
new guerrilla movements announced themselves: the Organization of People
in Arms, ORPA, and the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, EGP. Contrary to the
older guerrilla movements, the new ones had their base in the Mayan high-
lands and they worked for mobilizing the Mayas. They considered the fo-
quismo theory of Che Guevara not to work, as the army successfully won the
victory in the war against the guerrilla movements in the eastern part of the
country during the 1960s. Consequently, ORPA and EGP worked carefully
for mobilizing the civil population. However, there was a continuity between
the new guerrilla movements and the older ones. The new ones were founded
by survivors among the guerrilla leaders from the 1960s: Luis Turcio Lima,
Marco Antonio Yon Sosa, and Cesar Montes. Turcio Lima and Yon Sosa had
once been officials in the Guatemalan army. They left the army after the failed
coup attempt in 1960.

After the revolution in Nicaragua in 1979 the conflict escalated. The course
of events in Nicaragua awakened hopes about a change of the situation in
Guatemala. More people turned to the guerrillas. At the same time, the ruling
cal's fear of a possible change of structures led to increased repression by
the army. The same year, two of the most prominent leaders from Ríos Montt's
opposition coalition in the election of 1974, Alberto Fuentes Mohr and
Manuel Colom Argueta, were killed by the army. They had been expected to
run in the election of 1982. Another important date was the massacre at the
Spanish Embassy, in January, 1980. A delegation of peasants from El Quiché,
organized in CUC, peacefully occupied the Spanish Embassy to protest against
military repression in their villages. Despite protests by Spanish diplomats, the
Guatemalan riot police set fire to the embassy building, burning alive every-
body inside. After this event whole Mayan communities were incorporated
into the revolutionary movement. In February of the same year a CUC-organ-
ized strike on the sugar and cotton plantations on the southern coast stopped
the harvest and forced the government to increase the minimum wage.

23 The event has been reported by different organizations and human rights agencies. See for
example CONFREGUA 1988.
In 1980 and 1981, the massive retaliation by the army, usually called the "scorched earth campaign," brought about massacres and the burning of whole villages. During the Lucas García government and the successive governments of Ríos Montt and Mejía Victores, about 440 Mayan villages were totally destroyed. A large amount of the population in the country was displaced. At the beginning of 1982 the army reckoned that 200,000 people were committed to participation in armed struggle against the government. However, all of them could not realize their intent due to lack of arms. In addition, there were all the sympathizers to the guerrillas.\(^{24}\)

Not only peasants and agricultural workers but also other sectors of Guatemalan society became increasingly active in protests and organizing efforts in the 1970s. In 1975, the struggle was initiated to create an independent union at the Coca-Cola plant.\(^{25}\) During the following years the army, with the approval of the manager of the plant, killed or forced all leaders of the union to leave the country. The events at the plant awoke solidarity actions both in Guatemala and internationally. With the purpose of supporting the Coca-Cola workers, a united labor front was soon built (Comité Nacional de Unidad Sindical, CNUS). CNUS united independent unions, both Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo, PGT (the Communist Party), and Christian Democratic forces.

People from the middle sectors of society also had a prominent role in the struggle for change, for instance, students, academics, professionals, and not least, teachers. The national university, San Carlos, had been an important center for left-wing activism already in the 1960s, and suffered repression accordingly. The middle sectors of society were an important base of recruitment for both the guerrilla movements and the army, as well as for Catholic priests, nuns and Protestant pastors.

Contradictions within the Roman Catholic Church

The emergence of grassroot organizations in Guatemala during the 1970s cannot be understood without taking the Catholic Church into consideration. The role and effects of Catholic Action, as well as the radicalization of some priests and nuns during the 1960s and early 1970s, has already been discussed in Chapter 2.\(^{26}\)

The impact of the Second Vatican Council 1962–1965, the Medellín conference in 1968, and the growing influence of theology of liberation is important as background, when we want to understand the radicalization of sectors

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\(^{24}\) R. Escobar Argüello, interview May 2, 1994. According to army information, in 1982 the so-called "subversive strategy" involved 175,000 persons. Inforpress Centroamericana, July 5, 1984:5.

\(^{25}\) See H.J. Frundt 1987 for the history of the conflict at the Coca-Cola plant.

\(^{26}\) For a recent history of the Catholic Church in Guatemala, see e.g. R. Bendaña 1985; J.L. Chea Urruela 1988; and L. Samandú, H. Siebers, and O. Sierra 1990.
inside the Catholic Church in Latin America during the 1970s, as is well-known to all researchers and students of religion in Latin America. However, in studying the situation in Guatemala, other factors must also be taken into account. We have already seen in Chapter 2 how Catholic Action, the most important Catholic lay movement on the Guatemalan countryside, came to express a new orientation among people in the indigenous communities: development work and cooperation between Mayas and Ladinos. Further, the Christian Democratic Party used this movement to establish a political base on the countryside.

Thus, the radicalization of sectors inside Catholic Action can be seen partly in relation to developments inside the Christian Democratic Party. The loss of the election of 1974 and the following repression almost forced the party underground and promoted cooperation with the political left. Further, the peasant organization during the 1970s had its center in Catholic Action through the formation of cooperatives and peasant leagues. Thus, there were close connections between CUC and the Catholic Action from the beginning.

Priests, nuns, and lay people became targets of the military repression. During the regimes of Kjell Laugerud and Lucas García, twelve Catholic priests and hundreds of Catholic catechists were killed. Between January 1980 and August 1981, ninety-one Catholic priests and sixty-four nuns fled the country, six Catholic radio stations had to close, and ten schools and forty-two other centers for religious education had to stop their work. Worst was the situation in the department of El Quiche, where the Catholic Church temporarily had to close the diocese from 1980 because of the repression by the army.

These difficulties were accompanied by a debate in the newspapers. Contributions to this debate show how conservative Catholics in the country viewed the changes in the Church. Conservative Catholics expressed their fears about the changes in the Church toward a more progressive stand. A pair of exam-

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27 CONFREGUA 1988. CONFREGUA is the Guatemalan branch of CLAR, which is the Latin American organization for Catholic orders. The Catholic priests killed, and their nationalities, are the following: William Woods (U.S.A.), Hermógenes López Coachita (Guatemala), Conrado de la Cruz (Philippines), Walter Voordeickers (Belgium), José María Gran Cirera (Spain), Faustino Villanueva (Spain), Juan Alonso Fernández (Spain), Carlos Gámez Galindo (Guatemala), Tulio Marcelo Maruzzo (Italy), Carlos Pérez Alonso (Spain), Francis Stanley Rother (U.S.A.), and Carlos Morales (Guatemala). Other well-known Catholic missionaries, nuns, and catechist leaders mentioned by CONFREGUA as killed or disappeared from 1978 to 1982 were Mario Mujía Córdoba, Paulino Morán, Ambrosio Yuyá Suc, Eulalio Guzmán, Vicente Menchú, Gaspar Vivi, María Ramírez Anay, Juana Tun de Menchú with her son Patricio Menchú, Herlindo Cifuentes, Domingo Batz, Marcelino Avila, Marcos Hernández, Pedro Lares, Santos Jiménez Martínez (evangelical pastor), Jerónimo "Don Chono" (evangelical pastor), Reyes Hernández, Diego Quic, Lígia Martínez, Diego Tún Pacheco, Luis Abdulio Navarro, Angel Martínez Rodrigo, Raúl Leger (Canada), John David Troyer (U.S.A), Dora Clemencia Azmitia "Menchy," Victoria de la Roca, Sergio Berten, and James Arnold Miller "Santiago" (U.S.A). During the Mejía Victores government 1983–1985 another priest, Augusto Rafael Ramírez Monasterio (Guatemala), was killed, like the Catholic leaders Prudencio Mendoza and Ma. del Rosario Godoy de Cuevas.

ples from this debate demonstrates the conflict between the different positions.

In January 1979 a representative of Carcor (an organization for coffee cultivators) wrote about his worries concerning the changes in the Catholic Church:

Many of us old Catholics because of family tradition see with surprise how a different Church gradually appears, a Church whose values are directed toward norms, which are different from the ones we knew, and whose concerns no longer are the same.\(^{29}\)

According to the author, the Bible is losing influence in comparison with socio-economic aspects. The sinner is no longer primarily the person who breaks God's commands, but the one who is privileged in the social structure. Poverty is glorified and the one who owns something is damned. The priests, who criticize the upper class, neglect the greater changes that have occurred on behalf of the working class in the country during the last decades. On the coffee plantations, workers frequently earn more than the legal minimum salary, and it is not uncommon to see families earning more than eight quetzales a day. It is possible that there are plantations in Guatemala where the conditions are not very good, maintains the author. However, one should not generalize or dramatize this as some priests do when they criticize the system of economic freedom and devote themselves to "social-marxismo."\(^{30}\)

In 1981, an anonymous article, "Curas del Anticristo" (The Priests of the Anti-Christ), was published in Prensa Libre. The article was an accusation that spoke out against the work of the Catholic Church. According to the author, the theology of liberation wants to give a theological base for Marxism, with the purpose of justifying the kinds of acts as those Stalin did in Ukraine and Pol Pot in Camphuchea. Pope Paul VI is held responsible for the growth of this position in the Catholic Church in Latin America. The task of the present Pope John Paul II is to try to return to "authentic religiosity," for instance, by working against the priests' involvement in politics. The article's focus is mainly on the situation in Nicaragua and the Catholic priests in the Sandinista cabinet. These are called "lying, impudent types," who have forgotten about human rights and abandoned the Nicaraguan's strive for democracy. The article ends with a request to the Catholic hierarchy to recognize their mistake:

Without doubt the non-Communist Catholic countries suffer many limitations, but the possibility to better them exists. They can also reckon with an environment where those who follow the commands of this religion can reach happiness on this earth and in heaven. In Communist countries this hope does not exist. One always suffers of anguish for not knowing where salvation will come from.\(^{31}\)

\(^{29}\) R. Perret 1979. Author's translation from Spanish.
\(^{30}\) Ibid.
\(^{31}\) Prensa Libre, June 15, 1981. Author's translation from Spanish.
In sum, the critique against the Church concerned structural changes. All who promoted these kinds of changes were seen as Communists. But the Catholic Church itself was severely divided in this conflict. Archbishop Msgr. Casariego was as much against structural changes as the Guatemalan elite. In addition, President Kjell Laugerud was a pious Catholic and a member of the fraternity in the church Santo Domingo. This church is one of the oldest in the capital of Guatemala and has been an important meeting place for pious Catholics inside the Guatemalan elite. Archbishop Casariego and Kjell Laugerud had a good relationship, and both were terrified by Communism. With these two persons as leaders of state and church, the relationship between cross and sword was rather unproblematic at this high level. When two Catholic bishops in 1976 wrote a pastoral letter denouncing the situation in the country, Msgr. Casariego did not want to sign it. He was convinced that the regime would not persecute Catholics if there was no good reason for it. These contradictions in the Roman Catholic Church can be understood as a new phenomenon announcing more radical changes in Latin American societies.

The “Hawks” Seize the Initiative
From Trilateralism to Containment Militarism

Important events in the world during the 1970s influenced or changed the worldview of many people in the Western world, something that also became evident in the foreign policy of the United States. The oil embargo of 1973 and the end to the Vietnam War promoted a new worldview, the principal conflict no longer involving east and west but rather north and south. The 1970s demonstrated that Third World nationalism was a genuine force and not just a pretext for Soviet or Chinese expansionism. Now arms control and trade were part of political agendas in parallel with containment and militarism. The Trilateral Commission meant that the best way to keep the peace between the Soviet Union and United States was to promote trade. George Kennan, the creator of Containment Doctrine in the 1940s, already had taken a stand against this doctrine. According to him, it lost much of its reliability when Stalin died and the conflict between the Soviet Union and China developed. In the 1970s George Kennan became a leading spokesman of détente and increased relations between the United States and Soviet Union concerning trade, science, and culture.\(^\text{32}\)

The beginning of the presidency of Jimmy Carter was influenced by trilateralism, détente in east-west relations, peaceful solutions of conflicts, and respect for human rights. The new policy implied that some countries violating human rights were prohibited from buying U.S.-produced arms. This policy

concerned Guatemala, El Salvador, and Argentina in Latin America. Arms sales and military assistance from the United States to Guatemala ceased in 1977, at least officially, while Guatemala instead turned to Israel for help. However, the policy of the Carter administration in the Caribbean was not very clear. On the one hand, the treaty to hand over the Panama Canal to domestic control at the end of the century was signed by Carter and Torrijos in June 1978. On the other hand, there was no agreement in the Carter administration concerning Cuba and Nicaragua. Carter was caught between the "doves" in the Department of State and the "hawks" in the National Security Council and intelligence organizations concerning Cuba policy. He seems to have been unsure as to which stand he should take. When the revolution in Nicaragua occurred, Carter hesitated to discontinue support for Somoza. But the Sandinistas came to power partly because the United States did not intervene militarily on the side of Somoza. After the revolution Carter was prepared for good relations and for a strengthening of the moderate forces in Nicaragua.

During the time of Carter's presidency, the President's policy changed from "global management" to a traditional cold war policy. This change was obvious in January 1980. Among the different factors behind this change, domestic concerns can be said to be the most important. Right-wing opposition had persuaded the population concerning containment militarism. Opinion in the United States changed during the 1970s in favor of supporting military expenses and protecting the role of the United States as a world leader. Carter had to adjust to the situation in order to have a chance to win the next election.

But the Democrats lost the election of 1980, and Ronald Reagan was brought to power by a coalition in which neoconservatives and the New Religious Political Right were important ingredients. In the Reagan administration human rights were viewed as being subordinated to the east-west conflict, and a trilateral equality between the United States, West Germany, and Japan was not accepted. Instead, all countries should acknowledge the United States as the leader of the "free" world. The consequences for Central America were a more aggressive U.S. policy against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and increased support for the armies in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

33 See for example S. Karlsson 1996:207–208.
34 Ibid.:209–216,222–223,239. It may be questioned if Carter's humanitarianism was the only motive behind the Guatemala policy. The Guatemalan military posed an escalating threat against Belize, a member of the British Commonwealth. The U.S. policy against Guatemala, and against Argentina, as would later be obvious in the Falklands war, can be seen as the United States giving priority to common NATO interests. In addition, the U.S. Latin American policy during the 1970s, also during the Carter administration, was a continuation of the policy put into action by the Alliance for Progress. The problems with this policy were seen in Chapter 2.
35 The term "containment militarism" is used by Sanders for the more aggressive containment strategy, including the rollback of Communism, that became influential from the end of the 1970s. J.W. Sanders 1983.
The Reagan Administration and Guatemala

The Reagan administration continually tried to explain away the violence and the massacres of the Lucas García regime in Guatemala, and downplayed the responsibility of the Guatemalan military. But the administration did not manage to get the Congress to support Lucas García and to send arms to Guatemala. The administration’s attempt to smooth over the human rights atrocities must be seen against the background of its policy in all of Central America.

The 1979 ouster of Somoza in Nicaragua meant that ideological and strategic unity in the Central American military institutions broke down. Before this moment Nicaragua had been the most reliable country in Central America, as concerned U.S. military strategy, because of the political position of Somoza. But the importance of Nicaragua also had to do with its geographical localization at the center of the isthmus. Consequently, the revolution implied that the Central American security system, as expressed in CONDECA (the Confederation of the Central American Armies), broke down.37

The new situation urged the United States to look for new alternatives for defending its strategic interests and isolating Nicaragua. The first attempt to create a new military alliance took place already in August 1979, only one month after the fall of Somoza. Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador participated in this effort. New efforts were made in 1981 and 1982, until finally the Central American Democratic Community was established on January 19, 1982. The new alliance was built up by El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Honduras. The motive behind the community was to isolate Nicaragua, which was considered to be a Communist, non-democratic country.38

The only chance for the Reagan administration to have success with its rhetoric about Nicaragua being a totalitarian state oppressing the people and violating human rights was to show that the other countries were better and not worse. Thus, the name “Central American Democratic Community” was appropriate, despite the fact that these countries did not look very much like democracies. The Reagan administration tried to argue that even Guatemala would be a worthy member in this community.

From Human Rights to “Ethical Realism”

In 1980, before Ronald Reagan became president, a group of Republicans called together the Committee of Santa Fe and outlined a Republican policy for Latin America. The group included a military officer, while the others were political scientists. The so-called Santa Fe Document dealt with different

37 See for example Inforpress CentroAmericana, July 15, 1982:2. CONDECA was an organization founded in 1963 as an application of the Treaties of Mutual Assistance, which was signed in the Americas in 1953. CONDECA was the organ that had spread counterinsurgency strategy in Central America.
areas of U.S. foreign policy, security, economy, politics, and culture and would be very influential during the first years of the 1980s. Justifications for military support to countries like Guatemala are given. The document emphasizes the east-west conflict and the need for military support to Latin American governments. To survive, the United States must seize the initiative. If it does not, it will perish. The world is challenged by either "a Pax Sovietica or a world-wide counter-projection of American power." This does not mean an interventionist policy in Latin America, according to the Santa Fe Document. The United States should intervene only if the Latin American countries "follow policies which aid and abet the intrusive imperialism of extracontinental powers." Thus, there was no place for neutrality of the Latin American countries in the east-west conflict, and the United States would intervene when its interests were threatened.

Under the heading "Internal Subversion," the Santa Fe document shortly deals with the churches:

Manipulation of the information media through church-affiliated groups and other so-called human rights lobbies has played an increasingly important role in overthrowing authoritarian, but pro-U.S., governments and replacing them with anti-U.S., Communist, or pro-Communist dictatorships of a totalitarian character.

U.S. foreign policy must begin to counter (not react against) liberation theology as it is utilized in Latin America by the "liberation theology" clergy. The role of the church in Latin America is vital to the concept of political freedom. Unfortunately, Marxist-Leninist forces have utilized the church as a political weapon against private property and productive capitalism by infiltrating the religious community with ideas that are less Christian than Communist.

The Committee of Santa Fe recognized the important political role of the churches to such a degree that they are considered to be significant in a country's development as pro-U.S. or pro-Soviet. That is why the United States should counter theology of liberation, which is seen as pro-Soviet. The term "counter" is used as a contradiction to "react against." A reasonable interpretation of what the Committee of Santa Fe means by this distinction is that "react against" has to do with military means, while "counter" is related to political, ideological, and cultural means. If so, the terminology in the document follows the language used in the United States in relation to counterinsurgency. As has been clarified earlier in this dissertation, "counter" in "counterinsurgency" means that an insurgency must be countered not only with military means, but also with politics, ideology, and so on. If the present

39 The Santa Fe document did not have any official status, but the members of the committee acquired appointments in the Reagan administration. The document outlines the policy that President Reagan attempted to implement.
40 The Committee of Santa Fe 1980:1–2, 10.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.:20.
43 Ibid.
interpretation is correct, the sentence about theology of liberation in the Santa Fe Document can be read as follows: "The U.S. foreign policy must begin to counter liberation theology—as it is utilized in Latin America by the liberation theology clergy—with political, ideological, and cultural means, instead of just reacting against it with use of military force." Using more popular language, this means that torturing and killing the liberation theologians will not help, or at least not be enough, to counter the anti-U.S. forces in the churches. It is also necessary to promote pro-U.S. forces inside the churches.

The Santa Fe Document then continues by attacking the human rights policy of the Carter administration:

Human rights, which is a culturally and politically relative concept that the present Administration has used for intervention for political change in countries of this hemisphere, adversely affecting the peace, stability and security of the region, must be abandoned and replaced by a non-interventionist policy of political and ethical realism. 44

The culturally and ethically relative nature of notions of human rights is clear from the fact that Argentines, Brazilians and Chileans find it repugnant that the United States, which legally sanctions the liquidation of more than 1,000,000 unborn children each year, exhibits moral outrage at the killing of a terrorist who bombs and machine guns innocent civilians. 45

The quotation shows that according to the Santa Fe Document notions of human rights have a relative nature depending on ethics and culture. But notions of peace, stability and security are not included in this relativism but are seen as absolutes. As is clear from the quotation that follows, human rights should be used discriminately as a weapon against the adversaries of the United States, while the allies not should be harassed with human rights policies:

The United States should cease targeting its allies with its present inequitably applied human rights program. A vigorously and equitably applied human rights program is America's wonder weapon against the Soviet Union, its satellites and surrogates. Curiously, the current administration, in spite of the Helsinki Accords and the Basket Two Agreements, has not seriously attempted to apply its human rights doctrine against Castroite Cuba, Sandinista Nicaragua or other Soviet satellites in the Western Hemisphere. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Somoza's Nicaragua and Paraguay—all old time allies—have, however, been harassed. Faced with the choice of an occasionally deplorable ally and a consistently deplorable enemy, since 1977 the United States has aided its adversary and alienated its ally. The result, as covered in the section on internal subversion, has been the destabilization of friendly governments convinced that they are confronted with an internationally inspired and supported civil war, who have acted accordingly. 46

44 Ibid.
46 Ibid.:37.
Another part of the Santa Fe document, namely the proposals concerning education, is highly relevant to the issue of religion:

The United States must seize the ideological initiative. Encouragement of an educational system in Latin America which emphasizes the common intellectual heritage of the Americas is essential. Education must instill the idealism that will serve as an instrument for survival.\(^{47}\)

The document goes on to explain that in spite of the regional differences between Anglo and Latin America, there is a common heritage from Greek culture, Roman law, and Judeo-Christian morality. This common heritage must be emphasized. Consequently, philosophical education in Latin America is seen as even more important than technical training:

Education is the medium by which cultures retain, pass on and even pioneer their past. Thus, however controls the educational system determines the past—or how it is viewed—as well as the future. Tomorrow is in the hands and the heads of those who are being taught today. The United States should not seek to impose its own image on Ibero-America. Neither liberal pluralism nor Wilsonian democracy has been successfully exported. We should, however, export ideas and images which will encourage individual liberty, political responsibility and respect for private property. A campaign to capture the Ibero-American intellectual elite through the media of radio, television, books, articles and pamphlets, plus grants, fellowships and prizes must be initiated. For consideration and recognition are what most intellectuals crave, and such a program would attract them.\(^{48}\)

The United States should therefore control the rest of the Americas when it comes to education. Yet in this quotation the same relativism is demonstrated concerning “liberal pluralism” and “Wilsonian democracy,” as earlier concerning “human rights.” The ideas and images to be exported are more generally formulated. All levels of ideology and culture are relevant to education, and later it will be noted how the work of evangelical organizations fit with the proposals of the Santa Fe Document.

Deriving some conclusions, the Santa Fe Document proposes the United States to promote individual liberty, political responsibility, and respect for private property. This should be achieved by increased military support to friendly dictatorships and by not harassing them with human rights policies. It is evident that the most important rationale behind this policy was to keep U.S. control of Latin America. With the Santa Fe Document as a background, Ronald Reagan’s policy on Guatemala becomes understandable. The issue was not that Guatemala deserved military assistance because of its improvements in human rights, but the other way around. Reagan wanted to support a friendly ally, whatever its human rights accords. Proving that the Guatemalan government was not so bad on human rights was necessary to justify military

\(^{47}\) Ibid.:32.
\(^{48}\) Ibid.:32–33.
assistance in the Congress. However, as has been noted, attempts to renew military assistance to Guatemala failed.

The Santa Fe Document did not deal specifically with Guatemala. But in 1980 one of the members in the Committee of Santa Fe, L. Francis Bouchey, wrote a book about Guatemala, co-authored by Alberto M. Piedra who later would become U.S. ambassador to that country (1984–1987). The authors attack the mass media and human rights groups, mainly Amnesty International, for being biased toward the left. They criticize the report of the violence in Guatemala given by Amnesty International, a version built on information from churches and popular organizations. Instead they refer to official army versions of events. According to Bouchey and Piedra, Amnesty International did not care about left-wing violence and blamed the Guatemalan government for the right-wing violence, while this in fact was frequently the result of right-wing groups without connection to the government. Unfortunately, according to the authors, congressional committees, official agencies, and the news media accepted the views given by human rights organizations like Amnesty International.49

The analyses made by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman concerning U.S. power and propaganda are revealing for the whole issue concerning the Reagan administration and Guatemala, even if these do not specifically deal with that country. Chomsky and Herman make a distinction between "constructive," "benign," and "nefarious" bloodbaths depending on their relation to U.S. power. The "nefarious bloodbaths" are those that can be related to official adversaries. The responsibility for these abuses are attributed to the highest political level in the country where it happened, and they are met with great indignation in the United States. These bloodbaths can be used for mobilizing the public against that particular country. "Benign bloodbaths" are irrelevant to U.S. interests and consequently not dealt with very much, and not reported in the major news media. The "constructive bloodbaths" are welcome, for they serve U.S. interests. However, when they are exposed, it is not possible to say that they are welcome, because this would reveal a hypocrisy in the indignation over "nefarious bloodbaths." The responsibility for "constructive bloodbaths" is usually derived to the lowest level of planning in the country, or to confusing circumstances leading to incorrect actions.50

The view on the bloodbaths fits very well with the views in the Santa Fe Document and in the book by Bouchey and Piedra. The human rights abuses in Guatemala were "constructive" because they were part of a counterinsur-

49 L. Bouchey and A.M. Piedra 1980:65–75. An investigation of the empirical evidence behind different versions of the human rights situation in Guatemala is beyond the scope of this study. But a commentary may be given. It is clear that Amnesty International also reported left-wing violence in Guatemala, even if not to the same extent as right-wing violence. The reason is obvious: Right-wing violence was behind the overwhelming majority of human rights abuses in Guatemala, even if the left was behind a significant minority. In addition, connections between right-wing violence and the military government were obvious.

gency campaign serving U.S. interests. Consequently, the Guatemalan government and other Latin American allies should not been harassed with human rights policies. The responsibility for “constructive bloodbaths” in Guatemala was deduced to the lowest level of planning, or outside the government, as is clear in Bouchey and Piedra. Instead, human rights policies should be directed as a weapon against U.S. adversaries, like Cuba and the Soviet Union, which is clear from the Santa Fe Document. This can be seen as an expression of indignation against “nefarious bloodbaths.”

The New Religious Political Right Emerges

To understand changes in the United States that again brought Containment to top-priority level, one must go back in time and look at the mobilization before the election of 1980. The new right-wing forces, which contributed to the victory of the Republican Party, can be analyzed as three different movements: the neoconservatives, the New Right, and the New Religious Right, the latter two coming together in the New Religious Political Right. In reality, of course, there were not such clear-cut boundaries between the three, but for analytical purposes it is appropriate to treat them as such. What was new about them can also be discussed. Perhaps the New Right was the most new, as it was based on a new combination of ideas from neoliberal economists from the 1960s and 1970s and old thoughts about the “night-watchman state.” Concerning the neoconservatives, continuity with earlier ideals is obvious. The same is true for the New Religious Right, even if it at some point clearly broke away from older religious traditions, including Protestant Fundamentalism. But it is important to note the new coalition of forces that put its weight behind the Republican Party in the election of 1980. Before this time many of them had belonged to the Democratic Party. Extensive writings exist concerning mobilization for the presidency of Reagan and the New Religious Political Right, leading to a selective usage of materials as follows. It is possible to analyze these events in many different ways, but only what is relevant for this dissertation is employed.

It is worth noting that the Bible Belt, where conservative evangelicals are strong, coincides in part with the states that traditionally have been marginalized in U.S. politics. The populations of these states are not so Europe-oriented as on the East Coast. They are more oriented toward Latin America and Asia and are home base for many of the more militant missionary organizations. Traditionally these evangelicals voted for the Democrats, as well as Catholics, Jews, and all who felt excluded or marginalized from the dominant Protestant East-Coast establishment, which voted for the Republicans. In 1976 many of these evangelicals voted for Carter, who in fact fit better into the traditional scheme of an evangelical than Ronald Reagan. Jimmy Carter is a Southern Baptist. In this denomination there was a polarization between liberal human rights religiosity and a conservatism that implied support for
the Moral Majority. In 1980, many of the evangelicals, including Southern Baptists, turned to Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party.

In 1976, the Committee of the Present Danger (CPD), which had been formed in the 1950s as a response against the Communist threat, reappeared under the name CPD-II. A new group of persons formed the committee, although some also had been members of the first committee. The background for this was a split in the Democratic Party concerning the presidential candidate in 1972. Some in the neoconservative faction formed the Coalition for a Democratic Majority’s Foreign Policy Taskforce (CDM) under the leadership of Eugene Rostow. He was one of the most important persons in the creation of CPD-II, and thirteen of the eighteen members in CDM followed him to the committee. Thus, CPD-II was dominated by names associated with Democratic administrations, even if many Republicans also joined. The purpose of CPD-II was to propagate the Soviet threat and counteract détente. According to the members, the problem in 1976 was that the threat from the Soviet Union was still strong, but the West was less concerned about it.51

The success of CPD-II is evidenced through the large membership among neoconservative intellectuals and trade union activists from AFL-CIO, among them Lane Kirkland. Among the many well-known academics among the members were Paul Nitze, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ernest W. Lefever, and Paul Ramsey.52 When Carter became president the CPD-II Democrats found themselves totally isolated from the administration. The result was that they turned to Ronald Reagan in the election of 1980. But the impact of the neoconservatives would not have been so strong if they had not been in coalition with the New Religious Political Right, which contributed with a mass organization of the general population.

According to Jeffrey Hadden, the secular media overestimated the impact of the New Christian Right in the election of 1980 and 1984. This was due to the fact that the media failed to distinguish between the New Right and the New Christian Right, their different interests and power bases. While economic interests were at the center of the New Right, the New Christian Right was based on sentiment and ideology. The character of the latter was only partly religious, as conservatives without a religious faith were also attracted to it. The strength of the coalition between these two groups was in the combination of the organizational skills of the New Right and the potential of the New Christian Right to mobilize a broader base of support than would be possible for the special interest groups that were affiliated with the New Right. The New Christian Right also had an access to the media, with which no other interest group could compete. According to Hadden, “no other interest group has ever possessed so much access to media for promoting an ideologi-

52 The members in CPD-II are listed in J.W. Sanders 1983:154–160.
cal perspective than do Christian Religious Broadcasters." Although agreeing with Hadden, I will maintain the terminology "the New Religious Right" and "the New Religious Political Right, NRPR." The networks did not include only Christians, but also Mormons and Jews.

The New Religious Political Right was thus a coalition brought together by two different groups: the New Right and the New Religious Right. The New Right was a movement that appeared during the 1970s and was characterized by a neoliberal view on economics and a minimal state, which only maintained a judicial system and a defense. The New Right was against the welfare state, against tax expenses, and in favor of a strong defense. The apparent contradiction in the ideology—that the state should not collect taxes for a defense, which should be strong—was resolved with so-called "supply-side economics." According to this theory, the state would receive such good incomes from investments in the military industry that high taxes would be unnecessary. The New Right thus continued thoughts about military Keynesianism.

The most important public opinion leaders inside the New Right were Howard Phillips, Paul Weyrich, and Richard Viguerie. Howard Phillips, a Catholic, was the national director of the Conservative Caucus, a key connection for New Right grass-root's organization. In 1977, he organized the until then largest political mail operation in the United States together with Weyrich and Viguerie, with the purpose of forming opinion against "unilateral disarmament."

At the end of the 1970s Richard Viguerie and Paul Weyrich urged fundamentalist Jerry Falwell—pastor of the 18,000 member Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia—to establish the Moral Majority. Thus, the most important connection in organizing the New Religious Political Right was made. Jerry Falwell's church broadcasted a television program through a large amount of stations in the United States, and together with their mail operations and their ability to connect with other churches, the Moral Majority could reach a large number of U.S. citizens.

The Moral Majority emphasized morality issues, like traditional family values, anti-abortion, anti-homosexuality, and so on, which were the questions that concerned the conservative religious constituency. The strategy of the promoters of Containment was to mobilize the religious people around family issues and from that point get them to cooperate in other causes. Through cooperation, religious leaders like Falwell could bring their own issues to the national political agenda.

54 See for example D.S. King 1987:141–155 concerning the ideology of the New Right.
55 The coalition was called the Emergency Coalition Against Unilateral Disarmament and its purpose was to get the Senate to vote against a proposal by Paul Warnke. J.W. Sanders 1983:208–209.
56 See for example G. Fackre 1982:1–2.
The New Religious Political Right did not only try to mobilize Protestants but also Catholics, Jews, and Mormons. But in spite of all the Catholic names on the top level in the network, the thought patterns in the NRPR were basically Protestant. It is worth noting that the Catholics came from the political side, while the important religious ideologists like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson were Protestants. That the message had a Protestant flavor is obvious in their way of viewing the relationship between religion and state. Ideological material was borrowed from the Protestant history of the United States.

In general, ideas about religion and state inside the NRPR circles were that separation between church and state must be maintained, as found in the Constitution of the United States. Yet the NRPR questioned a separation between the state and God. Instead, God should be the highest authority of the state. The emphasis was on moral consensus. The Constitution was not questioned but interpreted in a different manner. This interpretation can be explained as follows: Citizens cannot be forced to believe in God, or believe in any special way, which is why the principle of freedom of religion should be maintained. They can be forced, however, to follow God's commands. This view also reflects the NRPR's opposition against what they called democracy. To them democracy meant majority rule, which was a humanist and atheist idea, and against the intentions of the Founding Fathers of the United States. The NRPR makes a distinction between democracy and republicanism, the latter implying that the law circumscribes the will of the majority. This view was not unique to the NRPR or to the United States. But special for the NRPR was the way religion was brought in and which questions were considered to be important. The intention was not to protect, for instance, ethnic minorities from majority rule, but to impose the NRPR views on foreign policy, tax laws, family issues, abortion, and homosexuality on all citizens of the United States. These issues should be beyond negotiation, following God's commands. 58

Dominion Theology: The Ideological Background

The New Religious Political Right is influenced by a theological tendency frequently called Dominion Theology. This theology includes two different branches that frequently have trouble getting along with each other. These two tendencies are Christian Reconstruction and Kingdom Now. Reconstructionism is a fundamentalist movement, frequently in conflict with the "old" fundamentalists. The discrepancy is that "old" fundamentalists are premillenialists and dispensationalists, while Reconstructionists are postmillenialists. The difference is that dispensationalism and premillenialism imply that the

Second Coming of Christ is ahead. Christ will return to establish the millennial kingdom. Consequently, Christians should not involve themselves in politics, as the world will not change until Christ returns. The postmillenialist Reconstructionist view, however, implies that Christ will return after the millennial kingdom. Thus, it is the task of Christians to have dominion on earth and create a perfect millennial kingdom.59

According to Reconstructionists, the state should be governed by the laws in the Old Testament, including the same punishments for the same crimes. Reconstructionism implies that God governs directly through different spheres that are not allowed to intervene in another sphere. The number of spheres differs among different thinkers, but they include family, economic life, state, and church. God governs family, economic life, and church in a direct way, not through the state, which is not allowed to intervene in these spheres. Transnational organizations have no divine authorization, and consequently the Reconstructionists are against institutions like the United Nations or the International Court at The Hague.60 Reconstructionism fits very well with the New Right, for it has the same view on economic liberalism and a minimal state maintaining only a judicial system and a defense.

Reconstructionists have had a significant presence in NRPR networks, albeit behind the scenes. Theologians like Rousas Rushdoony, Gary North, and Paul Jehle are not wellknown to the public. In part, this has to do with the movement's identity as primarily an educational movement, not a political one. The goals are broader. To influence the public through education will give more long-term results than political action, according to Reconstructionists.61

The Kingdom Now movement belongs to the charismatic wing of U.S. evangelicalism. On this side the controversies have been at least as great as on the fundamentalist side. Yet the relationship between different views inside charismatic movements is more complex than in fundamentalism. In charismatic movements, premillennialism and apocalyptic views can be mixed to a surprisingly degree with ideas about Christian dominion and change in society.

The founder of Kingdom Now is Earl Paulk, who was a pastor in a Pentecostal church in Atlanta. He shares the view with the Reconstructionists that Christians should have dominion on earth, but the rest of his opinions differ from fundamentalist views. According to Paulk, Christians must be open to additional revelation through prophecies other than the Bible. His ideas about the kingdom do not necessarily strictly follow the Bible, in contrast to the Reconstructionists. In spite of these different views, Reconstructionists and

59 See for example B. Barron 1991.
60 See for example B. Barron 1991; W.C. Hatfield 1991; F. Clarkson 1994:1–7; R. Rushdoony 1991, which is a collection of reports and articles from the 1960s through the 1980s; and P. Jehle [1990].
the Kingdom Now movement were brought together in Coalition of Revival, an important measure in the creation of the New Religious Political Right. Efforts were principally undertaken by Dennis Peacocke, one of the leaders of the shepherding movement. 62

The two most well-known Protestant leaders—and with most access to media and the public—inside the New Religious Political Right were Jerry Falwell (fundamentalist) and Pat Robertson (charismatic). These leaders cannot totally be placed inside Reconstructionism or Kingdom Now. Being the most important public figures they were also more pragmatic and sensitive as to how to catch the public eye. However, they were clearly influenced by dominion theology in a more general sense.

There is a close relationship between dominion theology and prosperity theology, the latter implying that God will bless Christians with material success and good health in this earthly life. This ideal can be traced to the Calvinist wing of the Protestant Reformation and subsequently to the Puritan heritage in the United States. In the present it is an important ingredient in both fundamentalist and charismatic variants of dominion theology.

According to William Wipfler, the most significant point in the NRPR’s politicizing interpretation of the Bible was:

their equating of the forces of good with the United States and its allies, and those of evil with the Soviet Union and other Communist nations. Even more chilling, however, is their readiness to consider a nuclear conflict as an instrument of God in bringing in the Kingdom. 63

Johan Galtung has suggested that the Judeo-Christian metaphor of a covenant between God and his chosen people is an archetype for U.S. foreign policy, which is so deeply internalized that U.S. citizens are unconscious about how it guides their perceptions of the world. The implications of this archetype are that the United States is the representative of God on earth. To make the world look orderly, monotheism is constructed as an antipole to monothelism. During the Cold War the Soviet Union was the representative of Satan. The world behind God and Satan is suspended and all events take on the character of being a conflict between these two powers. 64

The Constituency for the New Religious Political Right

It is not easy to talk about a constituency for the New Religious Political Right, as there are discrepancies between the analyses of different researchers. One of the reasons for variation is that authors use divergent terminology, for example, the New Christian Right, the New Religious Right, or the New

64 J. Galtung 1987.
Religious Political Right, all of which they also define in dissimilar ways. Views may also differ because investigations have been made at different times. According to Dennis Owen and Samuel Hill, it was principally independent Baptist churches that made up the constituency for “the New Religious Political Right.” This is certainly a more narrow definition, in counting people close to the fundamentalist views of Jerry Falwell.

Hadden apparently has a broader definition when he writes about “the New Christian Right,” including not only fundamentalists but also other evangelical sympathizers. The study made by Clyde Wilcox, on support for the Moral Majority, based on a national telephone survey conducted by evangelicals in 1983, shows the following result:

Previously research has found that the Moral Majority had its greatest appeal among its target constituency: white evangelical Christians. Among this group, support for the Moral Majority was predicted by religious and political variables. Each of the hypotheses was confirmed in bivariate analysis.

- Those who attended fundamentalist churches and pentecostal churches were more likely to support the Moral Majority;
- those who identified themselves as fundamentalists were more likely to support it;
- those who held fundamentalist doctrinal beliefs had higher levels of support;
- those with higher levels of religiosity were more supportive;
- those who frequently viewed televangelists were more likely to be Moral Majority supporters;
- those who had some antipathy toward Catholics were more supportive; and
- conservative Republicans were more likely to support the organization.

According to Robert Wuthnow, the leaders of the movement increasingly made a distinction between morality and theology to counteract the accusations that they wanted to impose their own theological views on the nation. Thus, they could mobilize the public around morality issues on which there was a broad agreement among different conservative religious groups.

The NRPR outlook was basically Protestant, but moderate enough also to attract some Catholics and Jews, as the emphasis was on issues that concerned conservative religious people from all parties. References frequently were made to the “Judeo-Christian heritage” of the United States, although the difficulties to get a religious legitimization of politics of this kind from the Catholic side are obvious. The Catholic integralists—the equivalent to Protestant fundamentalists—denied separation between church and state. According to them, God is directly involved in politics through the Pope as his personal representative on earth. The ideal is the Middle Ages when the church kept watch over both civil and religious institutions. A view like that would not serve the interests of the New Right. Conservative Catholics participated in

68 R. Wuthnow 1988:210–211.
the New Religious Political Right, but their views did not serve as the general outlook of the movement.

The bringing together of the New Religious Political Right and the neo-conservatives was not without difficulty. They had the same view on Containment, but different opinions about the welfare state and some other questions, for instance the state Israel. The neoconservatives were not against the welfare state, and they had a positive view of Israel. Inside the New Religious Political Right were different views on Israel. For most charismatics, Israel has an important role to play in God's plans for the world. But inside the NRPR there were also connections to fascist and antisemitic groups. However, the coalition between the neoconservatives and the NRPR was instrumental in bringing about the new emphasis on Containment. In spite of the views among the leaders, it is clear that most Christians in the NRPR constituency had their focus on domestic morality issues, not foreign policy. They had not voted for Containment would it not have been connected to these domestic morality issues. If Galtung is right, the two issues were interconnected and not possible to separate.

Containment Militarism and Religious Mobilization

In conclusion, what could Containment Militarists gain from mobilizing religious forces? Three important reasons can be ascertained. First, progressive and liberal groups in the churches grew stronger in the 1970s. They struggled for détente and human rights at home and abroad, and their outlook had a significant influence on the U.S. public. Consequently, there was an interest to counteract these tendencies by mobilizing the churches for other ends.

Second, the churches had very extensive institutions and networks among the people, which were significant in the organization and mobilization of the grassroots. In addition, the churches had extensive networks abroad, ones which could be useful on different levels of mobilization in favor of U.S. foreign policy. A point to consider is the information aspect of U.S. diplomatic power. Ronald Reagan would later recognize the contribution of the private sector in building a domestic constituency for U.S. foreign policy:

During the past seven years, we have encouraged the American private sector to become a key element in the projection of U.S. foreign policy goals. Leading private citizens and groups have taken steps to identify and organize the many local forces throughout America that have a direct stake in our nation's relations with the rest of the world. These private voluntary organizations are doing an indispensable job of public education. They have our strongest encouragement and support.

Obviously, churches and mission organizations made up an important part of the private sector mentioned by Reagan. These can be understood as valuable instruments, having an instrumental value.

Third, on the ideological level a religious outlook meant it was possible to create a more or less coherent worldview in which both Containment Militarism and conservative family values fit. In this way one could win people with conservative values concerning family, gender, and so on, for Containment Militarism. The thoughts of Pat Robertson are revealing on this point. He contrasts a society ruled by God with a society ruled by the anti-Christ. From the beginning the United States was founded with a Christian spirit, but in this century the country started to lose its way:

Honor, decency, honesty, self-control, sexual restraint, family values, and sacrifice are replaced by gluttony, sensuality, bizarre sexual practices, cruelty, profligacy, dishonesty, delinquency, drunkenness, drug-induced euphoria, fraud, waste, debauched currency, and rampant inflation.

For Robertson, “honor” is related to the role of the United States in the rest of the world. Defeat in Vietnam was an example of the loss of honor and the will to win. Together with the change in abortion legislation in 1973, defeat in Vietnam was one of two important events during the 1970s that expressed the loss of destiny of the United States. Both events had to do with a crisis in the internal and moral condition of humankind. When a country in this way comes under the reign of the anti-Christ, destruction is the result. The society will destroy itself, or God will intervene to destroy it. Thus, a change in the United States is urgent, and the coming of Ronald Reagan to power was the first sign of “finding our way again,” according to Robertson. The domestic individual morality questions are the most important ones in the mobilization of the U.S. public. Many Christians in the United States had probably not supported the foreign policy view of the New Religious Political Right if this view had not been connected with domestic morality issues.

New Mission Initiatives toward Guatemala and Latin America

The Electronic Church and Latin America

Pat Robertson is president of the Christian Broadcasting Network, CBN, the largest Christian media empire in the world, which can compete with many secular broadcasting networks. The most well-known section of this media empire is the television show Club 700, an important link in the Christian

71 P. Robertson with B. Slosser 1984:29.
media network that “campaigned” for Ronald Reagan in the election of 1980. As with Reagan, Robertson had Central America as an important focus within his views on foreign policy. Nicaragua had fallen, and now efforts were to be made in El Salvador and Guatemala to stop the so-called Communist guerrillas from taking power in these countries, according to Robertson. Even if Falwell was concerned with Central America, the role of Robertson was more significant, not least because of the large involvement with relief aid. CBN has had wider access to the public, both in the United States and Latin America, than Jerry Falwell. Many Protestants—and Catholics—who consider Jerry Falwell to be too conservative are impressed and influenced by Pat Robertson, whose views are more in line with neo-Pentecostalism than with fundamentalism.73

The academic background of Pat Robertson includes law and business. In the 1950s he served in the Marines in the Korean Conflict, and after graduation from Yale University he worked as a representative to Latin America in W.R. Grace & Co.74 At the beginning of the century this company invested in fruit plantations in Latin America, but later also turned to other areas and investments.

The relationship between Pat Robertson and the director of the Grace Company, Peter Grace, is worth noting. Grace was severely devoted to anti-Communism in Latin America, and he was also involved with bringing Nazi technicians from Germany to the United States after the Second World War for working at the company. In the beginning of the 1960s Grace was one of the persons close to Nelson Rockefeller when the latter founded the American Institute for Free Labor Development, AIFLD. This institute is dedicated to promote “free” trade unions and counteract “Communist” ones in different parts of the world, including Latin America, mainly through educational projects. Trade union leaders in Latin America were brought to the United States for education. Grace was a devout Catholic, and during the 1980s he was the president of the U.S. chapter of the medieval crusade order, the Knights of Malta, well-known for supporting U.S. policy in Latin America. For instance, the director of the Guatemalan branch, Roberto Alejos, made his sugar plantation available for CIA training of anti-Castro counter-revolutionaries for the Bay of Pigs invasion.75

Pat Robertson spent less than a year with W.R. Grace & Co. Instead, he started the Curry Sound Corporation together with two friends. The idea was to get rich quick by patenting a technological breakthrough in sound systems. However, the company failed, and the personal finances of Robertson were in ruin. In this situation he met conservative evangelical leaders and was “born

73 See Chapter 1 for the terms fundamentalism and neo-Pentecostalism.
75 The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center 1988:47; T. Barry and D. Preusch 1987; and E. Hervet 1986:27–38. The complete name of the Knights of Malta is the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John, of Jerusalem, of Rhodes, and of Malta.
again.” From this time on he has been a devote charismatic evangelical. He began his first Christian radio work in November 1959 when he broadcast from Portsmouth, Virginia. His first television broadcasting occurred October 1, 1961. In these first days Billy Graham was sent over the waves, along with reports from the military and programs about Christians.

In 1975, CBN had nine radio and television stations, and sixty affiliated ones. Also that year the international ministry initiated an array of locations throughout the world. In 1977, CBN began broadcasting via satellite. However, the satellite channel would later be so successful that CBN was forced to sell it to joint owners in 1990 in order not to break tax laws, as the network was registered as a not-for-profit organization. The CBN also included Regent University and the relief organization Operation Blessing, both founded in 1978. In 1982, retired U.S. Marine captain Robert H. Warren became director of Operation Blessing.

Even if Pat Robertson emphasized the religious motivation behind his business it is obvious that it also turned out to be an economic success that neither the W.R. Grace & Co. nor the Curry Sound Corporation could offer. CBN can also easily be seen as a religious parallel to the work of AIFLD in trade unions. Both are somewhat educational organizations working to spread U.S. patriotism among the public, in the United States and Latin America.

The establishment of the Christian Broadcasting Network in Guatemala in 1980 coincided in time with the mobilization of the New Religious Political Right for the presidency of Ronald Reagan. A growing interest in Latin America is visible in CBN that year. The broadcasting network established branches not only in Guatemala but also in Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama, and Peru. Earlier, CBN had been present in Colombia (from 1968) and Puerto Rico (1978). Thus, Latin America became more interesting strategically for CBN at the same time as the continent was so highlighted in the campaign of Reagan. A similar pattern is visible in the growing conflict in and U.S. concerns with the Middle East. In 1982 CBN was established in Israel, Lebanon, and Cyprus.

In 1986, a study about the impact of the electronic church in Central America was undertaken at the National University in Costa Rica. The purpose was to study the role of the electronic media in the growing ideological polarization inside the churches of Central America. Pat Robertson’s Club 700 was not included, although Luis Palau, Hermano Pablo (radio), Jimmy

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77 CBN 1990:2.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.:2–3.
80 Ibid.:3.
82 See W.D. Roberts and J.A. Siewert 1989, concerning the years for the establishment of CBN in the Middle East. See for example L. Jones [1990] for more information about Christian broadcasters in the United States.
Swaggart, and Club PTL with Juan Romero (television) were. The study shows that the audience for these programs came from all social classes including members from the Catholic Church, mainline Protestant churches, and Pentecostal churches.\textsuperscript{83}

The Frontier Mission Movement

The impact that CBN and other Christian media empires had in Latin America and Guatemala between 1976 and 1982 was primarily through their influence of the public via radio and television. On the other hand, the network which in this study is called the Frontier Mission Movement, worked in a different way, through more direct contact with the churches. It is a movement consisting of a loosely organized network of churches and organizations with concern for Christian evangelization abroad. Generally these groups would not consider themselves as part of the New Religious Political Right. They were more in line with neoconservatives, but they shared the NRPR view on foreign policy. Among them were personalities from Fuller Theological Seminary and U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, along with organizations such as Overseas Crusades and MARC (the research department of World Vision).

The Frontier Mission Movement can be seen as a third alternative in Protestant mission, other than the ecumenical direction of the World Council of Churches and the more socially concerned wing inside the Lausanne movement. The leaders of the movement viewed it as an inheritance of both the mission conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and the Lausanne conference in 1974. But there is reason to view the Frontier Mission Movement as a right-wing alternative to the other two. While many participants of the Lausanne movement—not least from the Third World—during the later part of the 1970s and the 1980s became increasingly open to social concerns, the Frontier Mission Movement appeared as an alternative that focused exclusively on the conversion of as many people as possible. The basic idea was to get the churches to grow. When a sufficient number of individuals in a country were converted, the social structures would be transformed and the politics be influenced by Christianity. The central thought was to reach “unreached people groups,” a concept developed at the Lausanne Congress in 1974.

In a critical review of the “unreached people groups” strategy in 1984, a prominent evangelical leader, James Reapsome, identified the “prime movers” and “shakers.”\textsuperscript{84} According to him, these were the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, World Vision, through its Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center (MARC), and the U.S. Center for World Mission. Reapsome maintained that the strategy was influential, because

\textsuperscript{83} D.A. Ruiz and D.A. Smith [1986].  
\textsuperscript{84} J. Reapsome 1984:103–116. He was the editor of Evangelical Missions Quarterly and executive director of the Evangelical Missions Information Service.
some persons and institutions with power decided that this was the future of missionary thinking. He was himself a representative of the evangelical opposition against the Frontier Mission Movement.⁸⁵

Although it would be problematic to consider the Frontier Mission Movement as a New Religious Political Right movement, the movement can be counted within Political Evangelicalism because of its view of evangelicalism as a base for the creation of a good society. The Frontier Mission Movement was a new militant, aggressive alternative in evangelical mission work and its appearance must be seen in relation to the growing support for a militant, interventionist U.S. foreign policy during the 1970s.

The U.S. Center for World Mission

Among the most important leaders of the Frontier Mission Movement were Ralph and Roberta Winter, who founded the U.S. Center for World Mission in 1976. Later they would describe the center as follows:

It would be difficult to run an effective military campaign with the high command of the Navy in Kansas, the Army in Florida, and the Marines in Alaska. And so we have a Pentagon. The commanders of all the military forces work side-by-side under one roof in order to develop effective strategies. For a much higher purpose, the U.S. Center for World Mission is a Pentagon for mission agencies around the world. Mission strategists from dozens of agencies are working together at the Center to gather information, coordinate efforts, and develop the most effective plans possible to reach the nations.⁸⁶

The U.S. Center for World Mission thus compared its role for mission with the Pentagon’s role for defense and strike forces. But the comparison with military forces did not stop here. The mouthpiece for the U.S. Center was the magazine *Mission Frontiers*, whose task was described as follows:

Our purpose is to “cover the waterfront” when it comes to missions and frontier missions in particular. We believe the evangelical mission enterprise is an integral part of God’s plan for world history. The Bible introduces the protagonists in a cosmic battle for the allegiance of all earth’s peoples in the very early chapters of Genesis. From Genesis 3:15 on, it is clear who the final victor will be, yet there is a pitched battle throughout Scripture and it continues today. For this reason, Mission Frontiers reports on the evangelical mission enterprise much as a war correspondent reporting to the voters, taxpayers, and moms and dads “back home.”⁸⁷

Among other things the magazine reports about “specific campaigns or particular battles” (breakthroughs for evangelization) and “fighting units” (missionaries and missionary organizations).⁸⁸

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⁸⁵ Ibid.
⁸⁶ The U.S. Center for World Mission [1987]:15.
⁸⁷ Ibid:41.
⁸⁸ Ibid.
During ten years in the 1950s and 1960s the Winter couple worked as missionaries in Guatemala, employed by the United Presbyterian Church. Their work was among Mayas in the highlands of western Guatemala. Ralph Winter was involved with the development of Theological Education by Extension (TEE) and the establishment of the Protestant university. 89

In 1966, Ralph Winter was invited to join Donald McGavran and Alan Tippet in the second year of the new Fuller School of World Mission. During his first years at Fuller—between 1966 and 1969—Winter was also the executive secretary of the Latin American Association of Theological Schools. This organization was the accrediting agency for all evangelical theological schools in the northern half of Latin America. 90 Winter left the Fuller School of World Mission in the middle of the 1970s to found the U.S. Center for World Mission. He hoped to build a missions center to complement, not compete with, the mission agencies and the Fuller School of World Mission.

The background to the U.S. Center For World Mission was a conclusion about the missionary task, which Winter made from the results of Donald McGavran. 91 McGavran is the founder of the so-called Church Growth School, which from the middle of the 1960s has its institutional base at Fuller Theological Seminary. Primarily, the thoughts of McGavran concerning church growth are founded on the observation that there are social and cultural barriers to such. A church is not likely to cross these boundaries. Already in the 1930s McGavran invented the concept “Homogenous Unit Principle,” which is a functional concept organizing people in a society from the church growth point of view. A homogenous unit is a social segment in which the church can grow without meeting social or cultural barriers. For Winter, the theories of McGavran meant that even if all congregations in the world had a spiritual explosion and reached out to all within their homogenous unit, 80 percent of non-Christians would remain untouched. To fulfill the Great Commission, consequently, missionaries had to go to unreached peoples where no church was established. Winter talked about this issue at the Lausanne Congress in 1974. From this time several terms began to be used to refer to these people groups: “Hidden Peoples,” “Unreached Peoples,” or “Frontier Peoples.” The terms refer to the same thing. 92

Ralph Winter wished to build a center for world mission in every country of the world. Each center would provide the facts and the coordination needed for the discipling of people in the country. 93 Yet the U.S. Center for World Mission apparently would have a broader territory than other national centers, as the focus was not so much about the discipling of the people in the

89 R. Winter 1987:16.
90 Ibid.:166.
United States as discipling the rest of the world. As seen in the passage quoted earlier, the U.S. Center for World Mission would be a Pentagon for mission agencies around the world, not only in the United States.

The purpose of the center was to serve churches and mission agencies, as well as to mobilize Christians to mission among unreached peoples. It would help Christians live at the same level as missionaries and thereby free money for the missionary task. The Winters did not want to compete with missionary agencies over people's money, but instead increase the amount of people supporting mission agencies. The center would be a place where mission agencies could lend key people to cooperate in mission. It would be an umbrella organization whose members could rent office space on the campus.

In 1978, the U.S. Center for World Mission opened its university. One of the purposes was to promote a development implying that people could work in "closed" countries as Ph.D. students and complete research papers on unreached people groups. Some of them could teach English to support themselves, for almost all countries in the world wanted English teachers, according to the Winters. The university would train people in skills that would make work in "closed" countries possible: agriculture, water resource development, community health, literacy, and so on. The result of these considerations was the William Carey International University, which was to hold a high academic level and give what other Christian universities did not give. An important country—which was in the mind of the Winters—was China. Roberta Winter writes that when China opened its doors, in 1979, one of its first requests was 100,000 teachers of English. Thus, the M.A. offered in international development and teaching English to speakers of other languages was a strategic measure of the U.S. Center for World Mission for sending missionaries into China.

Edinburgh 1980

The U.S. Center for World Mission was one of the most important forces behind the World Consultation on Frontier Missions of Edinburgh '80. The conference used the slogan "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000." The terminology "Hidden People" was used when talking about the unreached people groups.

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95 Ibid.:124.
97 The Winters had to work much with fundraising, and they received help from several prominent evangelical leaders, for example from Mission Aviation Fellowship, Bill Bright of Campus Crusade, Jack Hayford of Church on the Way, World Opportunities, and Young Life. A local church supported the Winters with a salary in the beginning. Bill Bright, founder and director of Campus Crusade and an old friend, helped with office expenses during the first year. R. Winter 1987:28–38,144.
The purpose of the conference was to mobilize a new generation of "frontier missionaries."\textsuperscript{100} It is interesting to note how the organizers viewed the Edinburgh conference in relation to the two other conferences the same year: one by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the other one by the Lausanne committee. The WCC had its meeting in Australia in March, and the Lausanne movement held its conference in Pattaya, Thailand, in August.

In her book, Roberta Winter reflects on the discussions concerning the relationship between the three missionary conferences. The location Edinburgh was chosen by the U.S. Center of World Mission to make the conference something of an heir to the great missionary conference held at the same place in 1910. Consequently it was called "Edinburgh II." But the question was if this conference should be a global Protestant event in collaboration with the World Council of Churches and the Lausanne committee. According to Roberta Winter, the WCC was

in one sense one of the indirect products of the 1910 conference. By 1978 [this date because it was the date of this discussion, authors remark], however, the WCC had become so vastly different (both in theology and mission strategy) from the mission group that had preceded it that it would definitely be unacceptable as sponsor to most evangelical mission leaders who might want to come.\textsuperscript{101}

The WCC conference in Australia would not compete with "Edinburgh II":

From previous experience Ralph knew their topics of discussion would likely be justice and liberation—basically political concerns such as apartheid, guerilla warfare in South America and Africa, etc.\textsuperscript{102}

Concerning the Lausanne committee, the problem was not theology but, according to Roberta Winter, the constituency of mainly churchmen and people with little relation to mission agencies. Not even the Pattaya conference would compete with "Edinburgh II." But the U.S. Center for World Mission was careful not to make a time conflict between the two conferences.\textsuperscript{103}

**Overseas Crusades and the Discipling of a Whole Nation-State**

One of the North American parachurch organizations that would be the most important in Guatemala during the 1980s was Overseas Crusades, whose visions were in accord with the Frontier Mission Movement. The organization established its branch in Guatemala in August 1979, the month after the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. Many new organizations arrived in Guatemala at this time, with the direct or indirect purpose of counteracting a similar political development as in Nicaragua.

\textsuperscript{100} B. Gill 1984:97–101.
\textsuperscript{101} R. Winter 1987:171.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.: 171–172.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.: 172.
In Latin America, Overseas Crusades uses the name Servicio Evangelizador Para América Latina, SEPAL. Galo Vásquez, who during many years cooperated with the Argentinian evangelist Luis Palau, became the director of the SEPAL's Guatemalan team. Palau himself earlier was the president of Overseas Crusades, but at this time he recently had handed over the directorship to Clyde Cook.\footnote{T. Halls 1987:6–7. This is an unpublished memorandum on the history of SEPAL (Overseas Crusades) in Guatemala written by Timothy Halls, who in 1987 recently had become the director of SEPAL/Guatemala. Overseas Crusades later changed name to OC International. To avoid confusion because of too many names I will keep to the name Overseas Crusades throughout this study.}

Overseas Crusades was established as an organization already in 1950, when Madame Chiang Kai-Shek asked a group of U.S. evangelicals to come to Taiwan and preach to the demoralized military forces in the country.\footnote{The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center 1988:59; and Committed to Reaching the World [no date].} In 1952, Overseas Crusades initiated its operations in the Philippines. Operations in Latin America began in Colombia and Brazil in 1963, and expanded to Guatemala in 1979.\footnote{W.D. Roberts and J.A. Siewert, eds. 1989.} The development of evangelization strategies within Overseas Crusades was closely connected to work in the Philippines, which is a reason to make some short remarks about Overseas Crusades in this area of the world.

In 1968, Overseas Crusades officially opened its branch in the Philippines, but it already had some operations there before. The organization was incorporated in Manila as Philippine Crusades. The purpose was said to be “to work side by side with national Churches in the discipling of nations.”\footnote{D.A. McGavran and J.H. Montgomery 1980:54.} James Montgomery became the Philippine field director, and he remained in this position for seven years.\footnote{Ibid.}

In the Philippines Montgomery developed some ideas he first encountered in 1965 when he studied church growth with Donald McGavran at the Institute of Church Growth in Eugene, Oregon. Montgomery employed these ideas in his work in the Philippines. The most concrete result was that Overseas Crusades encouraged the churches concerning “goal-setting.” This implied that the churches in the Philippines would direct their forces to set up defined goals for quantitative growth.\footnote{Ibid.:53–69.}

James Montgomery returned to the United States in 1975 and became director of research and strategy at Overseas Crusades and managing editor of the Global Church Growth Bulletin. He also studied church growth strategy at the Fuller School of World Mission.\footnote{Ibid.:63–64, back page.} At this time one of the professors there, Ralph Winter, already had left to found the U.S. Center for World Mission.
It is difficult to know exactly who influenced whom at different stages, but it is clear that at the end of the 1970s Winter, McGavran, and Montgomery were of the opinion that the most effective way to work with unreached people groups was to make use of geopolitical entities in the world. The volume written by Montgomery and McGavran before the Church Growth Congress in the Philippines, 1980, was given the title, *The Discipling of a Nation*. "Nation" in this case explicitly meant nation-state, which implied the boundaries of the states in the world of today. The book reports from the experiences of different churches in the Philippines between 1974 and 1979. The technical and statistical parts were written by Montgomery, while McGavran wrote the missiological parts.

Under the heading "Is it God’s Will?" the book explains the relationship between "nation" in "the discipling of a Nation" and the New Testament *ethnos* (one of the Greek words for "people"). According to Montgomery and McGavran, "nation" today means "nation-state." In the Bible it is not stated explicitly that whole nations should be discipled in this sense. The New Testament states that one is to disciple *ethne*. But when all *ethne* are discipled, the nation-state is discipled. The discipling of a whole nation(state), according to Montgomery and McGavran, can be seen as an implicit command in the Bible.111

The book also gives a justification for the discipling of the nations, which may be an appeal to persons who do not share the authors' views on mission: If one wants to improve a nation socially and get rid of oppression and exploitation, the best way is to disciple it: "Evangelization is the best friend of all reformers who desire the reconstruction of the social order along righteous lines."112 If the state will be Christian, a substantial part must accept Christ:

Churches should keep steadily in mind the great liberation of soul and body, society and productivity, which will result when at least a third of a nation-state is discipled and in it many ethnic units have become substantially Christian.113

It is difficult to find support in the Bible for the view that the Great Commission implies discipling at least a third of the citizens in a nation-state. The call of Jesus for people to be the salt of the world (Matthew 5:13) would rather imply 4 percent of the population of the world being Christians. This is the percentage of salt in the oceans. Certainly, the Bible can be used in many ways.

The best thing to do for any country, according to Montgomery and McGavran, is to spread the Gospel and multiply congregations. Churches, which are the result of such an effort, will revolutionize values, organizations, relations, rights, and obligations. The authors also count countries that are in a process, according to them, to becoming substantially Christian (in contrast

112 Ibid.:22–23.
113 Ibid.:163.
to nominally Christian). In Latin America these countries are the Maya, Quechua, and Aymara halves of Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.\textsuperscript{114}

In the book there are no considerations against proselytism among other Christian churches. If "Branch One" of the "Universal Church" gets ill, God will send in Branches Two, and Three, and so on. Both persons who are non-Christians and persons who are Christians in a national and cultural sense should be discipled.\textsuperscript{115} Concerning the fact that all churches and organizations using this method will try to win nominal members of other associations, the authors write:

\begin{quote}
All Catholic Missions in Protestant territory and all Protestant Missions in Catholic territory fall under this head. Instead of bewailing and denouncing such action, let us accept it as a normal procedure. If it results in all becoming more biblical and spiritual, God will be pleased.\textsuperscript{116}
\end{quote}

These were the latest developments in the mission strategy of Overseas Crusades at about the time when the organization established its branch in Guatemala.

Overseas Crusades had plans to start up in Guatemala already in 1977, but the start was postponed.\textsuperscript{117} In February 1978 Luis Palau, who still was the president of Overseas Crusades, ran an evangelization campaign in Guatemala. Just before this campaign he wrote a letter to pastors in the United States explaining what plans Overseas Crusades had for Mexico and Central America. In this letter the purpose of the operations in Guatemala was clear.\textsuperscript{118} Palau wrote that he visited Guatemala for the first time in 1968. The local leaders then asked him to come back for "a crusade," which took place during three weeks in 1971. The mass meetings in this campaign were televised every night on Guatemalan television.\textsuperscript{119} In 1973, he returned to Guatemala for holding campaigns in four of the country's larger cities. Another campaign was planned to 1976, but apparently was canceled because of the earthquake:

However, we have noticed that instead of hardening the people toward the Gospel, like what has happened in neighboring countries, the earthquake has made the industrious Guatemalan even more receptive. We firmly believe that Guatemala could become, by God's grace, the first Latin nation with a majority evangelical population. Guatemala has the potential to become a spiritual powerhouse for God's glory. The question is, that is the Spirit's strategy to take advantage of this obviously strategic hour for Guatemala?\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.:163–164.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.:166–168.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.:164.
\textsuperscript{117} T. Halls 1987:6–7.
\textsuperscript{118} Luis Palau, January 25, 1978.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
Thus, Luis Palau meant that Guatemala was in a strategic point of time for the expansion of evangelicalism. He viewed the earthquake as having created this possibility for evangelical growth. With the purpose of promoting this growth the Overseas Crusades began to develop a “five-year-plan” and decided to send missionaries to Guatemala. 121

Further on, Palau wrote that Overseas Crusades planned to hold a “Latin American Congress on Evangelism” and at the same time a national campaign in Guatemala in November 1979, with the purpose of developing a strategy to win Latin America for Christ in our generation. - - - As I said at the outset, this could change the history of that country and spill over into all of Central America and Mexico. 122

In February 1980, the first team meeting for Guatemala was held at the Overseas Crusades headquarters in California to plan for “the discipleship of a nation.” 123 James Montgomery participated and gave an account of experiences in the Philippines. He emphasized four factors that he viewed as important in a national “training program”: to do research, motivate the church, mobilize the church, and disciple. 124 Among the goals for activities in Guatemala, which were established in 1980, the following are mentioned: to start a research program that would cover the whole country, to contact mission directors and Guatemalan church leaders, to get the Overseas Crusades team members established in local churches, and within five years publish “the contextual and church growth data of each subcultural group within the nation.” 125 In addition, the team should work with research about the world-view of every ethnic group in Guatemala, and all team members should be involved in the celebration of the centennial of Protestantism in Guatemala in 1982. The political situation in Guatemala was also discussed at the meeting. One of the participants predicted revolution within three to six months. However, it is not evident from the sources how the activists in Overseas Crusades viewed a possible revolution. 126

The most obvious result of the work of Overseas Crusades in Guatemala before 1982 was its contribution to the IINDEF/SEPAL/PROCADRES directory, a source employed earlier in this chapter. The directory was part of the work of identifying the homogenous units in Guatemala, and in which of them no Protestant church was planted. Many churches in Guatemala considered the directory to be a service of good use to them. This helped the Overseas Crusades team to establish themselves as a part of Guatemalan church life.

121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid..
Neo-Pentecostalism and Independent Churches in Guatemala

The Charismatic Movement

The charismatic movement is important for understanding the development of new independent churches in Guatemala as well as in the United States. The growing split in the Catholic Church in Guatemala during the 1970s coincided with the spread of the charismatic movement. As long as the movement stayed within the churches it meant that borders between Catholicism and Protestantism were crossed. Ecumenical charismatic groups with both Catholics and Protestants were established. These were prayer groups with the purpose of complementing the activities in the churches. The purpose was not to establish new churches but rather to keep members in the charismatic movement within existing church structures. In spite of this, the charismatic movement implied many church divisions. Many of the new charismatic groups broke away from traditional denominations and started new independent churches.

The charismatic movement in Latin America started in Argentina. Between 1970 and 1972 Catholic charismatic meetings were organized in most of the countries in Central and South America. In 1973, the movement reached many cities in Mexico. That same year, it developed into a more well-established presence in Guatemala. Two persons were especially important in the establishment of the charismatic movement in Guatemala, both of them from the United States: Rev. Timothy Rovenstine on the Protestant side and Ann Sullivan from the Catholic side. Sullivan came from Ann Arbor, Michigan. The Franciscan university Steubenville in this city was one of the most important centers for the Catholic charismatic movement in the United States.

Timothy Rovenstine was the one who brought together Catholics and Protestants in the charismatic movement. But also other North Americans were influential in the establishment of the Guatemalan charismatic movement. Some came from Ann Arbor, some were connected with Full Gospel Business Men, and others were influenced by the Catholic priest Francis McNutt. In Mexico and Guatemala most of the Protestant charismatic movement was absorbed within Pentecostal churches. The ones who did not join the Pentecostals established independent groups.

It was difficult for leaders to keep the charismatic movement functioning on an ecumenical level. Catholics and Protestants had problems working together. In most cases the Catholics, who continued to be Catholics, remained within the Catholic charismatic movement, while Catholics who participated in the ecumenical charismatic movement frequently converted to Protestantism. In the group led by Rovenstine, conflicts emerged, and Catholics wanted

128 Ibid.:48,56.
to have their own group without Protestants. One of the reasons for difficulty in unifying Catholics and Protestants in the charismatic movement seems to be the different views in relation to the leaders of the discipleship/shepherding movement in Fort Lauderdale. These tried to make themselves into leaders of the whole charismatic movement. Through discipleship, charismatics should be subordinated to these leaders, something that contradicted other church loyalties. Opposition against charismatic leaders from Argentina existed for the same reason. The initiative for opposition against the Fort Lauderdale leaders came from groups like the Full Gospel Business Men and the Club 700 of Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network.¹²⁹

In 1977, a charismatic conference was held in Antigua, Guatemala, where twenty-eight Protestant and Catholic Charismatic leaders from Latin America and the United States participated. These leaders opposed the discipleship leaders and presented an alternative that implied being charismatic without subordination to discipleship. The movement from Antigua came to be called 17:21 after the New Testament text in John about unity. Within time, the movement reflected a strong Catholic orientation.¹³⁰

Apparently, subordination to the Fort Lauderdale leaders was seen as a separatist tendency by the leaders who wanted the charismatic movement to remain within traditional churches. The shepherding leaders instead tried to establish the charismatic movement as a new force alongside denominations, subordinated to them rather than established church leaders. This was difficult for many Protestants, but even more for the Catholic Church, with its emphasis on unity.

But from the end of the 1970s the trend to move away from denominations to establish new, independent churches became increasingly visible in Guatemala. From the beginning these new churches were small groups that gathered in places connected to more exclusive hotels in the capital. The trend coincided with a growing division within the churches concerning the political situation. The charismatic movement—both when it kept to the traditional churches and when it implied the establishment of independent churches—attracted the upper sectors of Guatemalan society especially in the capital and other cities.

The organization Full Gospel Business Men could be counted as an important force behind the charismatic movement. The gathering of businessmen implied that financial resources could be channeled to the charismatic movement, but there is seemingly no empirical evidence for this as far as I know. In Guatemala, as in other countries, the organization gathered both Protestant and Catholic professionals. Two months after the revolution in Nicaragua, in September 1979, the Full Gospel Business Men was established in Guatemala. The presence of Father Francis MacNutt at the gatherings for its estab-

¹²⁹ Ibid.:57,92.
¹³⁰ Ibid.:92.
lishment demonstrated that the organization would gather Guatemalan Catholics as well as Protestants. According to the organization's magazine *Voice*, revolutionary winds were blowing in South America. The Christians also wanted to have a change in Guatemala, according to *Voice*. However, they did not want a change at the price of revolution or military rule. The change would occur through a change in people's hearts.\(^{131}\)

Two of the neo-Pentecostal churches established in Guatemala during the latter half of the 1970s would be especially significant during the 1980s. One of them was the Verbo Church, established by California-based Gospel Outreach in 1976. The other one was the independent church Christian Fraternity (Fraternidad Cristiana) established in 1979, which in the beginning of the 1990s had the largest local neo-Pentecostal congregation in Guatemala City. The constituency of these and other similar churches was the wealthier sectors of society, middle class and upper class.

The Christian Fraternity

The Christian Fraternity is an off-shot from the Guatemalan Calvary Church. One of the pastors in this church, the Cuban Rev. Torranzo, helped Timothy Rovenstine with his charismatic group. The Calvary Church was a Baptist church, rather similar to classic Pentecostal churches. It was not charismatic; however, many charismatics came to the church because some of its leaders supported the charismatic movement. Eventually some leaders detached themselves from the Calvary Church for establishing new independent churches.\(^{132}\)

One of these leaders was Jorge Lopez, who founded Christian Fraternity in 1979. The church had its first open meeting at the hotel Guatemala Fiesta on January 7, 1979, and five families participated. A booklet from the church, written at the beginning of the 1990, stated that it was natural to have a fashionable place for meetings because the purpose was to reach the middle class. The place was expensive, but a miracle happened, according to the booklet. The hotel let the group rent the hall every Sunday for a small amount of money. Soon the church started to broadcast on radio and television.\(^{133}\)

Jorge Lopez was more well-educated in theology than many pastors in Guatemalan independent churches. He received his Master of Divinity at Logos Graduate School in the United States. In 1974, he worked as pastor in the First United Methodist Church in Miami and at the same time studied at Lindsay Hopkins Education Center, taking courses in the operation and production of television. During this time he had got the opportunity to observe closely the charismatic movement in the United States. In 1974, he also studied one semester at Liberty College in Pensacola, which is connected to Globe

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\(^{131}\) *Voice* 1979.
\(^{132}\) S. Berberian 1983:57.
\(^{133}\) R. Escobar Argüello 1991:5.
Missionary Evangelism, an organization that arrived in Guatemala in 1975. Its leader was Ken Sumrall, who was also the leader of the National Leadership Conference, the largest network of independent churches in the United States.\textsuperscript{134}

When Jorge Lopez returned to Guatemala he worked as pastor in the Calvary Church. He then noted that many persons from the upper middle class came to church but disappeared after a short while. According to Lopez, the reason was that the churches oriented themselves too much toward the poor. In the Catholic Church, the theology of liberation was growing. The churches behaved as if it was forbidden to be successful, he maintained. Thus, Lopez believed there was a need for a church with an increased openness to the upper middle class.\textsuperscript{135}

The Verbo Church and Its Background

The Verbo Church, of which Efrain Rios Montt became a member, grew out of the Californian movement Gospel Outreach, an off-shot from the discipleship/shepherding movement. Gospel Outreach was founded by Jim Durkin, who in 1970 started to work with a group of Christian youth at a coastal guard lighthouse in Eureka, California. Jim Durkin previously had been an Assemblies of God pastor, working in California and Oregon for twelve years. Inside Gospel Outreach he started to train teams for missionary tasks. The first team was sent to Alaska and the second one to Guatemala.\textsuperscript{136} Jim Durkin had a premillenarian worldview. He thought that the second coming of Christ would soon occur, but that Christ would not return before more people in the world became Christians. This was the motive for sending missionaries.\textsuperscript{137}

After the earthquake in Guatemala in February 1976, Gospel Outreach decided to send its second missionary team to this country for giving assistance in reconstruction work. The team of fifteen persons was led by Carlos Ramírez, a Colombian who was born-again in the United States in 1971 and joined Gospel Outreach in 1972. Ramírez became the director of the Verbo Church, which the missionary team founded in Guatemala. The Verbo Church remained a branch of Gospel Outreach International.\textsuperscript{138}

Carlos Ramírez and the others in the missionary team thus worked with reconstruction after the earthquake. But already at the beginning they established the congregation and devoted themselves to evangelization. In accordance with shepherding strategy, the Verbo Church started cell groups, so called iglesias en el hogar (home churches) to facilitate this evangelization. A

\textsuperscript{135} J. Lopez, interview February 25, 1994; R. Escobar Argüello 1991:3.
\textsuperscript{136} Verbo Christian Ministries 1991.
\textsuperscript{137} D. Stoll 1990:184.
\textsuperscript{138} Verbo Christian Ministries 1991.
decade later the Verbo Church magazine explained that the home churches had an important role in the construction of local churches. According to this article, the role of the home church was to inspire, instruct, and animate the believers so that they would get a better understanding of the word of God. Many people came to Verbo through home churches; many would never come to a gathering in the church, the article asserts. On the other hand, they were prepared to go home to someone they knew.139

The home church is and has been an important part of the mission strategy of the Verbo Church. It is carefully decided where to locate the home churches: It is important to have the right people as leaders in the home gatherings. The nucleus of the Verbo Church consists of people from the higher levels of Guatemalan society. They must be well known persons, involved in social activities, and accordingly have a large social network. These influential persons are leaders of the home churches. Because of their social influence, it is easy for them to bring others with them when they are born again.140

In August 1979, the Verbo Church grew out of the so-called Casa Verbo, where the services were held. At that time 250 adults attended the congregation’s Sunday services. It was time for the growing congregation to change locations. The place for services was moved to “Auditorio de la Cámara de Industria.” This happened soon after the revolution in Nicaragua in July 1979. At this time the Verbo Church also started to prepare for its missionary crusades in all of Latin America. According to the official version of the Verbo Church, in 1979 a vision of filling all of Latin America with the Gospel arose. The first country to which the Guatemalan Verbo Church sent a missionary team was Nicaragua. According to the Verbo Church, insecurity and chaos grew after the assumption of power of the Sandinistas in July 1979. The first visit occurred a few days after the revolution, and a Verbo missionary team arrived in Nicaragua on February 3, 1980. Also in 1980 a group of Latin Americans in New Orleans joined the Verbo Church, and in 1982 the Verbo Church started a congregation in Quito, Ecuador.141 According to information in a memorandum from the Presbyterian Church in Guatemala, the Verbo Church had about 800 members in 1980 and 70 pupils in its school.142 This implies that strong growth occurred during the latter half of 1979 and the following year.

139 Ministerios Verbo [1987].
140 See for example S. Berberian, July 1986. According to Berberian, himself a member in the Verbo Church, the nucleus in the congregation consists of “middle-high class society.” These are people with major involvement in social activities and well known in society. When they are saved it is easy for them to bring others with them in the same direction. Latin Americans are open to receiving everything a friend offers, according to Berberian. Thus, they receive the Christian message with the same ease. This strategy has been well planned and used by the elders to get to know who are key persons to have in home gatherings.
142 P. Santizo Morales, October 25, 1990.
Ríos Montt and the Verbo Church

Efrain Ríos Montt became a member of the Verbo Church in 1978. According to people with a sympathetic view of him, Ríos Montt was a devote Christian with a high sense of morality, also before conversion. His critics depict him as a fanatic, not only from the time he became an evangelical but also during the time when he was a Catholic and good friend of Cardinal Msgr. Casariego. The author’s view of Ríos Montt, as with others, naturally has been influenced by what he did during his time as president and before, as well as after. From the beginning of this investigation about Guatemala (1988) until this writing (1997), Ríos Montt has been a hot issue in the Guatemalan newspapers. In 1988, he appeared as a possible presidential candidate for the election of 1990, but the debate hardened as the election approached and when he got surprisingly large support in the opinion polls. This support, even among Mayas, was a shock to many who remembered the violence and the brutality of the army during his regime. The Guatemalan population, including the elite, was divided on the issue of Ríos Montt. Finally his candidacy was ruled as unconstitutional, as the constitution from 1985 does not allow perpetrators of a coup d’etat to run for presidency.143 The course of events was repeated in the election of 1995 when he again tried to run for the presidency.144

Sources for the personal history of Ríos Montt are newspaper articles and the historiography offered by Gospel Outreach leaders Joseph Anfuso and David Sczepanski, with a preface by Pat Robertson. In addition, almost every researcher on Guatemala has something to say about Ríos Montt. The work of Gospel Outreach gives a favorable picture, and it is built partly on information given by Ríos Montt himself and people close to him. The tendency here is to depict him as a servant of God and not a tyrant, as a dedicated Christian and not a hypocrite. The book wants to expose him as unfairly defamed by the international press and human rights organizations. In spite of this tendency it is an important source on the life of Ríos Montt as seen from his own perspective. The authors apparently tried to give an accurate description of events, not in the country but in his life and how he viewed things, for instance, his military carrier and his conversion to the Verbo Church.145

Ríos Montt was born into a Catholic middle-class family in Hue-

143 See Chapter 8 about the election of 1990.
144 In a preliminary version of this chapter Ríos Montt was depicted as brutal and fanatic, but also consequent, noncorrupt, and loyal to the army. However, later events may give a different picture. After the election of 1995, high-level members of the party of Ríos Montt, Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (FRG), appeared in narcotic trade issues. Ríos Montt himself has been accused of being a major threat to the peace process, working behind the scene to set up obstacles for the implementation of the peace accords, and trying to remove the law that prohibits him from running for presidency. It might turn out that he is more pragmatic than fanatically religious, and more corrupt than noncorrupt. But perhaps he changed during the 1980s and 1990s.
145 J. Anfuso and D. Sczepanski 1986.
Huetenango in 1926. When he was a boy his parents were not active Christians. But his maternal grandmother was a Protestant, and her brother was the founder of the Central American Mission church in Huetenango. When Ríos Montt's brother was accepted to the Catholic pastoral seminary, the family became devoted Catholics and committed to the church.146 This brother later would become a bishop in the Catholic Church and an adversary to Ríos Montt during his presidency. That one brother becomes a military officer and the other a Catholic priest is common in Latin America, because of the traditions in many Catholic countries. Frequently one son takes up the occupation of the father, another one goes to the army, and a third to work in the church.

Unlike most of the other high-ranking officers in Guatemala, Ríos Montt began his military career as an ordinary soldier. He stayed in this position for three years before going to the Guatemalan military academy Escuela Politécnica. Apparently his marriage with a member of an important military family, Sosa Avila, aided his career. Among his military appointments Ríos Montt especially distinguished himself as the director of the military academy. He was very popular among the cadets, something that would be of great importance in 1982 when these former cadets were young officers and chose Ríos Montt as president of the junta. Within some circles he was famous for his morality, for his verbal criticism of corruption, and for his statements about not wanting to be involved in politics, which he considered a dirty business. According to Gospel Outreach, Ríos Montt was angry at businessmen's and politicians' use of the army for their own benefit.147 Already as a Catholic, Ríos Montt was devoted to Bible studies and Christian principles. In the historiography from Gospel Outreach, it is told that Luis Palau once came to visit him in his office at the military Polytechnic School:

"I'd like permission to distribute New Testaments here at the academy," said Palau. "That will not be necessary," Ríos Montt replied. Palau braced himself for a cool rebuff. "We already have New Testaments here. Every cadet is required to carry one." The evangelist broke into a surprised smile.

When Ríos Montt was director, every cadet at the Polytechnic was expected to own two books: the army code of conduct and a pocket-sized New Testament. Whenever a cadet was disciplined, Ríos Montt would routinely ask, "There are two rule books we live by here. Which one did you violate?"

Frequently, both at the academy and at the various military bases where he served, Ríos Montt spoke to his men about God. "Even the best of fathers can fail us," he would sometimes say. "Our mothers can fail us. Our wives can fail us. Our children can fail us. But there is one who can never fail: God. Therefore, Christ must be the Anchor of a man's life. With all your strength you should hold onto this Anchor, for He will never fail you or let you down."148

Two incidents, which cannot be confirmed, show, if they are true, Ríos Montt as a person loyal to the established order and the army as an institution,

146 Ibid.:29–32,36.
147 Ibid.:37–41,56.
whatever different political opinions. According to the Gospel Outreach version, Castillo Armas, with help from the Honorary Guard, attacked the Aurora Military Base in the capital in 1950. The attack was part of an attempted coup d'état against President Arévalo. At this time Ríos Montt led the defense of the Aurora base in support of the president.\footnote{J. Anfuso and D. Szepanski 1986:44–45.}

According to one of his adversaries in the army, Colonel Djalma Domínguez, ten years later, in November 1960, Ríos Montt exposed the attempted coup against President Ydígoras Fuentes, who succeeded Castillo Armas after the CIA coup. This attempt by dissident officers failed and became the booster for the country's first guerrilla movements. The exposed perpetrators fled and founded Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes and Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre. According to Domínguez, Ríos Montt called for the Catholic archbishop Msgr. Casariego, on November 12, 1960. As already noted, the archbishop was a good friend of Ríos Montt and the cadet chaplain. Ríos Montt bore his soul to the archbishop and told him about the plan to oust the president, with which he was involved, and which would take place the following day.\footnote{D. Domínguez, August 5, 1990:6 ff.}

On July 30, 1972, Ríos Montt was appointed Brigade General of the Guatemalan Army. Less than a year later he was appointed joint chief of staff of the army, thereby reaching the highest position for a Guatemalan military officer after minister of defense or president.\footnote{J. Anfuso and D. Szepanski 1986:53.} But Ríos Montt did not hold this position for more than a few months. He was sent to Washington and then returned as presidential candidate for the opposition coalition with the Christian Democrats in 1974. After the electoral fraud he went as military attaché to Spain, at this time still under the rule of General Franco.

The Gospel Outreach work does not mention anything about Ríos Montt's military training outside Guatemala. But he was graduate of specialist training of the U.S. Army Special Forces at Fort Gulick in the Panama Canal Zone. He studied counter-guerrilla operations at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and also completed an eighteen-month course at the Italian Army's School of War.\footnote{M. McClintock 1985:224. He refers to Diario de Centro América, March 26, 1982.}

Ríos Montt returned to Guatemala in 1977 to attend the inauguration of the new military academy. His plan at this time was to stay in the country and run for president in the election of 1978. But the Christian Democratic leaders did not come to see him. They still resented the events in 1974 when he went to Spain instead of struggling for change in Guatemala. It was in this situation that Ríos Montt, despised by others, came in contact with the Verbo Church. The connection was made by Luis Chang, a former military officer who had been Ríos Montt's security chief during the election of 1974. Luis Chang was a member of the Verbo Church, and now he invited Ríos Montt
to participate in church gatherings. According to Anfuso and Sczepanski, the loss in the election of 1974 and the enmity with the Christian Democrats created a great trauma for Ríos Montt. This led him to a conversion experience at the Verbo Church. A widespread rumor in Guatemala was that Ríos Montt went through an alcoholism crisis during his time in Spain. This could be an important reason for his conversion. This is not unlikely, for it is the personal history supporting many conversions to evangelicalism in Guatemala. Gospel Outreach or the Verbo Church would never mention something like this, as they only want to emphasize the favorable parts of Ríos Montt's life.

There is a problem in the historiography of Gospel Outreach in relation to genre. Usually these kinds of pious books depict conversion experiences that imply a radical change of life when the person is born again. However, Anfuso and Sczepanski describe Ríos Montt as a Christian person with very high moral during his entire life. Thus, they emphasize a continuity before and after conversion. The major difference is Jesus Christ, who was not central for Ríos Montt before conversion. But according to the authors, there are apparently no greater changes in life or worldview for Ríos Montt. If this view is accurate it implies that Ríos Montt kept the same views while the world around him changed. The Catholic Christian Democrats wanted him to protest and revolt. Ideas like that were growing among Catholics in the country, while the Verbo Church was in continuity with traditional Catholic views, implying subordination to authority and submission to the political system. The conversion of Ríos Montt thus can be seen as a change of religious context that better fit with the views on religion and society that he always had kept. Thus, Ríos Montt is an example of an internal migration within a Christian camp.

Neo-Pentecostalism and Politics

Who were attracted by neo-Pentecostalism and why? Certain issues already have been noted: the split inside the Catholic Church and the resistance against Catholic social doctrine. People from the upper classes were searching for a new alternative and looked in the direction of the charismatic movement. However, Archbishop Casariego was against the Catholic charismatic movement as much as he was against liberation perspectives in the church. This is an important reason why so many Catholic charismatics became evangelicals.

It must also be noted that Protestant churches were divided over politics as well as other issues. Many neo-Pentecostals considered themselves to be more liberal than the Protestant churches from which they came. The neo-Pente-
costal churches were interested in politics, more open minded concerning
dress codes and not always as rigid on alcohol and other customs common
within the upper classes. Anticatholicism was widespread, but the official
rhetoric was to unify, not split, evangelicals and charismatic Catholics.

What social sectors were attracted by neo-Pentecostalism? Contrary to poor
people, including Mayas, who mainly were attracted to traditional Pentecos-
talism, it is clear that persons both inside the bourgeoisie, the technical bu-
reaucratic class, and in the urban intermediate strata converted to neo-Pente-
costalism. Most of the neo-Pentecostal pastors themselves belong to the urban
intermediate strata. Few have an academic, theological education. Jorge Lopez
in Christian Fraternity is one of the exceptions. Others have other professions,
for instance, Harold Caballeros (leader of El Shaddai) is a lawyer, while Oton-
iel Ríos Paredes (leader of Elim) is a medical doctor. To become a leader of a
church is thus an alternative career, which possibly is more profitable than a
professional one. Pastors live on the tithes given by parishioners. This explains
why it is attractive to be the leader of a church with rich members. The
pastors naturally reflect the attitudes by those parishioners who are most im-
portant to the existence of the church. 155

Special for Guatemala, in comparison with many other Latin American
countries (at least during the 1970s and 1980s), is that Protestantism has been
growing within all social classes, among the rich as well as among the poor.
it is interesting to note the views of a Colombian pastor, whom the author
interviewed, about this phenomenon.

The pastor, Adelmo Ruiz, worked for the Summer Institute of Linguistics
in Guatemala at the time of the interview. In Guatemala, as compared to his
homeland Colombia or other countries like Mexico and Costa Rica, he noted
that the U.S. influence was larger in Guatemala, both in society and in the
churches. Despite widespread and strong anti-U.S. feelings in Guatemala,
people accept a Protestantism from the United States. According to Ruiz, this
means that people think the Protestant message works. 156

Further, Ruiz reflected on the fact that people from the Guatemalan elite
became Protestants. The reason is that there was evangelization work targetted
toward the elite. The situation may be the same in countries like Argentina
and Brazil. When the elite converts to Protestantism, it influences all classes of
society, according to Ruiz. When the poor become Protestants, they influence
only the poor. This is why theology of liberation has more influence in Protes-
tantism in Colombia than in Guatemala. The Colombian elite is not Protes-
tant. But because people from the Guatemalan elite are Protestants they serve
as examples for the other classes. Ruiz had a positive view on the U.S. influ-

155 An analysis of causes behind evangelical growth in Guatemala is beyond the scope of this
study as far as it is not directly related to counterinsurgency. This does not imply that I suggest
that politics is the only or main explanation to evangelical growth in Guatemala.
156 A.A. Ruiz D., interview June 26, 1992. The strategy mentioned to reach the elite is the same
method the organization Moral Rearmament used in Europe.
ence, the role of Protestantism, and the blessings these implied for Guatemala. What Adelmo Ruíz in a way expressed, even if this might not have been his intention, was that evangelicalism in Guatemala had lost its potential as a resistance movement when the elite of the society became evangelical. The truth of this is tested in the following chapters.

In concluding this chapter, a rapprochement between evangelicalism and the extreme right, which began in 1980, is considered as a starting point for Guatemalan Political Evangelicalism. At this time the Verbo Church and other neo-Pentecostal churches in Guatemala did still not have any high profile concerning explicit evangelical involvement in Guatemalan politics. Nor did fundamentalist or Pentecostal churches.

Beginnings of Political Evangelicalism in Guatemala

Since 1954 the extreme right had looked for religious legitimacy from the Roman Catholic Church. In the midst of the revolutionary crisis of 1980 it was clear that such legitimacy not easily would be provided by the Catholic Church anymore. The growth of Protestantism implied that a larger part of the population was beyond Catholic control. Internal conflicts within the Catholic Church made it a less reliable ally. In this situation a mutual rapprochement between some evangelical leaders and the extreme right took place. In 1980, the minister of education in the government of Lucas García made a widely noticed conversion to evangelicalism. In the election of 1982, the official presidential candidate Aníbal Guevara made some attempts to win support among the evangelical voters.

In January 1980, a book about the situation in Guatemala, written by the MLN politician Jorge Torres Ocampo, appeared. The purpose of the book was to analyze the political situation and propose strategies concerning the prospects of the election of February 1982. Torres Ocampo reckoned with democratic elections in which the political left would participate. To him the task of the political right was to win the population in a competition with the political left. The political right was forced to talk about social and economic changes, as well as the left did, to compete for the voters. But even if important, the changes proposed by Torres Ocampo in the areas of education, health care, and economic conditions for the poor did not concern the issues earlier identified as the center of conflict: land reform, taxes, and labor legislation. Instead, his proposed changes had to be made to keep the status quo in anticipation of the threat of structural changes.

Torres Ocampo actually maintained that the concept of private property had to be strengthened, and that the harmony between employer and em-

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157 Ibid.
ployee should be saved. The awareness of the advantage of common efforts and equilibrium between “employer (and his risk of capital) and the employee (and his risk of social security)” had to be strengthened.159

In his book, Torres Ocampo briefly wrote about religion in relation to his analysis of political interest groups that must be dealt with in the coming election. According to him, both Catholics and Protestants had a solid base to define themselves politically and ideologically as right wing. While reminding one that the Catholic Church was divided, Torres Ocampo was surprised of what he viewed as sympathies with the radical left among Protestants who otherwise had such excellent capabilities. He thought that the reason may be the traditional chaining together of evangelicals and Communists in the language of Guatemalan reactionaries.160 Torres Ocampo had obviously not noted the large changes taking place within Guatemalan Protestantism.

A member in a fundamentalist church, Marco Tulio Cajas, was challenged by the statement of Torres Ocampo concerning the Protestants. In an article in the daily El Gráfico, he responded to Torres Ocampo and explained his view on the relationship between evangelicals and politics. Only a few evangelicals had sympathies with the political left in his view. After the publication of this article many evangelical leaders phoned Marco Tulio Cajas. They were positive about the article and encouraged him to continue writing. Thus a few months later, Cajas published the book El Futuro es Vuestro (The Future Is Yours), in which he dealt with the relationship between evangelicals and politics in Guatemala.161 This was a start of a career as a prominent leader of public opinion among evangelicals. Later, Marco Tulio Cajas was the campaign leader of Serrano Elias in the election of 1985. Within time he also became the general secretary of the party Central Autentico Nacionalista (CAN).

In his book, Marco Tulio Cajas carried on a discussion with two political fronts. One of them was the political right, represented by Jorge Torres Ocampo. The other was the political left, represented by the National Council of Jesuits of Guatemala. Concerning the first one, Cajas discussed what the political right had to do if they wanted to count on the evangelicals as being among their sympathizers. He emphasized that evangelicals had different political opinions, even though a majority would prefer a fair and democratic government. The sympathies for the extreme left did not come from evangelical majority groups like the Pentecostal churches, but only from a few smaller groups. The Gospel does not ally itself with a special political party, according to Cajas. But there are political motives that can gain confidence among Christians, both Catholics and evangelicals, in spite of different party orientations.162

159 Ibid.:12. Author’s translation from Spanish.
160 Ibid.:61–64.
Two political motives, which would win the confidence of evangelicals, are social justice and morality, according to Cajas. Every candidate or party offering complete and concrete measures could win sympathy. He writes about the Bible’s teachings on oppression, including the Jubilee Year, implying an automatic land reform to avoid overly large concentrations of land. What Guatemala needs is land reform, modernization, and honesty in public administration. Politicians must work in favor of morality so that the vices receive less space in the mass media, and strive toward a situation when biblical principles about justice and truth are practiced by they who govern and those who are governed. Because Guatemala is the country in Latin America with the relatively greatest number of evangelicals, it has the possibility to become a nation where biblical principles are realized. This happened in countries like the United States, Switzerland, Holland, and England. In England, the existence of Methodism meant that a blood-stained revolution like the French one, inspired by humanism, could be evaded, according to Cajas.163

If the concern of Deputy Torres Ocampo is that the evangelical mass becomes the electoral base of the right, we urgently propose that the moral restoration of the country—based in the teaching of the Bible about the human being and society—will be promoted. This may be one of the ways in which God will bless this needy country: to allow that genuine Christians exercise a beneficial influence in the midst of so much confusion and violence.164

Cajas continues to discuss participation in politics. Evangelicals emphasize personal salvation, and social action is not an integrated part of the mission of the church. But social action can very well complement this mission, even if it is not an expression of the church. It is rather an expression of the social responsibility of Christians. Contrary to the Marxist view that the human being is changed if the social environment change, evangelical theology maintains that the key to social change is the change of the individual. Because of this view many Christians maintain that the state should be secular and that the Gospel not should be mixed with any political program or social ideology. According to Cajas, an individual Christian can have political sympathies, but should keep away from a surrender to any cause or ideology, that is not of Christ, no matter how right or attractive this cause would ever be.165

In this sense we as Christians can cooperate with a democratic system, or with one that is not, while our conscience before God always indicates that we are searching for the good. We can struggle for what is right in this world because the principal victory over the forces of darkness has already been won by Jesus Christ.166

163 Ibid.:34.
164 Ibid.:35. Author's translation from Spanish.
165 Ibid.:36.
166 Ibid.:36. Author's translation from Spanish.
Cajas then turned to his discussion with the Jesuits. The background for this debate was that the National Council of Jesuits of Guatemala, together with other authorities in the Jesuit order, on January 16, 1980, published a declaration in the newspaper *El Gráfico*. The Jesuits condemned the persecution of Catholic priests and civil population in Guatemala. They also talked about the urgency of a change in social structures. The declaration provoked strong reactions from the political right. The day after the publication, the editorial committee of *El Gráfico* announced that they did not agree with the opinions of the Jesuits. Alvaro Contreras Vélez—one of the owners of the competing diary *Prensa Libre*—publicly took a stand opposite the Jesuits. According to him, many Guatemalans protested against priests who were dedicated to political agitation and used their religious positions to attack state institutions and the private sector.\(^\text{167}\) The increasing confrontation and repression in 1980 provoked some of the Guatemalan Jesuits to join the guerrillas, which they viewed as the only possible alternative.

Also in January 1980, the extreme right party MLN demanded in a communiqué that the Jesuit order be expelled from Guatemala, and that their resources be nationalized and distributed to the poor. According to MLN, the Jesuits, who once upon a time appeared to defend the faith, now were attacking this faith, preaching hate instead of love, and embracing people who denied the existence of God. The communiqué maintained that violence and killings, which the Jesuits were denouncing, were being caused by Communists and terrorists:

> Torments, like persecution in the countryside, are the work of guerrillas who dress in olive green to look like soldiers, or like civils pretending to be an “authority” so that people in reaction will expose in their lines, to feed the FARI-SEES of politics, the Jesuits, Amnesty International, and Human Rights. They talk about discrimination, but the Guatemalan peasant is only discriminated against by the Communists and their cassock-dressed representatives who insist in calling him INDI... Surely Jesus discriminates between the wheat and the tares. “First collect the tares and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn” (Matthew 13:30), and in Guatemala the only real discrimination is the one between the wheat and the tares.\(^\text{168}\)

Marco Tulio Cajas was one of the critics of the Jesuits, albeit in a less aggressive way. In his book he assumes that behind the commentaries of the Jesuits is a genuine concern for the problems of violence and poverty in Guatemala. He also maintains that without doubt the Jesuits talk about events well-known in Guatemala. However, the confusion may have been caused by their use of the Bible. Cajas maintains that the Jesuits manipulate words by mixing a secular terminology with a biblical one. According to the Jesuits, the killings in Guatemala are against the will of God, for Jesus Christ came to this

\(^{167}\) Ibid.:39-40.

\(^{168}\) *Prensa Libre*, January 31, 1980. Author's translation from Spanish.
world so that humans would have “life in abundance” (John 10:10). But the life talked about in John 10 is a spiritual life, while lives killed in Guatemala have a political meaning, maintains Cajas. Mixing these two matters of life is a manipulation of words. If the church makes Christ a part of a social and economic struggle the essential content of the Christian revelation disappears. Cajas offers more examples of the same phenomenon, while maintaining that what disturbs him is not the Jesuits’ critique of injustice, which is a legitimate concern. But a problem appears when associations are made to Jesus Christ. If the Jesuits were biased, it is clear that Cajas was also, but from another point of view.

Cajas was a member of Centro Bíblico El Camino, an independent fundamentalist church, and he cannot be seen as a representative of all evangelicals in Guatemala. But he was representative for a majority of evangelicals at least on some points. He reacted strongly against poverty in the country and considered extensive changes to be necessary. At the same time, he maintained a dualistic view of worldly and spiritual matters and did not want to mix Christianity with socio-economic changes.

It may be asked if the views of Marco Tulio Cajas were more compatible with the extreme right ideology than the Catholic social doctrine, and in that case, why. Obviously, Cajas had some things in common with the MLN view as represented by Ocampo, and other things in common with the Jesuits. It is peculiar that Cajas shared the Jesuits’ views on the need for structural changes in Guatemala; but at the same time he obviously felt closer to MLN and fell into line in a critique against the Jesuits.

A plausible explanation for this is that Cajas, like many other evangelicals, principally was against everything Catholic. Thus, when a split occurred between large sectors of the Catholic Church and the extreme right, Cajas naturally saw the opportunity to relate to the adversaries of the Catholic Church. Another explanation is that the defense of a dualistic, spiritual interpretation of the Bible was more important for Cajas than structural changes in Guatemala. This interpretation did not allow the Bible to be concerned with all of human life, including physical survival, or to address political violence in Guatemala. Nor did Cajas present an alternative basis from which to criticize human rights abuses. In this kind of evangelical worldview, in which spiritual matters are not allowed to relate to worldly matters, it would be logically possible to develop a secular base from which to judge worldly matters like political systems and political violence. Such a base could be the human rights declarations of the United Nations, for example. This would not be feasible for fundamentalists, however, because of their rather firm history as opponents of a humanistic world view. Cajas did not offer such an alternative, nor did other Guatemalan fundamentalist or charismatic leaders who maintained a dualistic worldview that supported their principles on Bible

interpretation. Thus, no justification for a protection against attacks on human life as a whole was articulated on a philosophical, ideological, or theological level. On this point, the views of Cajas fit very well with the extreme right.

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170 There is a fundamentalist justification to protect human life: “inalienable rights” based on the Bible. However, these rights were not articulated against political violence in Guatemala during this period.
CHAPTER 4
Counterinsurgency and Conversion in the Ixil Area (1976–1982)

Introduction

In the beginning of the 1980s, a majority of the Ixil population supported the guerrilla movement Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, EGP. Some years later, when the Guatemalan army had taken the control of most of the Ixil area, a large part of the population had become evangelicals, more involved in practicing speaking of tongues than political organizing. This chapter is the first of three in this study treating counterinsurgency and evangelicalism in the Ixil area. The chapter covers the period from 1976 until the end of the Lucas García regime in February 1982.

The chronology in this dissertation starts with the earthquake of 1976, which marks an increase both of popular organizing, evangelization efforts, and repression by the army. In the Ixil area, however, the most important event of 1976 was not the earthquake, but the increased army occupation accompanied by repression, and the subsequent effect of pushing many inhabitants into the arms of the guerrillas. The earthquake was milder in the Ixil area compared to many other parts of the country. Consequently, the Ixil area was less affected by evangelization efforts in the wake of the earthquake than those areas suffering most damage. Instead evangelical growth coincided with increased army repression around 1980, which included persecution of the Catholic Church.

Even if several authors have included sections about the Ixil area in their books, only one major study of the area has been made after the violent 1980s. It is the Ph.D. dissertation in anthropology by David Stoll: “Between Two Fires: Dual Violence and the Reassertion of Civil Society in Nebaj, Guatemala” (1992), published in 1993 with the title Between Two Armies in the Ixil Towns of Guatemala. Stoll focuses on the municipality of Nebaj, but has

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1 There is common agreement that a majority of the Ixil people supported EGP in the beginning of the 1980s. See for example D. Stoll 1993. According to J.E. Cifuentes 1982:35 (an army document) approximately 50 percent of the population collaborated with the guerrillas concerning intelligence. According to evangelical church member E, interview April 23, 1994 about 70–80 percent were in favor of the guerrillas.

also researched extensively in the two other Ixil municipalities, Cotzal and Chajul.

Stoll criticizes what he calls “the solidarity version” of the situation in the Ixil area, that is, an interpretation of the Ixil behavior stemming from the concept “resistance.” He wants to reinterpret history to bring it more in accordance with the way the Ixils speak about it. He maintains that most inhabitants in the Ixil country were peasant rebels against their own will. Stoll aims at an interpretation of the situation from a third perspective. According to his view, a majority of the population were neutral favoring neither army. Stoll also has a chapter about religion in his study, including the growth of evangelicalism. According to him, the conversion to evangelicalism was a survival strategy. While I agree with Stoll that evangelicalism was a survival strategy I do not find the interpretation that the majority of the Ixils were neutral in the war between the guerrillas and the army as the most plausible. I will return to David Stoll in the discussion at the end of this chapter.

The Army and the Guerrillas

The Formation of the Guerrilla Movement EGP

In January, 1972, survivors from the earlier guerrilla movement, which had been defeated in the eastern parts of the country, crossed the frontier from Mexico to enter the jungle of Ixcan in El Quiche. The purpose was to create a new guerrilla movement: Ejercito Guerrillero de los Pobres (the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, EGP). The story about the early efforts of EGP in creating a popular base in northern El Quiche has been told by one of the founders, Mario Payeras, who later left EGP. In the preface of Payeras' book it is stated that the selection of this part of the country was carefully considered. The Guatemalan president, General Arana Osorio spoke about the “pacification” of the country and there was no force to counteract his plans. The strategy of the EGP was to confront Arana in the parts of the country where he was weakest.3

The earlier guerrilla war in Guatemala had followed the foco strategy of Che Guevara and Régis Debray. EGP went beyond this strategy in emphasizing carefully planned political and ideological work among the population for creating a popular revolutionary base before any armed actions were initiated. During the 1960s, the guerrillas had judged the ethnic identity of the Mayas to promote conservatism and to counteract a class consciousness. Consequently the Mayan population had not been seen as a possible base for a revolutionary war. To the EGP, however, the Mayas formed an integrated part of the Guatemalan class struggle. The Ixcan area was chosen because it was dominated by well-organized cooperatives established principally by the

Catholic Church. The Mayan inhabitants in these cooperatives were considered to be progressive and conscious and the Guatemalan state was weak in the area. In addition, EGP was attracted to Ixcan because of its closeness to the Mexican border; an important logistical consideration.

EGP worked secretly with clandestine organizing for several years until it made its first public announcement by killing Luis Arenas, the owner of the La Perla plantation in Chajul, in 1975. The Guatemalan military dates the appearance of EGP's combative actions from November 1977, when the first guerrilla attacks occurred in the Ixil area.4

From August 1979 the EGP entered a new phase in its strategy, implying that it became a popular force. At this time EGP turned from clandestine cell groups to the organization of whole villages.5 This change must be related to the revolution in Nicaragua in July 1979. Obviously the events in Nicaragua increased hopes for a similar development in Guatemala and consequently more people turned to EGP. At the same time army repression increased with the purpose of preventing a development similar to Nicaragua. To understand the escalating conflict between EGP and the Guatemalan army, implying that a majority of Ixils sided with EGP, it is necessary to first examine the situation in Ixcan.

Early Military Involvement in Ixcán

The extensive jungle area of Ixcán in the northern parts of the provinces of El Quiché and Huehuetenango was uninhabited until the beginning of the twentieth century. The first migrants to Ixcán were peasants from Alta Verapaz who were forced away from their traditional land by the landlords. During the Second World War the migration from Alta Verapaz to Ixcán increased, and by the mid-1950s, poverty also drove landless peasants from El Quiché and Huehuetenango to penetrate and settle in the Ixcán jungle. By the mid-1960s the spontaneous immigration to Ixcán intensified, because of the national economic crisis. Simultaneously, a new form of migration started to take place, inspired and organized by the churches.6 Protestant denominations, most significantly the Central American Church, established organized immigration projects to Ixcán. Also some community groups from the highlands managed to establish organized immigration without the help from the churches.7

Most significant in the colonization of Ixcán was the support from the Catholic Church, however. In 1966, the Maryknoll order, with support from

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4 J.F. Cifuentes 1982:27.
5 D. Stoll 1992:70.
6 IGE 1992:100; IGE 1989:88–89. IGE stands for Iglesia Guatemalteco en Exilio (the Guatemalan Church in Exile). It was formed in exile by some of the Catholic priests and sisters who had to leave Guatemala because of repression by the Guatemalan army.
the Catholic Diocese of Huehuetenango, started a massive colonization project in Ixcán in cooperation with INTA (the National Institute of Agrarian Transformation). The purpose was to involve landless peasants in the organization of cooperatives. Prominent among the persons committed to the project in the Catholic Church were some Maryknoll priests from the United States, Thomas Melville and P. Doheny, who in 1969 was replaced by Guillermo Woods.  

Approximately 1,500 Mayan families from the highlands settled in Ixcán in the Maryknoll project with a modest budget and almost no technical assistance. During the first years, the organized immigration projects turned out to be a great success. The cooperative settlement model that was used also influenced the older communities in Ixcán, which started to adopt this kind of organization. The soil yielded very well, enough for domestic consumption as well as for exportation. Schools and health clinics were established. The area was marked by visions about equality, and liberation Christianity mixed with traditional Mayan views on community values.

However, soon the situation started to change. When General Carlos Arana Osorio had become president, the Guatemalan government demonstrated an increased interest in the Ixcán area, as well as in the northern parts of Alta Verapaz and Izabal, which were similarly jungle areas. At about the same time the spontaneous immigration to Ixcán increased dramatically because of the growing poverty among the highland peasants at the beginning of the 1970s.

In 1970, the Arana Osorio regime established the development project of the Northern Transversal Strip (Franja Transversal del Norte—FTN). This project included the northern parts of the provinces of Huehuetenango, El Quiché, Alta Verapaz, and Izabal. The main ingredients were oil production, agricultural and animal production, redistribution of land and reorganization of the peasant population. The project began in Ixcán under the direction of the National Institute of Agrarian Transformation. In relation to the FTN project the Guatemalan army established its permanent presence in Ixcán.

With the FTN project all spontaneous or autonomous settlement in Ixcán was stopped, and INTA also suspended the transfer of land titles to peasants who already had settled in the area. The new cooperatives, which were created with the support of Israel, were modeled on the kibbutz with a focus on agro-export products. The planners hoped that autonomous peasants in Ixcán would try to join this new project. In 1975, a colonization project called Project 520 (after the USAID project number 520-T-026) was established in cooperation between the Guatemalan government and USAID. The purpose

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8 See IGE 1992:127; R. Falla 1992:11–12. T. and M. Melville 1971, have described their work and experiences as missionaries in the Catholic Church in Guatemala during the 1960s.
10 IGE 1989:89.
11 Ibid.:89–90.
of the project was the settlement of 5,000 families. However, as late as 1982 only 2,000 families had been settled in this project.\footnote{AID/Washington 1982:36–37.}

Many different interests were involved in Ixcán. The government wanted to have better control of the population. It favored settlements in Ixcán because it could ease the social pressure in overcrowded villages that otherwise could be a fertile ground for radical movements. But it also wanted to keep the control of the immigration. In addition, the government wanted to open up the area to foreign investments in the agro-export business and in the exploitation of the recently found petroleum reserves. At one point this interest coincided with peasant immigration, because a labor force was needed both for agro-export and petroleum exploitation. Last but not least, high-ranking military officers saw their opportunity to enrich both themselves and the Guatemalan military as an institution by occupying vast areas of land.

Thus, the government wanted to integrate Ixcán both politically and economically into the Guatemalan state and to the global economy. Naturally this created a clash with the cooperatives. From the perspective of the Guatemalan army, the cooperatives were turning into little Cubas and the Catholic Church was seen as responsible. The area had turned into a society that clashed with the structures of the rest of the country. The cooperatives were autonomous and held control of production, transportation and trade. They were not interested in participating in the government’s plan by being cheap labor on plantations and in oil production. In addition came the presence of EGP trying to organize people in the cooperatives.

The same month as the La Perla plantation owner was killed by EGP in 1975, the Guatemalan army started its repression in Ixcán by kidnappings of persons from the cooperatives. A frequently voiced opinion is that people joined EGP as a consequence of the army repression, not before:

\begin{quote}
The guerrilla came to the villages and spoke to the people. But the people said, "We do not need you. We know how to defend ourselves." People admired the guerrillas but they did not want to join them. When the repression came people joined the guerrilla as a consequence.\footnote{Catholic priest E, interview June 10, 1992. Author’s translation from Spanish.}
\end{quote}

In 1976, the Maryknoll priest Guillermo Woods was killed in an aircraft accident widely attributed to the army. He was the first Catholic priest killed in Guatemala in recent times. During the ensuing years, army repression forced the Catholic priests to leave Ixcán.

The Guerrilla and the Army in the Ixil Region

In 1972, the first encounter between EGP and Ixils was established by Cotzal residents who traveled to Ixcán to open avenues for the guerrillas. At this time the political conflicts in Cotzal were expressed in a struggle between Partido
Revolucionario, PR, and Partido Institucional Democratico, PID. Despite the name, PR was not a revolutionary party but shared power in the Lucas García government. The Ixils wished to recruit the EGP to the PR position in the conflict. Stoll points out that the persons from Cotzal, who contacted EGP, were not poor seasonal workers, but rather well-situated merchants and labor contractors. The main enemy on the PID/MLN side was Mayor Gaspar Perez Perez, an Ixil principal who was thought to promote the interests of the Brol family. 14 It took longer for the guerrillas to recruit supporters in Nebaj than in Cotzal. It happened first when young activists were hiding after the army's kidnappings 1976–78. Chajul was the municipality that was most difficult for the guerrillas to organize.15

It is worth noting that the Catholic Action in Chajul was the strongest and most well-organized in the Ixil region. Still, it was here that the Ixil's interest for the EGP was weakest. In spite of the struggles against Ladino plantation owners like the Arenas of La Perla, Chajul had always been wealthier with more land than the other municipalities and thus was less likely to support EGP. Cotzal on the other hand was the smallest and poorest municipality, soured by bitterness over loss of the best lands to Ladinos. Therefore it is no surprise that EGP first got support among people in Cotzal. The fact that the people who first contacted EGP were rather well-situated demonstrates that the struggle for land was a communal Ixil concern and not just a matter for poor individuals.

The army entered the Ixil region in 1975. During the coming years it established permanent military garrisons at several places in the area, as well as mobile military units in the area nearby.16 Already at the time of the earthquake in February 1976 the northern El Quiche was much militarized and visitors had to pass heavy military controls.17 It was also the same year, 1976, that the army started its selective repression in Nebaj, capturing, torturing, and killing alleged guerrilla sympathizers. At this time the people in Nebaj had heard rumors about the EGP, but still did not have any direct contact. As the military repression escalated, gradually more and more Ixils joined the EGP, which led to further escalation of the army's violence.

The army systematically destroyed all popular organization among the Ixils, by kidnapping or murdering all kinds of community leaders, including religious ones.18 In 1981, the scorched-earth campaigns in the Ixil country started. All villages in the area were totally or partially destroyed between 1981 and 1983. Many people were killed in massacres and the survivors were

15 Ibid.:71–72.
16 Permanent military garrisons were established at the La Perla plantation, Juil, Chajul, Chel and Amajchel in Chajul; in San Francisco and the municipal center of Cotzal; in Nebaj, Tzalbal, Pulay, Salquil Grande in Nebaj. IGE 1989:68.
17 Y dieron la vida por El Quiché... 1992:60. This is a book that was made by support of the diocese in El Quiché in memory of the three killed MSC priests.
displaced. Most of them fled to distant areas of the northern El Quiché, where the army had difficulties in reaching them because of the lack of infrastructure.

Counterinsurgency and Religion

Army Support for the Evangelicals

After Luis Arenas, the owner of the La Perla plantation in Chajul, was killed in 1975, an evangelical military officer, Ruiz Furlán, was sent to Ixcán to direct the counterinsurgency campaign. He later also spent time in the Ixil region. At the end of the 1970s, Ruiz Furlán said to one of my sources that many persons inside the Guatemalan army had become evangelicals and now entered “the sects.” According to Ruiz Furlán, my source said, many military officers, who had received education in United States and Panama, returned to Guatemala as evangelicals.

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s several military officers in the Ixil area were evangelicals or at least expressed themselves in an evangelical language. One of them was a young captain of the name Muñoz Pilona. He was a cadet at the military academy when Efraín Ríos Montt was director. At that time Ríos Montt was still a Catholic, but devoted to Bible studies and Christian principles.

A conservative Christian language has been a part of Latin American military rhetoric since the time of Iberian colonization, more or less emphasized depending on the circumstances. In the Ixil area at the turn of the 1970s a Bible rhetoric with emphasis on subordination under authorities and individual conversion and salvation fitted well with the army’s counterinsurgency strategy. In principle a language like this could be Catholic as well as evangelical, but in this special situation it turned out to promote evangelical growth. A conversion from Catholicism to evangelicalism symbolized a tacit support for one side in the war; from resistance to the side of the army.

A Catholic priest explained the events in El Quiché during 1976–1978 in the following way: What happened was a selective repression against catechists, nuns and priests, that forced the people to either a radicalization or to another kind of religion. The people became evangelicals or Catholic charismatics as a mechanism of defense.

In 1979 and 1980, the army introduced civic action projects in the Ixil area in coordination with preachers who said that the army only would forgive the evangelicals. The message was that if one was to avoid being killed, one should convert to evangelical churches. According to some Catholic catechists in

19 Ruiz Furlán was later killed. That he was an evangelical was also confirmed by his brother, who is a Catholic priest: J.M. Ruiz Furlán, interview April 6, 1994.
20 Catholic priest D, interview April 14, 1994.
21 R. Bendaña, interview April 7, 1994.
22 Catholic priest D, interview April 14, 1994.
Nebaj, the evangelical leaders were more interested than the army in dividing evangelicals and Catholics into two groups; the first one connected with the army and the second one with the guerrillas. According to these catechists, the army was not interested in the religious affiliation of people. Army officers did not care about evangelical or Catholic preferences. Anybody could be killed and it was impossible to know whom the army would take.23

Instead it was the evangelical leaders who had a strategy to get more converts into their churches. They used the situation to their favor, maintained the catechists. The evangelicals said that all Catholics would be killed because "the subversion" was born in their church.24 According to the evangelicals, the Catholic Church was synonymous with Communism.25 People were afraid and when they heard these messages they turned to evangelical churches to save their lives.26 At this time the army captured everyone who was denounced as Communist without investigating the reasons behind. The result was that charges of Communism became a pretext for anybody who wanted to get rid of enemies. This way a person could get rid of competitors both in business and in love, and apparently also in religion.

The catechists were not correct when they said that the army had no interest in religious affiliation and they also agreed that only evangelicals received special identity cards from the army to protect their security. Still it can be asked what evangelical leaders did to influence the army view that Catholics were guerrilla supporters and evangelicals not.

According to a story from southern El Quiché, some evangelicals went to the army headquarters to tell the officers not to kill peasants, but instead punish the priests and the nuns, because they were responsible.27 Such an act could be a strategy to get rid of religious competitors. But it could also have been motivated by a survival strategy of protecting the evangelical community by blaming the Catholic pastoral agents for the revolt.

A concrete example of how differently the army treated evangelicals and Catholics in the Ixil region at the end of the 1970s was the stories about soldiers stopping buses and asking the travelers if they were Catholics or evangelicals. Catholics were subjected to further investigation, and soon everybody answered that they were evangelicals. Then the army started to examine identification papers. Marriage is a civil act in Guatemala, but if married in a church this was noted in the identification. This way the army could pick out members in Catholic Action. Then people started to cut this page out of their identification documents.28

In March, 1980, the army started to issue new identity cards to inhabitants

24 Ibid.
26 Catholic catechists C, interview April 24, 1994; Catholic catechist D, interview April 24, 1994.
in the Ixil area. This was a way to determine those who were under military jurisdiction and also a way to distinguish Catholics from evangelicals. Many people I met during my fieldwork trips, told me about the special identity card that the evangelicals received. These cards functioned as safe-conduct passes. The evangelicals who held these identity cards could move themselves freely without limits, which was impossible for other persons. I could only believe that these reports were anchored in reality because so many people reported the same information. However, finally an evangelical demonstrated such an identity card to me and I could verify its existence.

The identity card had a photo, the owner's name, place of residence, profession, religion, date and place of birth, civil status, name of spouse, and name of father and mother. The card was issued in Nebaj on July 9, 1980, by the Policía Militar Ambulante and was signed by the person in charge. According to the card owner, the army began issuing these identity cards in March, 1980. The card gave the owner freedom of movement in the Ixil region, without being hindered by military controls which hunted Catholics. My source also told that many persons used the violent situation for their own ends, for instance concerning love affairs. If, for instance, two men wanted the same woman one of them could try to eliminate the competition by accusing the other of being a Communist. If evangelical church members were involved, the church leaders could go to the army and explain that they were not Communists, but members in an evangelical church.29

Naturally such behavior, as well as the issuing of identity cards with religious affiliation, anticipated cooperation between the army and the evangelical church leaders, so that the former could verify church membership. However, it is important to remember that the pastors barely had any choice in this situation. They were compelled to cooperate to protect the members in their churches.

According to the evangelical, who showed me his identification card, the army had said that everybody must have this kind of card. But according to the Catholic catechists in Nebaj, these kinds of identification cards were issued only for evangelicals so that they could save their lives. On the Catholics' identification cards nothing was said about religion.30

The Repression Against the Catholic Church:
400 Catechists Killed

In May 1980 more than 400 catechists had been killed by the army in northern El Quiché, according to the Catholic Church.31 This is a startling number of people. The effects of picking out such a number of people can be imag-

29 Evangelical church member E, interview April 23, 1994.
31 Y dieron la vida por El Quiché... 1992:74.
ined. The army killed persons who were important community leaders in an
effort to strangle resistance. Then in June and July, 1980, the army killed two
MSC priests in El Quiché: Faustino Villanueva—the first parish priest in
Cotzal, who later had worked farther south in the diocese—and José María
Gran, the parish priest in Chajul, killed together with his sacristan. The al­
leged army motive was that the priests were Communists and recruited for the
guerrillas. The Catholic Church decided to close the diocese until further
notice, because it was impossible to carry on under these circumstances. The
Church was worried that the army planned to kill all priests, including the
bishop Msgr. Juan Gerardi. All Catholic priests but one, left the diocese and
the army occupied all the Catholic church buildings. For one year the Ixils
had no access to their churches, which were transformed to military head­
quaters and torture centers.

Some people have questioned whether the MSC's withdrawal from El
Quiché was justified. However, the decision was influenced by the belief that
the persecution of the Church would continue if the priests were to remain.
Instead of creating tranquillity, the presence of the priests had become one
source of continued conflict. Father Juan Alonso, who was working in Petén
at that time, was against the evacuation. He decided to remain in the diocese
in spite of the danger. Juan Alonso was a hard-liner, both in religion and
politics. He actively worked against the costumbres and he held a very anti­
Communist view on politics. Therefore he thought that he would manage to
stay alive. However, on the fifteenth of February in 1981 he was killed by
the army. To many Catholics this was evidence that the army wanted to kill all
priests in El Quiché, regardless of their political views. The murder of Juan
Alonso served as a demonstration to skeptics that the decision of the Catholic
Church to leave El Quiché was correct.

Almost all Catholic activity ceased when the Catholic churches and chapels
were closed. Some Catholics continued with activities underground. The peo­
ple themselves had to take responsibility for baptisms and weddings. The
Catholic catechists took care of the tasks that before had been the responsibil­
ities of the priests. But many Catholics felt forced to hide both their images of
the saints and their Biblias Latinoamericanas.

Why did the army persecute the Catholic Church? The pretext was that the
priests and the catechists were Communists and involved with the guerrillas.
A few Catholic priests in Guatemala were indeed guerrilla collaborators.
However, this was clearly not the case with the ones who were killed in El

32 It must be noted that this was only some weeks after the murder of Archbishop Msgr. Oscar
Romero in El Salvador. Msgr. Juan Gerardi was murdered in April, 1998, after his presentation
of the REMHI-report about human rights abuses in Guatemala. The case is not solved and the
Guatemalan government avoids to investigate suspected army officers.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Quiché. José María Gran—who had been in Guatemala only five years when he was killed—had earlier stated that his denouncing of human rights abuses made by the army created difficulties for him. The local military commander had told him that this was "anti-governmental politics" in support of "subversive Communists." Faustino Villanueva was a Christian Democrat agitator as we have seen and Juan Alonso thought that he would survive because of his conservatism. The priest in Nebaj, Javier Gurriarán, was frequently accused of being a guerrilla collaborator. He saved his life by escaping from Nebaj in 1980. It is clear, however, that he was not involved with the guerrilla during the time until 1980 when he was working in Nebaj. This is the opinion of David Stoll and it is confirmed by my own interviews.

Years later, a high-ranking official among the moderates in the army, General Hector Gramajo, explained to me that the targets of the army were exponents of Marxism; an ideology that implied the view that humans are divided into classes, which was an error according to him. The problem, Gen. Gramajo maintained, was that both the catechists and the army failed to distinguish between theology of liberation and Marxism, which was why the army killed everybody.

Obviously Gen. Gramajo wanted to refine a distinction between a theology of liberation including a notion of social classes and one not including this view. The proponents of the latter should have the right to exist, but not the former. The army failed when it persecuted both types. At the same time it was not easy for the army to draw fine distinctions, because also the catechists confused them, if I interpret Gen. Gramajo correctly.

Not all Guatemalan army officers would recognize the possibility of a "non-subversive" theology of liberation as Gramajo did. But whatever the different opinions within the army it is clear that expressed sympathies with a class analysis of society was reason enough for a Catholic catechist or priest to be persecuted by the army, according to the justifications of the latter. In practice even less was required for a Catholic to qualify as a Communist guerrilla collaborator. If, for instance, a priest said to people that they had the right to demand fair salaries, this could be interpreted as a justification for the strikes implemented by the rural worker's union CUC, which the army viewed as a guerrilla branch. The statement of a priest denouncing human rights abuses committed by the army could be interpreted as an act of treason. The army's logic stated that such statements counteracted its defense of what it maintained to be national security.

The background to the persecution of the Catholic Church was that the Guatemalan army was confronted with a broad popular front including different organizations struggling for a change in the country with different means, politically or military, and not an isolated guerrilla movement. The

37 Y dieron la vida por El Quiché... 1992:62–63.
Catholic Church in El Quiché had become an important part of this front and theologically justified structural changes in the country, if not necessarily armed struggle to achieve them. The repression of the Catholic Church consequently formed a part in the army's strategy to destroy this popular front.

Another suggestion to explain the persecution that I have heard several times among Catholics is that it was a continuation of persecution of the Catholic Church in Guatemala since the time of Justo Rufino Barrios. The history of the Catholic Church in Guatemala during the last hundred years contains more than repression, however. It is not likely that the Catholic Church had been persecuted in the 1970s and 1980s had not sectors of it been allied to the struggle of popular forces for changing the society.

Catholic Charismatics and New Protestant Growth in the Ixil Area

When the Roman Catholic Church was forced underground in 1980 the evangelical churches in the Ixil area experienced a tremendous growth. According to army intelligence, approximately 20 percent of the population in the Ixil region was evangelical in 1980–1981. David Stoll refers to a linguist who estimated that the evangelical community had numbered about 300 persons in 1979. According to another source, however, at least 2,500 inhabitants in the area were evangelicals in 1979. Reckoning with the higher number for 1979, this implies that the evangelical community rose from about 3 percent to 20 percent within two years, based on the estimation that the Ixil region had 82,000 inhabitants in 1980. This growth is exceptional, compared to most rates of growth.

The Catholic charismatic movement must be noted as a background to the evangelical growth. This movement had entered El Quiché in the middle of the 1970s at the same time as the war broke out. Between 1975 and 1978 it spread in the southern part of El Quiché, in Santa Cruz and Chichicastenango. The movement started with merchants, who came into contact with the charismatics in the capital, and later brought the message to their homes. The charismatic movement started to grow in a situation when the rural Catholic Action became polarized concerning the question about liberation and social responsibility. Not everybody agreed with this position, above

40 D. Stoll 1993:176. The linguist referred to was Thomas E. Lengyel 1979. "Religious Factionalism and Social Diversity in a Mayan Community." Wisconsin Sociologist 16:81–89. Lengyel estimated according to Stoll that the Protestant community had doubled from 139 baptized converts in 1969.
42 R. Bendaña, interview April 7, 1994.
all not persons who were comparatively financially secure. In the last half of
the decade, the people felt an increased pressure to take a stand in the conflict
between the army and EGP. This situation created a favorable environment
for the charismatic movement, which instead focused on spiritual questions
and skirted the social and political issues facing the people.

Starting in 1979, some Catholics made a strong effort to promote the
Catholic charismatic movement in Ixcán. At this time a Catholic charismatic
priest arrived at Santa Cruz Barillas in Huehuetenango. From there he went to
Ixcán and brought with him about 200 charismatic catechists. The result of
this was a powerful increase of the movement in Ixcán. From there it spread to
the highlands of El Quiché.

The Catholic charismatic renewal consequently came to the Ixil region
from Ixcán, where this movement as well as the evangelical churches had a
much stronger influence than in the Ixil area. In Nebaj the charismatic move­
ment started when Padre Javier Gurriaran left in 1980. Two catechists
founded the movement, but one of them was killed by the army. To Chajul
the charismatic movement arrived with two catechists, who returned to
Chajul after some years of living in Ixcán. They returned about the time when
Padre José Maria Gran was killed. In both these municipalities the Catholic
charismatic movement became influential, while evangelicalism became more
important in Cotzal.

In the situation with increasing repression against Catholic Action, the
charismatic movement meant a possibility to stay in the Catholic Church
without being a member in the Catholic Action. At the same time the evan­
gelical churches started to grow. Because of conflicts with priests and with
Catholic Action some catholic charismatics became evangelicals.

Before 1977 only two evangelical churches, the Primitive Methodist
Church and the Full Gospel Church of God, had been present in the Ixil
region. The next churches that appeared were the Central American Church
and the Assemblies of God. The Central American Church was one of the
oldest churches in Guatemala. It had a strong presence in Ixcán and it is
natural that it would reach the Ixil region the same way as so many other
influences from Ixcán. Assemblies of God (a Pentecostal church) was estab­
lished in Nebaj after the nationwide campaign by the denomination in 1977.
It came out from a split in the Primitive Methodist Church that now was
increasingly shaken by confrontations about leadership, both locally in the
Ixil area and on the national level. Many Ixils opposed the Ladino leadership
of the church.

44 R. Bendaña, interview April 7, 1994.
46 Catholic catechist D, interview April 24, 1994.
49 R. Bendaña, interview April 7, 1994.
In 1979, the Prince of Peace Church (Pentecostal) was established in Nebaj, founded by earlier Catholic Action catechists. From this time it is clear that Catholic catechists among the Ixils were attracted to evangelicalism and started to convert. Obviously the catechists who became evangelicals were the children of the Catholic Action movement of the 1960s. They were strongly against the traditional religion—above all the cofradías and the devotion to the saints—and the use of alcohol. Now when Catholic Action had become more open toward the traditional religion some of these catechists turned to evangelicalism. When the Catholic Church was forced underground in 1980, former catechists from Catholic Action would form many of the new evangelical congregations in the Ixil region.\(^{50}\)

Several other new evangelical congregations were off-shots to the Primitive Methodist Church. On the national level this church was divided in 1980 and the National Methodist Church (Iglesia Metodista Nacional) was established. National in this case meant basically El Quiché and Totonicapan which had been the strongholds of the Primitive Methodist Church. The main problem causing the division concerned Guatemalan protests against the U.S. affiliation and domination of the church and this issue was related to the war in El Quiché. The newly established National Methodist Church became an independent Guatemalan church, while the old Primitive Methodist Church continued to be affiliated with the church in the United States.

The National Methodist Church had an anti-American rhetoric and was radical politically, though secretly because of the war. Just as in the Catholic Church, many of its members supported EGP and the church attracted large numbers of adherents. It was strongest in the guerrilla-controlled areas in the Ixil region.\(^{51}\) Thus, conversion to evangelicalism in this situation was not necessarily a turn in favor of the army. When other evangelical congregations were torn apart because of different opinions about the war, the National Methodist Church was a possible option for radical evangelicals. At the same time, when not much was left of the Primitive Methodist Church, it seems to have exploded in different Pentecostal congregations.

Unfortunately I do not dare to say much more about the confrontations in the rather old and important Methodist Church in Nebaj at the turn of the 1970s, due to lack of reliable information. Apparently there were three parties in the church; one that had turned to EGP, one that wanted to uphold neutrality, and finally one on the side of the army. The U.S. missionary, Donald Lawrence, who administered the church, wanted to maintain neutrality while the Summer Institute of Linguistic missionary Ray Elliott supported, or perhaps also created, the fraction that was on the army’s side. Along with the Catholic priest Javier Gurriarán, both these U.S. missionaries had to leave the Ixil area in 1980.

\(^{50}\) D. Stoll 1993.

\(^{51}\) See for example [V. Garrard-Burnett] V. Carroll Garrard 1986:211–212.
Neutrality and Conversion

No one questions that a majority of the Ixil population supported the guerrilla movement EGP in the early 1980s. There is disagreement about the nature of this support, however. The intention of David Stoll was:

to interpret the recent history of Ixil country in a way more in accord with how the inhabitants talk about it. At center stage I wanted to place all the people who were as likely to damn one side as the other, who denied any commitment to either, and whose behavior was consistent with those denials.52

According to Stoll, the majority of the Ixils wanted to be neutral in the war and became peasant rebels only against their own will, because the situation did not leave any room for neutrality. Stoll was well aware of the limits of his investigation; that statements of neutrality could be tactical, that he did not hear the view of the survivors in the mountains and of those who had been killed. Still he wanted to demonstrate that this interpretation was more likely than to suppose that EGP represented Ixil aspirations.53

I have not been convinced about the plausibility of Stoll's interpretation, but nor am I convinced about the opinion that EGP would represent the interests of the Ixils. What disturbs me most in Stoll's description is that he does not acknowledge the possibility of historical change. If Ixils at the end of the 1980s, when Stoll made his field study, expressed themselves as neutrals and interpreted their position in the early 1980s as neutrality, this is not evidence that they in fact were neutral. The counterinsurgency war of the 1980s included political, ideological and religious warfare. It may be that the neutrality position Stoll met was a reinterpretation of the recent history, created by the reality of events in the areas controlled by the Guatemalan army. The Communities of Populations in Resistance (CPRs), built up by survivors of the war who managed to stay outside the army-controlled areas, had a different interpretation of the situation. Even if they tried to maintain that they were civil populations and not guerrillas they did not describe themselves as neutrals, and their sympathies for EGP were not hard to detect for any outsider.

In addition, even the most convinced guerrilla soldier would probably say that she or he (it is noteworthy that a considerable amount of women participated in the armed struggle) was a peasant rebel only against her/his own will. Most people would say that they preferred a reformist change in the country and that the armed struggle was the last resort when other alternatives were exhausted. A statement like this can consequently not be taken as evidence for a neutrality position.

52 D. Stoll 1993:xiii.
53 D. Stoll's opinion is connected to his view on the EGP as responsible for the army massacres, because it provoked the army. I do not agree with this view. The violent way in which the army responded to "provocations" by the guerrilla and by the civilian opposition at large must be explained from the functioning of the Guatemalan army. See for example P. Gleijeses 1997 for a critique of D. Stoll on this point.
On the other hand I agree with David Stoll that it is not likely that EGP represented Ixil aspirations. EGP was not a “resistance movement” born among the Ixils or among any other Mayan group. Instead it was a “liberation movement” coming from outside with a strategy to build up a popular revolutionary front. It was lead by Ladinos, based on Marxism and on the notion to unify Mayans and poor Ladinos in a common revolutionary struggle. This was far away from the majority of the Ixils, who heavily resisted Ladino power and who were interested in the protection of common Ixil interests, not to make a unified front with other Mayas and poor Ladinos.

I would like to suggest a third alternative concerning the relation between the Ixils and EGP—an interpretation that seems to be the most plausible to me—namely that the Ixils tried to use EGP as an instrument to promote their own interests. Consequently EGP would be judged in relation to how much it would be able to protect Ixil interests and how thoroughly Ixils would be able to penetrate the organization.

The Ixils have always struggled for their physical and cultural survival as a people, with the land question at center stage. When outside forces cannot be resisted they have tried to make them instruments for their own interests. This was the case with the cofradías and also when the first Catholic Action movement became a tool for the land reform committee in the 1950s. In the late 1970s and the early 1980s the interests of EGP and the Ixils coincided on important points. The Ixils wanted the land that had been taken from them. EGP promised to give them land. Because of army oppression the reformist struggles wound up in a dead end. In this situation EGP offered protection which was wanted and needed by the Ixils.

The result was an alliance between two parties with different interests, but where some interests coincided. Evidence that supports this interpretation is that the most common charge against EGP among the Ixils during the late 1980s and the first years of the 1990s was that “they betrayed us,” “we were deceived, because they promised land, we got nothing and instead came the army’s violence,” and so on. In the beginning of the 1980s the Ixils still did not have this experience of EGP. At this time nobody knew what would be the devastating results of the war. The expectations were that there would be a revolution in Guatemala.

Certainly there were other reasons for evangelical growth than the army’s favoring the evangelicals. Evangelicalism grew in all parts of Guatemala during this time and it might have been growing also in the Ixil area even if there had been no war and no army presence. Both researchers and pastoral agents in different parts of Latin America have noticed the weakness of the Catholic Church concerning the fact that it can not function without an ordained priest who takes care of the sacraments. The church, administered by a priest, is the mediator between the believers and God. In addition, this priest must have entered into the highest levels of Western education. No Ixils have been ordained as Catholic priests.
On the other hand it is easier to establish an evangelical congregation, above all a Pentecostal one. Among the evangelicals the church is not seen as an intermediary between God and the faithful. Consequently an evangelical congregation can be established by an agreement of a group of people without outside interference. The congregation can function without an educated pastor. In fact some pastors in Pentecostal congregations are illiterate.

Another fact to consider is the superficial nature of Christianity among the Ixils. To many Ixils, being Catholic or evangelical is not the most important question. What matters most is the Ixil identity. An evangelical, whose whole family converted in the beginning of the 1980s, stated that the conversion happened because it was too dangerous to be a Catholic. The most important thing is to serve God, this evangelical said, and why do this in a church where it is highly dangerous when it could be done in a church where one could feel safe. He continued to explain that the most important thing for him and his family is that they belong to the Ixil people, not in which church they are members.54

Later this evangelical wanted to correct his statement. Apparently he did not want me to think that evangelical faith was unimportant to his family. To the contrary they had a strong commitment to their church, and their evangelical faith was very profound. It was just that being an Ixil and keeping the Ixil community together was even more important.

In spite of the fact that the army's support for evangelicals was not the only reason behind evangelical growth, the role of the evangelical churches can not be isolated from the violent circumstances in which this growth appeared. Before the violence, evangelicalism had not been a major alternative for dissidence among the Ixils. Evangelical growth did not start as resistance against Catholic Church hegemony, which has been the case in several other regions in Guatemala and Latin America. In many cases evangelical growth in Latin America has taken place as dissidence against the oppressing hegemonic power that included economy, politics and Catholicism. This was not the case in the Ixil country, however. The evangelical churches in Ixil country instead grew under circumstances when the army tried to make evangelicalism a part of its hegemonic power. Seen from the perspective of power and politics, evangelical growth among the Ixils consequently looks more like continuity with conservative Catholicism than dissidence.

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

In the former chapters it was noted that the severe earthquake was a catalyst both for popular demands and evangelical growth. This growth was principally not a result of missionary efforts from North American churches as could have been expected. Instead most of the new congregations were the result of evangelization efforts from churches already established in the country, or of splits from these churches. From the United States came mainly parachurch agencies, religious broadcasters, and the charismatic movement. Their purpose was not to build new churches, but to support or influence the already existing ones. One of the few exceptions was the Verbo Church.

The growing socio-economic crisis during the 1970s led to increased popular demands for structural changes. The army responded with repression and the situation escalated to a political crisis and then to a revolutionary crisis by 1980. The Roman Catholic Church was severely divided, with the cardinal supporting the rulers and large parts of the church, including bishops, supporting political change. The army repression to a large extent targeted the Catholic Church, and when the situation escalated in 1980 army officials approached the evangelicals in an attempt to increase legitimacy.

On March 23, 1982, former president General Lucas García was ousted in a bloodless coup d'état, which was engaged by junior army officers in cooperation with MLN. General Efraín Ríos Montt came to power as chief of a three-man junta. Later on the army made him president of the country. Guatemala thereby had its first evangelical president. The coup also meant that Guatemala formally turned from “democracy” to dictatorship. Despite the large influence of the army, the system since 1966 had been “democracy” in the sense that the country formally was governed by an elected government and a parliament, not by a dictator.

In this chapter, first, the politics of Ríos Montt is examined. It then turns to the question of evangelization and counterinsurgency during the Ríos Montt government. This question basically concerns how evangelicalism was used in efforts to generate consent with the regime. The chapter continues with the relationship between Ríos Montt and the United States, and efforts to mobi-
lize support for the Ríos Montt regime among evangelicals in the United States in a situation when the Reagan administration could not achieve agreement concerning the Guatemalan policy in Congress. The Verbo Church was deeply involved in political events, and the chapter continues with an examination of how the theology of the church related to counterinsurgency. Finally, Ríos Montt's relationship to religion and the Guatemalan churches in a more general sense is examined, as well as the factors behind the ouster of him on August 8, 1983.

Ríos Montt Comes to Power

Political Changes to Maintain the Status Quo

The Ríos Montt regime dissolved the Parliament, fired the vice president, and dismissed the state council. Most of the vice ministers and general directors, however, were permitted to remain in government. At first, the presence of the new regime was felt strongly by the people in the capital as a reduction of tension. Death squad activities ceased, and people could present denunciations for the first time in two years. But in conflict zones the "scorched earth" campaign continued, and the number of massacres increased.

Soon after the change in government it became clear that leftist organizations planned to continue armed struggle. The Ríos Montt regime claimed a reformist profile, but it was obvious that the new regime did not look for structural causes to explain the economic and political crisis. The position of the government was to maintain a hard line against the guerrillas and try to weaken the left-wing forces by some reformist actions.

MLN was behind the coup d'état and continuity with the politics of this party was obvious. Earlier that same year MLN party leader Mario Sandóval Alarcón had said that the strategy proposed by MLN was to pacify the country with similar methods used some years earlier in the counterinsurgency war in the eastern part of the country. Then social and economic programs should be developed. The killings in the streets should cease, and those who MLN considered to be "subversive" would be executed in accordance with the law.

The army's selection of Ríos Montt as president was more related to political, ideological, and administrative circumstances than to military practice against the guerrillas. It was connected to the necessity to improve its image before the national and international opinion. It was not about a profound change in the military strategy, but rather about cosmetic changes that were needed for maintaining status quo.

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1 See for example Inforpress Centroamericana, April 1, 1982:4,6.
2 See for example Inforpress Centroamericana, April 15, 1982:8–10.
3 See for example Inforpress Centroamericana, February 24, 1982:ii–iii.
4 According to C. Figueroa Ibarra 1991:157, the changes made by the coup should not be exaggerated, but the coup should not be seen as a self-coup that changed nothing.
In the beginning of 1982 there were approximately 6,000 guerilla soldiers in Guatemala. More impressive than this number were the extensive sympathies and support for the revolutionary movement in most social sectors, not least among the Mayas in the western highlands. About 175,000 to 200,000 persons were committed to the cause of the armed struggle. However, they could not participate directly in the war because of the lack of arms. In addition, all the other persons who supported or sympathized with the revolutionary movement must be considered. From the perspective of the Guatemalan elite, rough counterinsurgency was not sufficient for fighting the opposition. The country turned out to be in a severe political crisis. Guatemala was internationally isolated and did not receive military support from the United States. The Lucas Garcia regime lacked legitimacy both nationally and internationally, allowing political advantages for the opposition. Further, in the beginning of 1982, the Guatemalan political left made successful attempts to gather together the armed and civilian forces in a broad political front; the united revolutionary front URNG (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca) was established.

At the time of the coup the Guatemalan state was in a crisis without precedent in its history. The country was embroiled in a revolutionary situation, and the power of the elite was severely weakened. The capacity of the state to rule was extremely limited. The established system was threatened by disintegration within the ruling coalition, basically the bourgeoisie and the army. This was a crisis of legitimacy. The project of Lucas García was to strengthen the authority of the state by terrorism; however, for the Guatemalan bourgeoisie, this did not represent a stable project for their lasting rule. Sectors within the Guatemalan elite, including the army, understood the need for a political process. The purpose of such a process would be to secure unity between different sectors in the elite—that is, to maintain the coalition between the bourgeoisie and the army—and to recover passive consent of broader sectors of the population.

Thus, the coup d'état occurred to prevent a situation similar to events in Nicaragua that led to the revolution of 1979. But the elite also wanted to avoid what happened in El Salvador, where the junior officer coup in 1979 led to radicalization and civil war. The young officers in Guatemala consequently did not involve themselves in revolutionary rhetoric or search for social reforms. They did not create alliances with different organized groups in society, but instead worked to maintain institutional unity within the army.

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5 C. Figueroa Ibarra 1991:154, referring to army sources.
6 R. Escobar Argüello, interview May 2, 1994. He was public relations secretary in the Ríos Montt government. According to him, 200,000 peasants were committed to the armed struggle but could not directly participate because of the lack of arms. According to information from the army given through Mario Enrique Paiz Bolaños in 1982, the “subversive strategy” involved 175,000 persons. Inforpress Centroamericana, July 5, 1984:5.
7 C. Figueroa Ibarra 1991:142-143.
the principal perpetrators of the coup, army captain Muñoz Pilóña, later explained why the junior officers looked for help from the political right and not from the political left: Guatemalan officers had been educated to maintain an anti-Communist position. However, most important were the nationalist sentiments, that is, creating national dignity and unifying the army with the Guatemalan people.\(^\text{10}\)

Another important issue vis-à-vis the coup was corruption within the army hierarchy, which the civilian elite and the junior officers considered to be a threat. Since 1963 army officers used their positions in government for competing with the bourgeoisie and making themselves wealthy. This corruption was believed to have a negative effect on the counterinsurgency war. Inadequate armament and equipment were used in the war because generals used arms acquisition funds for their own profit. The junior officers believed they were the ones who suffered in this situation. They jeopardized their lives in the counterinsurgency war, while the generals were relatively safe, far from the reality of combat.\(^\text{11}\)

The counterinsurgency strategy of the Ríos Montt regime was new if seen in relation to the time of Kjell Laugerud and Lucas García, but it was in continuity with the strategy used in Guatemala during the late 1960s and early 1970s, as well as with strategies employed by the United States in the Philippines and Vietnam. In 1966, the civilian Montenegro government was installed in Guatemala as a measure to fight insurgency with political means. The same thing occurred in Philippines in the 1950s when the United States promoted democratic elections to counter the Huks. The strategy of the Guatemalan army was that the Ríos Montt regime would be an interim government until democratic elections could be held. These elections should be more or less clean and install a civilian government with broad popular consent; the army would continue to rule behind the scenes.

This new-old counterinsurgency strategy also implied an increased emphasis on military civic action and development projects in the conflict zones that would complement the armed struggle. The army established strategic hamlets in Guatemala, modeled after similar ideas employed by the United States during the Vietnam Conflict. From 1983 the army established "model villages" and "development poles." These terms were used to define top priority areas for military civic action used for control of the population. Massacres in the highlands continued and intensified during the Ríos Montt government; a total of 440 villages were razed between 1981 and 1984 during the Lucas García, Ríos Montt, and Mejía Victores regimes.

In spite of continuity there were some important new elements in the counterinsurgency strategy of Ríos Montt. Carlos Figueroa Ibarra calls his strategy reformismo contrarevolucionario. This meant a new phase for counter-

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\(^{9}\) C. Sereseres 1985:106.


insurgency strategy in Guatemala. “Counterinsurgency reformism” implied an increased emphasis on social measures to win the confidence of the population, but the other side of the strategy was that state terrorism against the population was intensified. Reformism thus signified a counterinsurgency strategy more “complex and holistic.”

The new strategy took a step beyond the traditional concept of military civic action, an idea that the Guatemalan army considered to be connected to an occupation army. The U.S. concept of civic action was believed to be one of the causes behind the U.S. defeat in South East Asia. During the time of Ríos Montt the army proposed “an army of integration” in contrast to “an army of occupation.” The army image was as a national army concerned about the security of the Guatemalan population, not as a foreign occupation power. Its representatives began to speak of “civilian affairs” instead of “civic action,” because of negative connotations of the latter term. The vision was “developmentalism,” in which the whole Guatemalan state apparatus was involved, not only the army.

Although there is a difference between traditional military civic action and the “developmentalism” proposed by the Ríos Montt government, this study employs the term “military civic action,” which states more about the character of the social projects than does “developmentalism.” It is clear that the army became the ruling and the coordinating body for other institutions of the state, which otherwise would be responsible for the social projects. Thus, “developmentalism” in the sense of the Ríos Montt government can be seen as an expansion of “military civic action” onto the entire national arena.

The Details of the Coup d’État

The electoral fraud of February 1982 brought about the coup. Both Democracia Cristiana de Guatemala (DCG) and Movimiento Liberación Nacional (MLN) claimed victory, but instead the official Partido Institucional Democratico (PID) candidate Aníbal Guevara was announced as the new president. Already before the elections Captain Muñoz Piloña talked to some political leaders about perpetrating a coup in case of a fraud. When this occurred the captain looked for support from the MLN presidential and vice presidential candidates, Mario Sandóval Alarcón and Leonel Sisniega Otero. The plan was to establish a provisional junta that would govern until democratic elections were held, but there was no agreement as to who would lead

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12 According to C. Figueroa Ibarra, a difference between more or less repressive tendencies had been visible in the army before Ríos Montt’s time in power. They became more visible after the election of March 7, 1982. Reformism was, however, not the only tendency after the coup. There were inherent contradictions in the strategy, and it was not an obvious choice for the bourgeoisie. C. Figueroa Ibarra 1991:155–158. As has been clear, in this context reformism means increased emphasis on social measures, not decreased emphasis on military measures.

13 AVANSCO 1990:47,70.

14 This is an uncontroversial issue in Guatemala.
the junta. Sandóval wanted to have Ríos Montt, but Sisniega had other preferences. Muñoz Piloña and the other junior officers wanted Ríos Montt as well.\(^{15}\)

It has been discussed whether or not Ríos Montt was the choice of the young officers. It has been said that the coup was a “young officers coup,” but that they soon were outmaneuvered by the “new old ones” in the army.\(^{16}\) The “new old ones,” like Ríos Montt, were slightly more reformist than the traditionalists inside the army, while the young officers were much more of a reformist nature. Because “young officers coups” in Latin America usually meant reform, it seemed to be a mystery that the junior officers in Guatemala would choose a leader like Ríos Montt.

In a newspaper interview several years later Muñoz Piloña emphasized that Ríos Montt really was the choice of the young officers. They were not outmaneuvered by MLN. Muñoz Piloña said he admired Ríos Montt since his time at the military academy.\(^{17}\) As seen in Chapter 4 Muñoz Piloña used an evangelical language already at the end of the 1970s, during his time in El Quiché. Ríos Montt emphasized the Bible when Muñoz Piloña and other officers were cadets at the military academy. Sometime in the early 1980s Muñoz Piloña converted to evangelicalism. That he wanted Ríos Montt thus seems to be the truth, but other young officers may have expressed different opinions. There are reasons to emphasize a coup within a coup, for none of the young officers were included in the junta. When Ríos Montt was installed he did not heed the speech prepared by the young officers, but designed his own, which included his religious language.

Another question concerns when Ríos Montt was brought into the coup, that is, if he participated in the planning or if he was brought in after. This was an issue before the election of 1990, which is why it is difficult to discover the truth. Ríos Montt and his defenders apparently thought that the constitution may be interpreted in his favor if he did not know about the coup in advance, but was called by the army when the old regime was ousted.

The Verbo Church and Ríos Montt have insisted that they knew nothing about the coup. According to Anfuso and Sczepanski, on the morning of March 23, 1982, Ríos Montt was in the Verbo school preparing for a gathering with parents and teachers. At this time, he was the director of the Verbo school. The secretary came running, telling him of the coup. She heard this from a parent who wanted to pick up a child. Later, the perpetrators of the coup called for Ríos Montt and told him that they wanted to see him. A very nervous Ríos Montt went to the national palace together with two of the elders. They still did not know why the officers wanted to talk with Ríos

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\(^{15}\) *Prensa Libre*, March 22, 1992:4-5. In this article Muñoz Piloña said to *Prensa Libre* that Ríos Montt was the choice of the young officers. Leonel Sisniega Otero said that he wanted Robert Carpio and Luis Alfonso López in the junta, while Mario Sandoval wanted to have Ríos Montt.

\(^{16}\) R. Santa Cruz Morales, March 26, 1991:14.

Montt. Not until Ríos Montt met the perpetrators in their headquarters did he realize that they wished for him to lead the junta. 18

As the theology of the Verbo Church does not accept revolts, it was important for its leaders to maintain that Ríos Montt was chosen by God to lead the country and that he himself did not try to initiate a coup. But according to Sisniega Otero, Ríos Montt participated in a meeting to plan the coup in the house of Colonel Sosa Avila, his brother-in-law. 19

Ríos Montt’s conversion to evangelicalism was not a reason for his election as president of the junta. The fact that he was considered to be the real winner of the election of 1974 was more important. Those involved in the coup did not know that he was active in the Verbo Church and were not prepared for his public use of religion.

The Politics of Ríos Montt

In the beginning of June 1982 the two junta colleagues of Ríos Montt resigned under pressure. Ríos Montt thereby became the president of Guatemala. The change in government was a result of a decision within the Guatemalan army, which wanted to develop a policy represented only by their new president. The army’s decision to make Ríos Montt president had nothing to do with changes in the military tactics, but the motive was that the army wanted a more clear and stable image for Guatemala. This meant democratic openness to counteract national and international support for the left-wing organizations. 20 At the end of June the Ríos Montt regime declared it would stay in power until December 1984. Until then all proselytizing activities of the political parties were banned. The only channel for political expression was a state council established in July as an advisory board to the president. 21

At the end of May, 1982, the junta declared that political amnesty would take effect from the first of June and one month forward, in order that members of the guerrillas would have the chance to integrate into society and get impunity. This amnesty was also offered to death squad activists, and it turned out to be a success from the perspective of the army, who informed that 1936 “subversives” handed themselves over to the authorities. The same strategy had been used during the war in the 1960s. 22 The advantage of an amnesty was that the army got people on its side, those who knew the highlands and the movements of the guerrilla organizations, as well as members in the popular support network. With the help of these persons, who accepted the amnesty, the army had better access to remote areas they otherwise did not know.

21 Inforpress Centroamericana, June 24, 1982:1–2.
The army also received information about which people in the villages they should capture as supporters of the guerrillas.

On July 1, 1982, the amnesty ended and a state of siege was implemented in the entire country. At the same time many individual rights were suspended, among them the freedom of movement, of expression, of joining organizations, and of having meetings. In addition, special tribunals were established outside the ordinary judicial system; these were authorized to hand the death penalty to persons committing treason against the state. The Ríos Montt regime also expressed that the war against "subversion" was no longer just the concern of the military, but also a social necessity involving all Guatemalans. In addition, the state of siege meant restrictions on the media. The publishing of news or commentaries with relation to "subversive activities" taking place in the country was forbidden. The only things to be published were those originating from the secretary of public relations of the president. The weekly Inforpress Centro- americana wrote after the first week in July that "the numerous reports of massacres on peasants, which were distributed during the last months, have almost disappeared from the newspapers in the past days." 23

Within a few months many of those who had supported the Ríos Montt coup d'état became more critical and negative of him. Instead of pure and fair elections, which were promised within sixty days of the coup, Ríos Montt forbade all political activities. The political parties that supported the coup were disillusioned. In June several members of MLN were arrested for planning of a new coup. According to U.S. journalist George Black, who arrived in Guatemala in June 1982, Leonel Sisniega Otero, a key figure behind the March 23 events, was now hiding. Black also interviewed the Christian Democratic leader Vinicio Cerezo: "Once favorable to the coup, Cerezo now says that any hopes of democratization are absurd as long as Ríos Montt stays in power." 24 Only the army was satisfied, according to George Black. The field commanders liked Ríos Montt's more sophisticated strategy. 25

On July 1, 1982, the new counterinsurgency strategy called "Victory 82" began. The campaign lasted until December 1982. During this time the largest wave of Guatemalan refugees appeared in Mexico, and the number of killings increased heavily. "Victory 82" consisted of three important elements. The first was to increase the number of people in the armed forces, to maintain a larger number of smaller military units in the conflict zones, and to improve the planning and execution of military operations. In addition, a code for military conduct was established with the purpose of improving relations between soldiers and civilians. The second element was to intensify efforts to build "civil patrols" in the highlands. This project had already started but was not developed on a larger scale until this time. 26 The Spanish name

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23 Inforpress Centroamericana. July 8, 1982a:1. Author's translation from Spanish.
24 G. Black 1982:42.
25 Ibid.:43.
for the "civil patrols" was *Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil* (PAC): "Self-defense Civil Patrols." A more proper description would be that they were paramilitary units in which civilians were forced to participate. The purpose was partly to be an extension of the armed forces, partly to be civilian political units to counteract the opposition. Consequently, they were used for turning the popular revolutionary war into a civil war. During the time of Ríos Montt, between 300,000 and 500,000 men were forced to organize themselves into PACs. 27

The third element in "Victory 82" was to start a socio-economic development plan for the conflict zones. The National Reconstruction Committee, which had been established after the earthquake to coordinate reconstruction, had a central place in development planning. The committee was coordinating institution for civic action and social assistance in villages in the conflict zones. The task of the National Reconstruction Committee was also to connect development projects with the establishment of PACs in the *Fusiles y Frijoles* program. 28 This program usually is translated to "Beans and Bullets" in English, while the exact translation is "Rifles and Beans."

"Victory 82" was a military plan. Beside this, a "National Plan for Development and Security" was developed out of common efforts by army officers and civilians. The central idea was that national security is dependent on socio-economic development. The document emphasizes the need for private sector involvement and resources from abroad, as well as the need for unity and coordination in the public sector. 29 In reality the latter implied that the army should coordinate and control the work of the civilian institutions. The civic action strategy was built on a military document outlined for the Ixil area in 1980–1981: "Operación Ixil. Plan de Asuntos Civiles." 30 It proposed a large scale socio-economic program to complement the military operations. But Lucas García never accepted this proposal why it was not implemented until the Ríos Montt government.

Part of these programs included the planning of "model villages" and "development poles." The whole strategy was built as a second phase following the "scorched earth" campaigns. First, villages were destroyed by the army. The survivors fled to less accessible areas. Then the army captured the displaced and forced them to settle in reconstructed villages controlled by the army. The reconstruction of state institutions to fit with this counterinsurgency strategy was not completed during the time of Ríos Montt. But already in January 1983 all police forces were placed under the charge of the defense department. In April 1983 the army began installing military bases in the twenty-two provinces of Guatemala.

A year after the coup the Ríos Montt government announced a political

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29 Ibid.:115.
opening and new laws. Now, when the military successfully had fought the insurgency and controlled most of the country, it was time for some relaxation of restrictions. Political party activity could start on a small scale, and labor unions had freedom as long as they were not involved in political activities. The relinquishing of legal responsibilities to the AIFLD-established labor federation CUSG on May 1, 1983, was to demonstrate that Guatemala was turning toward a democratic opening. The political opening was part of the counterinsurgency strategy, though.

According to calculations made by Carlos Figueroa Ibarra, 6,695 persons were killed in 249 massacres in 1982. The same year 1,407 persons were killed or disappeared in selective violence. In 1983, 82 massacres occurred with 957 victims, while selective violence killed 1,695. The numbers are based principally on reports published by the Guatemalan Commission for Human Rights. The number of unnamed victims may be considerable. The usually mentioned number of killed persons during the Ríos Montt government is 16,000. According to Figueroa Ibarra, the numbers show a change of tactic in 1983. While the massive terror expressed in massacres was an emergency terror related to revolutionary appearances, the selective violence belonged to the common functioning of the Guatemalan state. In 1983, massacres were not necessary at the same level, as seen from the perspective of the army, for the support for the revolutionary movement had decreased due to army violence. Selective terror was maintained at an even higher level, and kept up the level of fear so that people would not dare protesting.

Evangelization and Counterinsurgency
The Verbo Church Enters the Public Spotlight

It is not very surprising that many evangelicals, especially the ones who lived in the capital, viewed the Ríos Montt coup as part of a divine plan for Guatemala. As if through a miracle, the work of death squads ceased when Lucas García was ousted. In addition Guatemala got its first evangelical president in the same year the centennial of Protestantism in Guatemala was celebrated. No wonder this appeared as a sign from God. From the perspective of prosperity theology, the rise of Ríos Montt was obviously an earthly proof of the salvation that comes when people turn to Christ.

On the day of the coup, when Ríos Montt appeared on television to talk to

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31 See for example *Inforpress Centroamericana*, April 28, 1983:3. AIFLD stands for the American Institute for Free Labor Development.
33 See for example E. Torres-Rivas 1993:53–54. Torres Rivas mentions the higher number of 16,000 killed and disappeared during the time of Ríos Montt.
35 That Ríos Montt could stop the death squads activities indicates that they were controlled by the army.
the citizens, he said that "I am trusting my Lord and King, that He shall guide me... Because only He gives and takes away authority." His religious language thus appeared the same day as the coup. Even if Ríos Montt was an active member in the Verbo Church he was still not an elder at the time he became president of the military junta. His ordination as elder was scheduled for the Sunday after the coup, but because of political events this ordination was postponed.

Ríos Montt appointed two elders from the Verbo Church to be his advisers in government. They were Alvaro Contreras Valladares and Fransisco Bianchi. Both belonged to well-known families in Guatemala. The first was the son to one of the owners of the daily Prensa Libre. He had been introduced to the Verbo Church by Alfred Kaltschmitt, one of the early converts. Alvaro Contreras was a remote relative to Fransisco Bianchi and invited him to the Verbo Church. At this time Bianchi was a director of Channel 11 on Guatemalan television.

The leader of the Verbo Church, Carlos Ramírez, maintained that the reason to have Verbo elders in the government was that Ríos Montt for several years did not have people around him in whom he could have confidence. In the Verbo Church he found people he could trust. The Verbo Church decided after several days of prayer and fasting to release two of its elders to become his advisers. At the same time they decided that all leaders of the Verbo Church, together with their wives, should meet Ríos Montt and his wife every Monday for prayer, Bible study, and informal sharing. The government positions were ad hoc, created specifically for the elders. This was extremely unpopular in Guatemala; people in opposition considered these elders to be the most powerful men outside the military in the administration of Ríos Montt.

During his time in power Ríos Montt appeared every Sunday night on national television, speaking to the Guatemalan people. Usually he talked about issues that were not controversial from a confessional point of view, for instance, family life, good health, and civic duty. He seldom mentioned explicit evangelical beliefs. Apparently he did not want to cause unnecessary confrontation in a country with a majority of Catholics.

The principal message in the sermons of Ríos Montt was that the causes of social ills were inside the individual human being, not in bad institutions. Guatemala would not be liberated by a revolution against oppressive structures but rather by a revolution within the hearts of people. According to Ríos Montt, poverty and civil strife were moral problems to be solved only by a moral reformation.

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36 Quotations from J. Anfuso and D. Sczepanski 1983:20.
38 See for example J. Anfuso and D. Sczepanski 1986:87.
39 Ibid.:172-173.
41 Ibid.:234-235.
Many Guatemalans were disturbed already after the first speech held by Ríos Montt after the coup d'état. Questions were asked about his mental stability, and some compared him to the Ayatolla Khomeini of Iran. Several participants in the coup regretted their support, partly because Ríos Montt did not give them top positions in the new administration. Even if he gained sympathies among some Catholics, many others viewed the message of Ríos Montt as basically Protestant and as an offense against Catholicism. This concerned not only what he said but also how he acted. One example is how his moralistic campaign was involved with the Protestant centennial celebration.

The Moral Campaign and the Protestant Centennial Celebration

In October 1982 growing discontent with Ríos Montt led to a real crisis for his regime. It lacked legitimacy both nationally and internationally. The lack of democracy and respect for human rights meant that Guatemala was still marginalized in regional and international relations. In July 1982 Amnesty International presented a report on Guatemala, blaming the army for the massacres, which was a severe blow to the regime. Both the National Council of Churches and the Catholic Bishops Conference in the United States criticized the Ríos Montt regime. Critique also came from conservative evangelicals. An example of the latter was a very critical article written by two persons from Central American Mission in the United States: “The paradox in Guatemala is that a Christian in power is blind to the plight of the people, while the oppressed open their eyes.” They commented further that evangelical pastors were also persecuted in Guatemala. One should not be cheated by Ríos Montt’s pious appearance, they said.

In this situation of growing crisis, building public consent became increasingly important to Ríos Montt. In November he made an important step in an attempt to increase his confidence among the people. He initiated a campaign against corruption, directed toward public employees, but as a showcase to all Guatemalans. On November 17, 450 directors of governmental offices gathered in the National Theater together with Ríos Montt. They made a public promise “not to lie, not to steal, not to abuse.” The event was televised and repeated for all other employees of the state. The campaign “I do not steal, I do not lie, I do not abuse” was brought up at the end of November under the name “Project David,” after King David in the Old Testament. It was symbolized by a blue hand with three raised fingers.

45 M. Despot and B. Greider 1982. At this occasion Greider and Despot were coordinators for the Central American Mission group at Bartimaeus Community, Berkeley.
46 Ibid.
47 J. Anfuso and D. Sczepanski 1986:165.
According to the Christian Democratic leader, Vinicio Cerezo, Ríos Montt was "pushing morality issues to avoid democratic elections."\(^{48}\) This was certainly true. Ríos Montt tried to draw the attention from the structural and political problems of the country, including human rights abuses, by focusing on so-called morality issues.

The Protestant centennial was the largest single show of public support for Ríos Montt during his time in power.\(^{49}\) It also coincided with the anticorruption campaign and gave Ríos Montt an opportunity to relate this campaign to a religious message. It was a coincidence that the Protestant centennial in Guatemala occurred at the time when Ríos Montt was president. In the year 1882 Presbyterian missionary John Clark Hill arrived in Guatemala, and this was the first time that Presbyterian missionary activity had lasting results in the country. The Protestant celebration was primarily a Presbyterian centennial but was observed by all evangelical churches as a memory of the establishment of religious freedom in Guatemala.\(^{50}\)

The centennial committee organized mass meetings every evening on November 21–28. The main attraction was Luis Palau, who preached every night. At the beginning, 30,000 persons gathered at the Mateo Flores Stadium to worship and listen to Palau, who preached on the theme "the new person whom Guatemala needs." He said that only Jesus Christ can generate the profound changes needed for a strong nation. Christ gives a new consciousness to people who approach him in faith so that they can place themselves above the crisis and sins of the past. God puts a wish in the heart of the faithful to do good and to care about others, he continued. This justice includes not to steal, not to lie and not to abuse.\(^{51}\) Thus, Palau used the same slogan made public by Ríos Montt some days earlier. He also reinforced Ríos Montt's message that a change of the nation must begin in no other way than within the individual human being.

At the peak of the celebrations on November 28 half a million Protestants from different congregations marched through the capital and gathered at Campo Marte. Ríos Montt was present together with Luis Palau and Jorge Serrano Elias, the president of the state council. Ríos Montt preached about the importance of being humble, confessing one's sins, and being forgiven. Trust in God is necessary to gain victory over "the enemy, the violence, the subversion, and the protest." To defend Guatemala and gain victory, one must have faith and obedience, he continued.\(^{52}\) Ríos Montt thereby connected "the protest" with "the enemy."

With the help of Luis Palau and the leaders of the centennial committee, the Protestant jubilee was the largest contribution to Ríos Montt's moralist

\(^{51}\) Prensa Libre, November 22, 1982.
\(^{52}\) Prensa Libre, November 29, 1982.
campaign, which had the obvious purpose to draw attention from the basic problems in the country. Possibly, it was also a way for Ríos Montt to declare support for the evangelicals in a situation when it was not possible to declare an evangelical policy on religion. But not all evangelical churches were involved in the celebrations.

According to an evaluation conducted by Leopoldo Colom Molina, the centennial committee was organized by Alianza Evangélica at the request of the Presbyterian Church. Its purpose was to make the centennial not only the celebration of this particular church but also a celebration of hundred years of religious freedom. Another purpose was to use the event as an opportunity for promoting unity among the evangelical churches, working against illiteracy, duplicating the number of churches and believers, and striving for a higher appreciation of the preaching of the Gospel. The large meetings in the capital were only one part of the celebrations. A large number of activities were organized on regional and local levels.\(^{53}\)

Concerning problems in the organization of the celebrations, Colom Molina notes that the Centennial Committee utilized resources from some national and international evangelical organizations, with the consequence that many leaders in traditional churches lost “the freedom to participate with major amplitude in the event.” Another problem was that not all churches wished to participate. There was no room for representation of all in the committee. Neo-Pentecostal and charismatic leaders had an especially reserved attitude about the celebrations, because the centennial was more related to the history of traditional Protestant churches.\(^{54}\)

It is interesting to note that the centennial, which turned out to be such a show of support for Ríos Montt, was not based on activities by the newly established churches but rather by the traditional ones. But believers from all kinds of evangelical churches apparently went to the meetings of Luis Palau, even if their leaders were not involved in the organization. Without further specification Colom Molina hints at a problematic influence from some national and international evangelical organizations. He does not mention which ones, but among the international ones he possibly refers to World Vision and Overseas Crusades, both of which were involved in the centennial.

**Overseas Crusades, Church Growth, and Ríos Montt**

In Chapter 3 it is noted that Overseas Crusades had plans for Guatemala, which included an involvement of all team members in the centennial. In 1981, when the preparations began, Overseas Crusades’ Guatemalan director Galo Vásquez was appointed executive secretary of the centennial committee. The office of Overseas Crusades in Guatemala also became the centennial

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\(^{54}\) Ibid.:6–8.
office.\textsuperscript{55} Benjamin Orozco, director of the Luis Palau office in Guatemala, was the sub-secretary of the committee.\textsuperscript{56} This shows the great impact Overseas Crusades had on preparations.

On April 20, 1981, Vásquez wrote to Palau about the need for a national plan to make Guatemala the first Latin American nation with a majority of evangelical Christians. He believed the centennial celebration was very well organized and could therefore serve this purpose:

\begin{quote}
We are starting out slowly, and you know my ways: first gain the friendship and trust of the leaders serving them in things that may seem insignificant. But have learned a lot about what is the situation here in Guatemala and we are seeing some encouraging progress.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

Overseas Crusades viewed its participation in the centennial celebrations as an opportunity to achieve two objectives: “one is the motivation of people towards discipling Guatemala, another is building the infrastructure that we are going to need for the DAWN congress.”\textsuperscript{58} DAWN was a recently invented acronym for “Discipling A Whole Nation,” appropriately translated in Spanish to \textit{Amanecer}, signifying “dawn.”

On February 8–12, 1982, the first major gathering to plan the centennial celebration was held. This conference was sponsored by World Vision. About 700 pastors announced their presence, but only 290 of them arrived because of the severe political situation. The Overseas Crusades team members went by air to the conference; it was too dangerous to go by road because of the war.\textsuperscript{59}

At the conference in Quetzaltenango plans about a congress “Amanecer 1983” were discussed. The purpose of the congress was to set up goals for church growth. According to Galo Vásquez, the result of this discussion was very encouraging:

\begin{quote}
We were able to restructure the interdenominational committee for the Centennial and get it to work as a National Committee. I think that the next natural step is, as soon as possible, to involve the committee in the preparation for a National Crusade.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

In October 1982, Overseas Crusades distributed an invitation to a lunch meeting in Antigua with the purpose of establishing an Amanecer committee and selling the idea of an Amanecer process. At this time Vásquez had left Overseas Crusades to become executive secretary of CONELA (Conferencia Evangelica Latinoamericana). The meeting in Antigua was led by James Montgomery, who was once director of Overseas Crusades in Philippines, and

\textsuperscript{55} T. Halls 1987:9.
\textsuperscript{56} V. Zapata Arceyuz 1982:178.
\textsuperscript{57} T. Halls 1987:10.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.:12.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.:12–13.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.:12–13.
the well-known Guatemalan theologian Emilio Antonio Nuñez. However, only a few persons attended. More Overseas Crusades team workers than guests were present. The organization called this meeting a failure, and the Amanecer congress was postponed until 1984.61

At this meeting it was not possible to blame low attendance on the war. Antigua is located only one hour away from Guatemala City, and there was no problem getting to Antigua, at least not for those living in the capital. The only reasonable explanation is the Guatemalan pastors' lack of interest in an Amanecer congress. A reason for this was probably the often noted resistance to cooperation among conservative church leaders; pastors were more inclined to invest resources in their own congregations. The more liberal church leaders had other priorities; they were concerned about the role of the churches in society. Many church leaders, both conservative and liberals, were also more concerned about qualitative than quantitative church growth.62 However, if the plan for an Amanecer congress was a failure, the centennial celebration in November was considered a success:

... part of SEPAL's [Overseas Crusades Guatemalan office] impact on the Centennial celebration was to help broaden its impact so that instead of being only a Presbyterian celebration all would participate.63

This description clearly shows that the purpose of Overseas Crusades, concerning Guatemala, was to prepare churches for the discipling of the nation, no matter what the churches' opinions. The centennial celebration was one step toward this goal.

In 1982, James Montgomery was responsible for Overseas Crusades investigations about evangelical church growth in Guatemala. He was also editor for Global Church Growth Bulletin, published at Fuller Theological Seminary, and director for analysis and strategy at Overseas Crusades.64 The views of Montgomery, as presented at the Evangelical Foreign Missionary Association consultation in September 1982, show some developments vis-a-vis the book about the Philippines written by him and McGavran in 1980. In the book Montgomery maintains that the Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations" could be seen as an implicit command to disciple nation-states. In 1982, he still maintained this view about the discipling of a whole nation-state, but now he presented another rationale.

This new rationale was that it is not possible to know the exact meaning of the Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations." One cannot know the ultimate sense of discipling a nation, but it is possible to decide a "penultimate goal," the last big step toward discipling a nation. The measurable goal

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61 Ibid.:17–18.
64 J. Montgomery et al. 1983 (Before page numeration).
can be expressed in “saturation church planting,” meaning that everybody should have access to a church and thereby the possibility to hear the Gospel. A church must be located inside every homogenous unit. Montgomery further maintains that church multiplication must be the primary task, which “all our resources are focused upon.”\(^65\)

In the same paper Montgomery inquires into the implications of the three words “Nations,” “All,” and “Disciples” in the Great Commission to “Make Disciples of All Nations.” Here the distinction between the Great Commission and DAWN emerges clearly. While the Great Commission hints at \(\text{ethnos}\), DAWN aims at “nation-states.” Despite this difference the churches should emphasize evangelization of nation-states. The reason is “the necessity of church and missions to work within the framework of geopolitical realities.”\(^66\) Thus, the biblical rationale from 1980 had been replaced by an argument of practical politics by 1982: “We should take advantage of the sense of patriotism and love of country felt by most Christians.”\(^67\) He refers to a missionary conference in Guatemala in 1981, at which the pride for being Guatemalan was obvious: “We are Guatemalans and we ought to be doing something about reaching all the peoples in our country.”\(^68\) This sense of national pride among the Christians must be taken advantage of, according to Montgomery.\(^69\) In the church growth strategy promoted by Overseas Crusades, two kinds of collectives of people thus has an important role: the nation-state and the homogenous unit. There is no development about something between these two collectives in the case of Guatemala: ethnic groups.

In an article in \textit{Global Church Growth Bulletin} at the end of 1982, Montgomery explains even more about the theological background to his church growth program: God wants all people on the earth to be his disciples. When all peoples in a country are discipled the whole country is also discipled. Working efficiently with such a task also implies to be caught in an intense spiritual battle, for Satan tries to prevent the discipling of the nations.\(^70\)

How did Overseas Crusades view the relationship to the Catholic Church in Guatemala? Were Catholics not counted as Christians? On what side were the Catholics in the “intensive spiritual battlefield” between God and Satan? The opinion concerning this question appears in a letter sent by missionaries from Overseas Crusades in Guatemala to supporters in the United States in August 1983:

\begin{quote}
Dear Friends,

What are we communicating to others when we say the goal of our team is that by the end of the 1980’s, we want to see more than 50 percent of all Guatemalans become members of the evangelical community?
\end{quote}

\(^{66}\) Ibid.:6–18.  
\(^{67}\) Ibid.:4.  
\(^{68}\) Ibid.  
\(^{69}\) Ibid.  
Are we suggesting, for instance, that identification as an evangelical Protestant is the only measure of true Christianity?

Or, are we saying that God is a collective God rather than a personal God, one who is more pleased with numerical majority than He is with the worship of a single soul singing in harmony to His heartbeat?

Is our goal meant to challenge the Roman Catholic Church to a competition that has more political implications than spiritual significance?

Believe me, the answer is NO to these questions, but you could easily draw those conclusions unless you understood the situation.

To begin with, a clear distinction needs to be drawn between tradition and Christianity. Tradition speaks of behavior based on past proven answers to situations; Christian behavior is dynamic, based on an on-going relationship with a living, personal God.

For nearly 500 years, Latin America has regarded itself as Roman Catholic, but today its true majority religion is Traditionalism. The Christianity of Guatemala is like the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States; a marvelous cultural tradition, but more concerned with football and turkey than with giving thanks to the living God who has supplied all our needs.

While 78 percent of Guatemalans say they are Catholic, the number who attend mass is between one and two percent: on any given week, there are four or five times as many evangelicals in church in Guatemala as there are Catholics, even though the evangelicals represent only about one-fifth of the population.

It is not the one or two percent of the people whose lives are profoundly affected by their Catholic faith who are our target. It is the 75 percent who pathetically trust that to be married and buried in a church guarantees their salvation. This plight is like that of the deceived American who comfortably believes that his Puritan heritage and a case of indigestion on the last Thursday in November makes him a Christian.

For whatever the reason, the Catholic church and some Protestant churches have abandoned the field of evangelism and discipleship. The only real alternative to traditionalism is evangelicalism.

That’s not to say that evangelicalism is perfect (far from it), but it is the only indicator available that people have heard the call to return to a living relationship with God through the grace expressed in Jesus Christ.

When we say we are aiming for an evangelical community of 50 percent in Guatemala, we aren’t talking about political power, nor are we assuming that all those people will be disciples of the Lord.

We are saying that it is one way of being sure that at least half of the seven and a half million Guatemalans will have had the opportunity to understand the provision God has made for man’s rebellion against Him and to do something about it.

That’s a goal worth working for. 71

The missionaries tried to show that the work of Overseas Crusades did not result in an attack on the Catholic Church. Yet it is difficult to interpret the work of Overseas Crusades in any different way. The negative stand against the Catholic Church is obvious because it is disqualified concerning evangelism and discipleship. Many leaders in the Guatemalan Catholic Church would affirm that a large part of the population is nominal Catholic. The

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71 B. Coe and M. Coe August 1983.
figure of 75 percent is excessive, though, for it reveals that the missionaries did not count any Mayan Catholics as Christians. Nevertheless, these missionaries explained that they did not intend to proselytize among active Catholics, nor did they aim for evangelical political power. Yet if they did not aim for any kind of political implications because of evangelical growth, the rationale for the figure of 50 percent evangelicals seems to disappear. Why focus on 50 percent of a nation-state if the only reason would be so that as many individuals as possible would have the opportunity to understand the Gospel? A figure in percent hypothetically can be reached the other way around: if a large part of the non-evangelical population would leave the country, or be killed in war or natural catastrophes, for instance.

Anyhow, the letter demonstrates that the church growth program of Overseas Crusades could be supported for different reasons, which did not necessarily imply that everybody involved aimed for the political implications of evangelical growth in the way Montgomery and others did. But political consequences were there, whatever the declared variety of intentions.

In September 1983 Overseas Crusades' view on evangelical church growth in Guatemala was further illuminated. At this time the book *La Hora de Dios para Guatemala* (The Hour of God for Guatemala) was published by the organization.\(^2\) This was some weeks after the ouster of Ríos Montt, but because the book was planned and written before the ouster it is relevant to treat it in the present chapter. The book was written as a preparation for the Amanecer congress planned for 1984. Its authors are Jim Montgomery, Emilio Antonio Nuñez, and Galo E. Vásquez. The greater part of the book is written by Montgomery.

The volume gives an account of the situation for evangelical churches in Guatemala in the early 1980s, including factors supporting church growth. It also sets up goals for church growth in the future. One of the main themes of the book is that church planting and church development do not stand in contradiction but strengthen each other. Christians grow spiritually in a situation of strong evangelization and quantitative growth.\(^3\)

There is a clear difference between the parts of the volume written by Montgomery and the ones written by Nuñez. While the former dwells on quantitative growth, Nuñez emphasizes "holistic growth." This concept includes both qualitative and quantitative aspects. He focuses on the qualitative aspects of the church he wants to grow. Even if the difference in perspectives between Montgomery and Nuñez concerns a division of labor in the writing of the book, it also reflects a difference in views between the authors. In the text written by Montgomery it is clearly stated that the goal is 50 percent of the Guatemalan population becoming part of the evangelical community: "The Lord will be honored when at least 50 percent of the people are part of

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\(^3\) J. Montgomery 1986.
the evangelical community, and when these Christians press forward with reaching the remaining 50 percent."74

Montgomery mentions an event in Alta Verapaz when seventy Catholic catechists became evangelicals. Apparently he views this event very positively.75 The negative stance against the Catholic Church is again obvious, because these catechists must reasonably be counted among the active Catholics.

Montgomery is aware of the importance of political circumstances in relation to the situation of the churches. Church growth can be very difficult if there is no freedom of religion, but with Ríos Montt the evangelicals were allowed increased acceptance, he maintains.76

The devastating earthquake of 1976 that killed thousands, ruined whole villages, destroyed roads and industry and disrupted the whole economy is another upheaval the Holy Spirit used to awaken Guatemalans to their spiritual needs. As an aside, it is interesting to note that the Lord used this earthquake to draw the attention of evangelicals around the world to Guatemala. Among the many Christian workers who came were those from Gospel Outreach in California. This is the group that established El Verbo Church where the newly converted General Efrain Ríos Montt was nurtured in the Lord. Out of the earthquake the Lord raised up the nation's first evangelical president.77

Thus, the earthquake was an instrument that the Holy Spirit used for evangelical growth, according to Montgomery, who also states the task of discipling the nation in terms of conquest, with references to the Old Testament: spying out the land, occupying the land, and possessing the land.78

In a way the work of Overseas Crusades in relation to the Guatemalan evangelical churches during the time of Ríos Montt can be compared to the work of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) concerning trade unions. The work of AIFLD in Latin America was to promote anti-Communist and pro-U.S. trade unions through measures like education and directed economic assistance. This work complemented the repression against left-wing trade unions by Latin American governments.

AIFLD is related to AFL-CIO, the largest labor federation in the United States, and it was founded at the beginning of the 1960s through the efforts of Nelson Rockefeller and Peter Grace among others.79 AIFLD and AFL-CIO never participated in the international campaign to support the Guatemalan Coca-Cola workers. But because of the political situation in Guatemala AIFLD was forced to leave the country at the end of the 1970s. It was not possible even for conservative labor unions to work, and most unions were

74 Ibid. Chapter 3:3.
75 Ibid. Chapter 5.
76 Ibid. Chapter 4:2–3.
77 Ibid. Chapter 4:3–4.
79 Peter Grace was the director of W.R. Grace & CO., where Pat Robertson worked in his youth. See Chapter 3.
forced underground. But when Ríos Montt came to power the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala had the opportunity to create an AIFLD-backed labor federation that would be member in the U.S. dominated Regional Organization of Latin American Workers (ORIT). The result was the Confederation of Guatemalan Union Unity (CUSG) founded in May 1983. The leader of CUSG was Fransisco Alfaro Mijanos, representative of labor in Ríos Montt's state council. To begin with, CUSG had a great impact on Guatemalan labor because of the repression of the labor movement that had destroyed alternatives. 80

In the same way as AIFLD, Overseas Crusades worked to establish an umbrella organization to unify evangelical churches—Amanecer. The purpose was to direct evangelical efforts on one issue: quantitative church growth. That meant that no resources should be left for other purposes, for instance, for political concerns. Overseas Crusades was a force that promoted neutralization of the progressive forces within evangelical churches. The work of AIFLD and Overseas Crusades in Guatemala fit very well with the statements given in the Santa Fe Report, as quoted in Chapter 3: the United States should keep ideological control in Latin America. Perhaps this was not the conscious intent of Overseas Crusades, but the organization did not question nor criticize this control. Overseas Crusades attempted to implement a program that was neither the invention nor the first priority of Guatemalan evangelical churches.

Ríos Montt and the United States

Contradictions and Similarities in U.S. and Guatemalan Security Policies

When the junta of Ríos Montt had been in power about one month, the U.S. State Department suggested that military aid to Guatemala be reestablished as soon as possible. According to the State Department, the junta had great success in relation to the human rights situation. Alexander Haig explained the importance of coordinating efforts between the United States and the Ríos Montt administration. According to him, the Guatemalan guerrilla was more dangerous to the interests of the United States than was the war in El Salvador. 81

The role of the Reagan administration in the Guatemalan coup is obscure, but may have been decisive, according to Michael McClintock. The bad image of the Lucas García government, both nationally and internationally, made it impossible to restore U.S. military assistance to Guatemala. 82 What-

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81 Inforpress Centroamericana, April 1, 1982:5; May 6, 1982:12–13.
82 M. McClintock 1985:226.
ever the U.S. involvement, the Ríos Montt coup came at a very suitable time for the United States so that the relations between the two countries could improve and Guatemala be brought into a regional military cooperation. From the perspective of the Reagan administration renewed military support to Guatemala was of utmost importance. Congress had to be convinced to revoke the U.S. ban on Guatemala. Consequently, from the time Ríos Montt came to power, the U.S. State Department enthusiastically maintained the view that the Guatemalan regime had changed its nature and should therefore receive military support. When the new amnesty law was announced on May 22, the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala stated that this was evidence of Ríos Montt's reconciling intentions. Yet this positive view seemed to be rather empty when confronted with news about the stream of refugees to Mexico by the end of May.83

Despite Reagan's efforts, in the spring of 1982 the United States hesitated concerning military aid to Guatemala. President Reagan had problems in convincing Congress. A delegation from the U.S. Congress visited Guatemala in May and reported that peasants—children and old people included—were still being murdered in Guatemala. The United States therefore had to take military aid into consideration, even if it in principal was already being offered. Congress wanted to condition military aid on a better human rights situation.84

Another problem between Guatemala and the United States appeared when Guatemala took the side of Argentina in the Malvinas-Falklands War between April and June of 1982. The attempts of the Reagan administration to persuade Congress about the good will of the Guatemalan regime was further halted. The Ríos Montt regime mobilized against Belize, a member of the British Commonwealth. When Guatemala sided with Argentina in the Falklands War, Ríos Montt took common cause with most other countries in Latin America. From the beginning the United States hoped to be mediator between the United Kingdom and Argentina. But during the third week in April it was clear that the United States had sided with the United Kingdom. This was the week Argentina at an OAS meeting (the Organization of American States) proposed that TIAR (The Inter-American Treaty for Mutual Assistance) should take effect in support of Argentina. This was a treaty implying the legal possibility to structure a common military force for all of the American continent to confront an enemy, in this case the United Kingdom.85

But the United States objected to the implementation of TIAR, and also canceled a planned arms sale to Argentina. Among the twenty-one member states in OAS, seventeen expressed moral support for Argentina. Some of

83 Ibid.:228,231.
these—including Brazil, Venezuela, and Peru—offered military support. In Central America all countries were on the Argentine side except Belize, which supported the United Kingdom. This is easily explained by the fact that this country was a member of the British Commonwealth.\(^86\)

In the Falklands War it became more obvious to the Latin American countries what they had known before, that the United States gave much more priority to NATO than to OAS. The U.S. lost confidence when it came to Latin American policy. The strategic interests of the United States in Latin America only concerned U.S. interests against Communism. But despite this obvious conflict of interests between the United States and Latin America, problems remained at a diplomatic level and did not really worsen relations, not even in the case of Argentina. The common anti-Communist interest was strong enough not to permit such a break. Consequently, the important anti-Communist alliance between the United States, Argentina, and Central America stood firm albeit disagreements over the Falklands War.\(^87\) There was no contradiction between Ríos Montt’s siding with Argentina and at the same time trying to promote better relations with the United States, even if this was slightly more problematic because of the arms race against Belize.

Another issue that more greatly demonstrated the relative autonomy of Ríos Montt in relation to the United States was his refusal to submit to U.S. military plans for Central America. This refusal can be seen as a reflection of a view inside Guatemalan elite circles that the U.S. policy had severe limitations and that Guatemala itself could solve its problems. The limitations in the policy of the United States, from the perspective of the Guatemalan elite, were in regard to debated military support for Guatemala, which was not allowed by the U.S. Congress.\(^88\)

During the time of Ríos Montt, the Reagan administration maintained a Guatemalan policy with two edges. The first was a propaganda campaign to convince U.S. opinion and the Congress that Guatemala was worthy of military assistance. The second was to press Ríos Montt to participate in the regionalization of Central American conflicts. But Ríos Montt did not want to participate in counterinsurgency in El Salvador, nor in the proinsurgency war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. According to Carlos Figueroa Ibarra, he was afraid such a participation would lead to a neglect of the war at home. Ríos Montt was also against plans for a U.S. military base in Guatemala because of the military and political costs. He did not wish to waste resources on things that were not national; this could weaken his government in relation to the revolutionary movement.\(^89\)

\(^{86}\) There were no votes against Argentina, but Colombia, the United States, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica did not vote. See for example *Inforpress Centroamericana*, May 13, 1982:14–15.


\(^{89}\) Ibid.:227–230.
Without a doubt this was a very intelligent policy when seen in relation to the Guatemalan counterinsurgency war. Ríos Montt was conscious about widespread anti-U.S. sentiments in Guatemala. He wanted to promote the image of his army as a nationalist one, one concerned with Guatemalan national security and not a puppet controlled by the United States. Successful revolutionary movements in the Caribbean area always have included a strong element of anticolonial resistance in their ideology. Guatemalan movements are not an exception. Ríos Montt therefore tried to make himself a representative of anticolonial resistance, and thereby neutralize one edge in the ideological arms of the revolutionary movement. But despite contradictions between U.S. and Guatemalan security policies, their views on counterinsurgency were similar.

Already in April 1982, the CIA budget for Guatemala had increased by U.S. $2.5 million. During the last months of that year, important steps were taken for normalizing relations between the United States and Guatemala. In October Thomas Enders, the U.S. undersecretary of State for inter-American affairs, made a statement rejecting the Amnesty International's July report on Guatemala. He denied accusations against the Guatemalan army and maintained that the guerrillas were responsible for the massacres. This action prepared the ground for the approval of loans to Guatemala from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. Guatemala received U.S. $170 million from these institutions. A great deal of the money was destined to development of communications in the conflict zones. Democratic members of Congress protested. According to Senator Jerry Patterson, the money was an indirect form of military support because it was destined to develop communications in areas where the army was committing human rights atrocities.

In December 1982, President Reagan visited Latin America and met Ríos Montt. Political observers maintained that the most important effect of the visit was psychological, as it demonstrated the political will of the Reagan administration to restore the continent's security system. The visit also showed support for leaders who were good allies. Concerning Guatemala, the visit by Reagan was the most significant step to normalize relations between the two countries since 1977. It occurred about the same time as the anticorruption campaign and the Protestant centennial celebrations in Guatemala.

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90 Inforpress Centroamericana, April 14, 1983:2. This information was given in a document developed from a secret meeting held by the U.S. National Security Council in April 1982. Both the meeting and the document were secrets until The New York Times journalists found out about it in April 1983. Parts of it were published in The New York Times in the beginning of April 1983. According to Inforpress Centroamericana, the authenticity has been officially recognized.

91 Inforpress Centroamericana, October 21, 1982:7–8.

92 Inforpress Centroamericana, December 2, 1982:2; December 9, 1982:1–2.
A Political or Military Solution for Central American Conflicts?

The first months of 1983 evidence increased aggression and an escalation in military support from the Reagan administration to Central America. The focus was on U.S. support for the Contras in Nicaragua and efforts to destabilize the Sandinista regime, as well as support for counterinsurgency in El Salvador. Guatemala was still a crucial issue, but it tended to be in the shadow of larger U.S. debates about Nicaragua and El Salvador. The Reagan administration considered the Guatemalan counterinsurgency to be more successful than the Salvadorian one. Without support from the United States, at least without official aid, the Ríos Montt government managed to severely damage support for guerrilla movements. At the same time, insurgency in El Salvador was growing despite military efforts from the United States. Consequently, according to officials in the Reagan administration, Guatemala was important and promising but for the moment not as urgent as El Salvador.

In the first two weeks of February 1983 the United States held its largest military training exercises in Central America since 1965. The army, the Marines, and the air force participated. Other participants were the armed forces from Honduras, the National Guard from Panama, the Civil Guard from Costa Rica, and the National Guards from Puerto Rico.  

Already on January 7, 1983, the United States had removed the arms embargo on Guatemala despite protests from human rights organizations and other groups. But this did not mean that the problem with Guatemala and military assistance was resolved by the Reagan administration. At issue was the level of economic and military assistance. In February 1983, three delegations from the U.S. Congress visited Guatemala to investigate the level of respect for human rights. Participants from the Democratic Party expressed dissatisfaction with what they learned. But the two Republican delegations had a very positive impression. The Republicans maintained that the tactic of beans and bullets was having very positive results in the Guatemalan highlands. In contrast to the Democrats, Republicans had no time to visit the Guatemalan refugee camps in Mexico. They explained that neither their itinerary nor their time allowed for this. The result of these three visits was that the Republicans wanted increased cooperation with Guatemala, while the Democrats opposed it.

The growing militarism in Central America, supported by the United States, meant that Central American conflicts became a high priority issue for many other countries and international entities. Since a long time Latin American countries like Mexico and Venezuela were especially concerned about Central America. During the first months of 1983 successful efforts

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96 Ibid.
were made to counter the military solutions of the Reagan administration and instead press for negotiations.

In January 1983 the foreign ministers from Panama, Venezuela, Mexico, and Colombia met at Isla Contadora in Panama. The Contadora group was formed for lending support for Central American peace initiatives. The same month the Non-Aligned Movement had its encounter in Managua, Nicaragua, with special focus on Central America. This group supported the efforts made of the Contadora group. Later that spring participants at the encounter of the Socialist International expressed their support for the Nicaraguan revolution, and also encouraged Nicaragua to keep its ideological pluralism, non-alignment, and mixed economy so that the enemies of the country not would have a pretext for aggression. The conference of the Christian Democrat International in Brussels also highlighted Central America. In this context the problem was considered from an east-west perspective. The militarism of Nicaragua was emphasized, while the role of the United States was smoothed over. But also the Christian Democrat International was in favor of negotiations in Central America.

Despite this international opposition the United States maintained its hard-line politics in Central America. This was affirmed in June 1983 when important changes were made at top-level posts related to Latin America. Thomas Enders, undersecretary of state for inter-American affairs, was replaced by Langhorne A. Motley, former U.S. ambassador to Brazil and a personal friend of Reagan. General Wallace Nutting at Southern Command, Panama, was replaced by General Paul Gorman. Finally, the ambassador to El Salvador, Dean Hinton, was replaced by Thomas Pickering, former ambassador to Guyana.

The three who were replaced were directly related to Reagan's policy in El Salvador. Thomas Enders, for example, was considered to be the designer of U.S. policy in the region. But the three of them were considered "traditionalists," while their replacements were more representative of the hard line of the New Right, with a stronger military emphasis. The people with the greatest influence on Central American policy in the department of state (William P. Clark, national security adviser, William Casey, CIA director, and Jeane Kirkpatrick, U.N. ambassador, the three of them New Rightists) were no more in line with the "traditionalist" Thomas Enders, who as undersecretary of state for inter-American affairs was the person with the highest responsibility for the execution of Central American policy.

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98 Inforpress Centroamericana, April 14, 1983:2.
100 Ibid. One of the problems the New Rightists had with Thomas Enders was his negotiation strategy for El Salvador. His idea was to split FDR (the political arm of the revolutionary movement) from FMLN and then invite some persons from FDR to participate in a government of national unity, and in this way leave the guerrillas isolated. But Clark and Kirkpatrick considered this an error; Thomas Enders was no longer one of them.
On a general level, the difference in policy between the three “traditionalists” and the New Right was that the former maintained that the use of force meant a price had to be paid. This price was a respect for human rights and a regional negotiation solution. Military assistance to Central America implied an approval from Congress and in the public opinion of the United States. But the New Rightists were more inclined to act in secrecy, not allowing Congress or the public to know, if necessary, that more support was given to the armies in Central America, including the Contras in Nicaragua.

In practice the New Rightists also had to consider public opinion. They found themselves ideologically isolated on national and international levels concerning Central American policy. To break this isolation they had to take a stand on the negotiation initiatives of the Contadora group. This was inevitable partly because of the approaching elections in the United States. Reagan desired a quick military solution for Central America, but he had to think about public opinion and the criticism of his foreign policy if he was to be re-elected. Consequently, Reagan openly supported Contadora, while at the same time he gave more effort to support the armed struggles in Central America.

During the summer of 1983 a number of meetings were held by European and Latin American Social Democrats who wanted to press for peace in Central America. They were worried about a possible regionalization of the conflicts, which would in turn threaten the security of the whole continent. The common views of the Social Democrats were the repudiation of foreign intervention in Central America, the opinion that the roots of armed struggles were found in the social and political injustice, and the search for a common understanding on an international level, one not conditioned by the United States. Contadora, the United Nations, the European Social Democrats, and the armed forces on both sides in Central America agreed that the United States was not a mediator, but rather the principal force directly involved in the political and military conflicts in the region. It is evident that they had another understanding of the conflicts than the United States.

The Verbo Church in Guatemala and Its North American Contacts

When the Verbo Church found itself at the center of political events in Guatemala, it also received new contacts with religious groups in the United States. One was Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network. The first interview with Ríos Montt a few days after the coup was given to Pat Robertson. According to Robertson, this was the first time he met Ríos Montt. He

101 Ibid.
did not personally know the leaders of Gospel Outreach or the Verbo Church until then. Gospel Outreach, including the Verbo Church, had been a rather small and insignificant movement. It was not until Ríos Montt became head of the junta that it was important for Robertson to have contacts with him and with Gospel Outreach. He moved into place and offered his support.

According to Ríos Montt, Robertson promised him one billion U.S. dollars to be collected from Christians in the United States. Ríos Montt maintained that this was the reason why he did not ask for military or economic aid via official U.S. channels. With help of Robertson money, Guatemala would develop model villages and a political and economic system that he labeled "communitarianism." Ríos Montt also argued that this system was neither Communism nor democracy. He did not need helicopters or weapons, nor any other military support to fight insurgency in the country: "'The only solution to the civil strife is love, said the general," according to The New York Times. The truth actually was that Ríos Montt needed foreign financial assistance to bring about the military civic action projects, as a large part of the national budget was already spent on arms.

Pat Robertson spoke more carefully on the amount of money he promised Ríos Montt. The Christian Broadcasting Network gave U.S. $350,000 to Guatemala after the earthquake in 1976. Now he hoped to be able to give comparable assistance. The sum of one billion dollars, maintained by Ríos Montt, possibly referred to the total amount he expected to receive from Christians in the United States.

In June 1982, a major effort to mobilize Christians in the United States to support Ríos Montt was initiated coinciding with the declaration of public amnesty, which from July 1 would be replaced by waging a total war against the peasant population. The strategy was already outlined. Ríos Montt was ready to use money from Christians in the United States to develop model villages on the ruins of the villages razed by the army.

In June 1982, a meeting was held in Washington to plan for private support from the United States to Guatemala, which was reported by several journalists and researchers. The OAS ambassador William Middendorf took the initiative. Francisco Bianchi (the adviser of Ríos Montt and an elder in the Verbo Church), Edwin Meese (adviser to President Reagan), James Watt (U.S. interior secretary) and Frederick Chapin (U.S. ambassador to Guatemala) participated. All were "born again" evangelicals who had contacts and sympathies with the New Religious Political Right. Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Loren Cunningham (leader of Youth With a Mission) also participated.

The result of this encounter was a common effort from the White House

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105 Ibid.
106 This encounter has been mentioned for example in: J. Andersson, September 29, 1982; Data Center Files Oakland, December 1982; S. Diamond 1989:65; Ceri-Gua, March 1987:9; D. Eberwine, February 26, 1983.
and the New Religious Political Right for establishing private support for Guatemala. Gospel Outreach's relief branch International Love Lift received and channeled economic support to Guatemala from churches in the United States. The Christian Broadcasting Network played a significant role in fund-raising. In Guatemala the relief organization Fundación para Ayuda a los Pueblos Indígenas, FUNDAPI, was established to receive and distribute money and material resources. The principal forces behind FUNDAPI were the Verbo Church, Wycliffe Bible Translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics, and the Carrol Berhorst Development Foundation. 107

Other evangelical leaders who supported the efforts were Luis Palau and Bill Bright, the leader of Campus Crusade for Christ. A leaflet in which both politicians and evangelical leaders propagated support for Guatemala was distributed. Palau and Bright wrote that "we have been to Guatemala. We have met President Ríos Montt, and seen for ourselves the remarkable changes brought about through one man's faith." 108 The leaflet encouraged financial support to International Love Lift "which President Ríos Montt has asked to coordinate the help of U.S. and Canadian churches and ministries..." 109 Paul Townsend from Wycliffe Bible Translators wrote that he lived in Guatemala for more than one decade and because of this saw what Ríos Montt accomplished in only a few months. Other names in the leaflet were Pat Robertson, the Bible smuggler Brother Andrew, and George Wilson, executive vice president of Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Together there were sixteen names, the remainder being evangelical pastors, Congressmen, and businessmen. 110

International Love Lift distributed a letter written by the Guatemalan Verbo Church leader Carlos Ramírez to a large number of churches in the United States and urged them to support Guatemala. Attached was a missive by Representative Jack Kemp. The letter from Ramírez clearly demonstrates his view of the situation in Guatemala:

God's miracle in Guatemala has opened a door of unprecedented opportunity to all of us. He has put us in a position of having to spend considerable time and effort contacting Christian leaders and pastors throughout the United States to unite them in a vision of hope for Guatemala... The door He has opened to the Christian leaders in this country is our opportunity to serve them and ultimately contribute in establishing unity in the body of Christ. The sovereign move of God in Guatemala is recognized by these leaders. I must have the financial ability, for administration and personal contact, to rally these leaders together. I want you to realize just how strategic Guatemala is in relationship to the United States and this hemisphere. Please prayerfully consider what is being said in the enclosed letter from Representative Jack Kemp—a Christian man, in our government, who realizes our efforts are vital to this country. If Guatemala falls,

107 See more on FUNDAPI in Chapter 7.
108 B. Bright and L. Palau et al. [1982 or 1983], undated leaflet.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
what then?—Mexico? Wouldn't you agree that we really don't have much more
time to unite?... This is God's time for Guatemala and I need your continued
support to help us contact more churches in the United States and other parts
of the world. Let's look at it this way; your additional support will allow us to
involve the church leaders of America to work together as never before. This will
bless Guatemala and show the world that when a nation turns to God, and
God's people unite—His marvelous plan is fulfilled. Nicaragua is becoming a
Marxist model of oppression and hatred. The battle for El Salvador is still a
brutal one. Guatemala is our opportunity to demonstrate God's alternative in
this struggle for freedom (JN. 8:36).111

The east-west perspective of the situation in Central America is clear in this
letter. At a first glance it may be possible to think that Ramírez wished to
unite Guatemalan evangelical church leaders in a way similar to Overseas
Crusades. But a closer look reveals that he referred exclusively to the unity of
churches in the United States. As a U.S. citizen, he directed his words to other
citizens. When he wrote "this country" and "our government" he referred to
the United States. His ideal was to unite Christian efforts in the United States
to donate money for military civic action projects in Guatemala.

Few evangelical churches in Guatemala were so unconcerned about coopera-
tion between churches within Guatemala as the Verbo Church. This was also
ture during the Ríos Montt government. In spite of its special relationship to
political power, the church was never really involved in attempts to generate
public consent on the national level in the way that Overseas Crusades was.
The Verbo Church had either bad or no relations with most other churches in
Guatemala, and it did not show much of an interest to change this. All funds
collected in the United States went to military civic action projects in the
conflict zones.

How much support did Ríos Montt receive from churches in the United
States? After the ouster of Ríos Montt, the Washington Times reported that
some evangelical groups, among them CBN and International Love Lift, with-
drew support until they could be given guarantees from the new military
regime. It was stated that more than 10,000 evangelical churches supported
CBN and International Love Lift in their Guatemalan effort.112 But Ríos
Montt never received the one billion U.S. dollars he expected.

David Stoll maintains that even if the Verbo Church had a theology corre-
sponding with the east-west conflict, the elders in Guatemala tried to distance
themselves from the U.S. Central American policy, even when Gospel Out-
reach in the United States was allied with the New Religious Political Right. It
was not until Ríos Montt gained power that the Verbo Church became in-
volved in politics. Before that the elders were uninvolved in politics. An exa-
ample for this is the critique against anti-Sandinista pastors in Nicaragua by the
erd James Jankowiak. He said that these pastors made it look like the Gospel

111 C. Ramírez, September 1, 1982.
112 G. Archibald, August 11, 1983.
was an instrument for an external rather than eternal revolution. But the view of Jankowiak can also be interpreted as one in line with the policy of Ríos Montt on the Central American security system; Ríos Montt did not want to support the Contras in Nicaragua. It is worth noting that the contradictions between the policy of the United States and Guatemala was never an issue for the U.S. evangelical network supporting Ríos Montt.

The Verbo Church and the “Spiritual Battle Field”

In her book about the extension of the Christian Right network, Sara Diamond refers to an event when a group of North Americans interviewed a Verbo Church pastor, who told them:

The Army doesn’t massacre the Indians. It massacres demons, and the Indians are demon possessed; they are communists. We hold Brother Efrain Ríos Montt like King David of the Old Testament. He is the king of the New Testament.

The army did not massacre Indians, according to this pastor, but the problem was that demons were located inside the Indians, which was why the Indians died, when the army massacred those demons. This type of theology is further illuminated by considering a couple of articles written by Gospel Outreach leaders in Testimonio Cristiano.

In “La oración como arma en la batalla espiritual” (The Prayer as Weapon in Spiritual Battle), Jim Durkin explains that a spiritual war is going on in heaven. Satan all the time lies in ambush for the Christians. The struggle the Christians have to bring out is not against blood and flesh or against any person. Neither is this fight against those who do not want to know anything about the Gospel. Rather it is a struggle against the princes of darkness in the spiritual world. The weapon for the Christian is prayer. No Christian should fight this battle alone, but the whole church must be involved. But why, asks Jim Durkin, does not God eliminate Satan and his angels so that Christians can live in peace? The reason is that God does not want an easy-going people but one trained for battle.

According to the Bible, the heart of a ruler is in the hands of God, Durkin says, and God moves him where ever he wants. The question, according to Durkin, is why God does not guide leaders of government to do what is right. The reason is that God has decided that the church should participate in the battle and consequently he does not move the hearts of rulers until Christian people ask for such. Because the Guatemalan people have asked for liberation, God has aroused an honest ruler and given him faithful collaborators. But

115 J. Durkin, May 1, 1983:3.
116 Ibid.
they cannot do anything if Christians do not continue to pray. A spiritual war is continually going on against these rulers. In contemporary Guatemala the forces of God have the authority in the heavens, but the forces of Satan try to recapture the throne. The only thing that can stop Satan is Christian prayer. The Christians in Guatemala must therefore be prayer warriors and pray for Rios Montt: "We pray for Efrain Rios Montt, for the Christians who are together with him, and we pray that all forces that oppose the will of God not will get the advantage."117

Some articles by James Jankowiak deal with the contrast between human goals and God's goals: According to human purposes people can better themselves and develop a better society, but the truth is that all human attempts at progress result in a worse situation. We should dedicate our lives to search for the will of God. We should, like St. Paul, live only to glorify God. We find perfect satisfaction when we serve and help better our fellow creatures.118 With the latter Jankowiak probably hints at an improvement in human morality.

These texts reveal a clear cut dichotomy between the physical and spiritual world. In the struggle to change Guatemala Christians should not involve themselves in actions other than prayer. At the same time paradoxically there is an intimate relationship between the physical world and the spiritual world as events that occur in the physical world are the result of prayer. Christian prayer has a political content, and God responds with actions that have political implications in the physical world. Soldiers who massacre Indians accordingly can be seen as messengers of God. Their target is a Satanic force, not human beings. But because these evil forces are located inside human beings people must be killed in order for Satan inside them to be killed. Clearly, the advantage with such a theology, from the perspective of the Guatemalan government, is a justification for a most violent counterinsurgency. According to this view, the Rios Montt government was an expression of the will of God, but he was counteracted by the forces of Satan. His opponents were not only political adversaries, but also diabolic.

This kind of theology was not unique for only the Verbo Church. A related view was expressed in an interview the author held with Johnny Carrette, a strong supporter of Rios Montt. Carrette was a member of the neo-Pentecostal church Shekinah, a church developed through the missionary efforts of Latin American Missionary Challenge. He was also the owner of the hotel Pan American in Guatemala City and active in Full Gospel Business Men in which he later would be a vice president. According to Carrette:

Before Columbus came to America Satan governed here. Because of this, Central America is an area that is more and more to be set free from evil... The real king has come to Central America. But Satan has had control for hundreds of

117 Ibid.
years and struggles as well as he can to keep his power. The solution to Central American problems is not basically political nor economic, but spiritual. If people want to return to the time before the war everybody has to stop preaching about Jesus. Then the Devil will be happy and everything will be calm and peaceful... Central America will come under the authority of God in the future. Then it will not be poor. It will be healed, peaceful, and rich... A whole nation can be blessed and become rich and peaceful... Look at those who lived in Tikal! Where are they now? They served the king of Death. That is why they do not exist anymore. 

Tikal is a ruined city abandoned by the Mayas several hundred years before the Spaniards came to Guatemala. According to Carrette, these Mayas ceased to exist because they served the king of death. The Mayas are thought to be satanic, not worthy of life.

These views are not unique for Guatemala. The same kind of theology is reported from different countries around the world. One case is Sweden, where some evangelicals interpreted the murder of Olof Palme in apocalyptic terms. The former prime minister was killed because he hindered the plan of God, mainly because of his contacts with Yassir Arafat. According to this kind of theology, those who stand in the way of God's plans are annihilated. God can even use persons not on his side and who are not conscious about the role they play in the plan of God.

Ríos Montt and the Guatemalan Churches
A Military and Pious Strongman

According to Virginia Garrard-Burnett, the agenda of Ríos Montt was shaped by an influence of a calculating anti-Communist general, not by an evangelical faith. She also emphasizes that the counterinsurgency campaign was executed by the Army High Command, which was an extremely secular body. Evangelicals were hit as hard as the Catholics by army violence. The only evangelical trait was the rhetoric about salvation from evil and the rather unsuccessful attempt to secure support from fundamentalists in the United States. The moral campaigns, however, were evangelical in nature.

The politics of Ríos Montt were formed by counterinsurgency strategies, not evangelical considerations. But was the pious image of Ríos Montt accidental and separated from his other role as military strongman? Were these two roles separated and contradictory parts of his personality? Or was his piety an integrated part in counterinsurgency strategy? If so, how could he promote a minority religion and create a conflict with the Catholic Church,
which inevitably would lead to resentment by a large part of the population? Did he act rationally or not?

Carlos Figueroa Ibarra maintains that the Protestantism of Ríos Montt was an integrated part of counterinsurgency strategy. His contradictions against the Catholic Church, which Figueroa Ibarra calls “absurd,” may have been a tactical error, as the situation from 1982 to 1983 definitively showed the ideological weight of the Catholic Church. A government with no support from the Catholic Church would have a difficult time. But Ríos Montt had good reasons to use Protestantism. First, he could use the ideological capacity of Protestantism for creating a social base for the regime and the state. Second, he had access to communication channels with religious transnationals and power centers in the United States. For Ríos Montt it was interesting not only to mobilize the Protestants but to do it based on certain ideological elements like individualism and personal salvation as a solution to social and political problems, that is, beliefs that created a distance to society. In the end, religious manipulation created more problems than it solved. It led to the same kind of contradictions as some other elements of counterinsurgency strategy, according to Figueroa Ibarra.122

The use of evangelicalism to generate consent for Latin American governments is not unique for Ríos Montt. It can occur successfully through non-evangelical presidents, even if they do not have an overt religious message as did Ríos Montt. Jean-Pierre Bastian gives an explanation for the relationship between Protestants and the Latin American states, which is valid for Ríos Montt's Guatemala, Pinochet's Chile, as well as for Sandinista Nicaragua. The reason for Protestant support concerns the relationship between religious dissident groups, the dominating religious organization, and the state. To handle the critique from the Catholic Church the state tries to mobilize Protestant dissident groups for strengthening its position and increasing its dominance over the civil society in antagonism to the Catholic Church.123 According to this theory, Ríos Montt could have acted the same way whatever his personal religious or nonreligious orientation.

A related explanation is offered by Timothy Steigenga, who uses the theory by Migdal concerning Third World government usage of popular survival strategies for social control. According to this theory, Protestantism in Guatemala is a widespread strategy for survival among the popular sectors, which is why it could be successful for rulers to use it for social control.124

Thus, it is possible to explain Ríos Montt's use of evangelicalism, as well as the rapprochement between the evangelicals and Ríos Montt, without taking his religiosity into account. Ríos Montt and the evangelicals shared a common antagonism against the Catholic Church. In addition, from the point of view of the government, it was wise to approach a growing movement with a large

popular appeal like evangelicalism. But Ríos Montt was not unappreciative of
the problem about alienating the Catholic Church too much. No Catholic
priest was killed in Guatemala during the time of Ríos Montt. A fact to
consider is that the Verbo Church was closer to charismatic movements inside
the Catholic Church and traditional Protestant denominations than to many
other evangelicals in Guatemala. Evangelical leaders testified that Ríos Montt
did not care about them and their thoughts. In their view, he cared only about
his own church. Most of the things Ríos Montt said were not exclusively
evangelical, but could be understood even by Catholics, and consequently he
received also Catholic support.

Ríos Montt pictured himself as a *mayordomo* at the head of the chosen
people of Guatemala. It has already been noted that the Verbo Church
viewed Ríos Montt as the king of the New Testament, the equivalent to King
David of the Old Testament. It is likely that evangelicals in Guatemala first
and foremost would connect the term *mayordomo* to the role of human beings
as administrators of creation as written in Genesis of the Old Testament. This
is how the term frequently is used by evangelicals in Latin America. But most
Guatemalans would relate the term to the cofradía leaders, for they are called
*mayordomos*. A *mayordomo* traditionally is both a religious and a political
leader, and those were the most powerful men inside Guatemalan indigenous
communities. Thus, Ríos Montt used a language related both to traditional
Catholicism and to Maya religion. In connecting the chosen people theme
with a nation-state Ríos Montt related to a long Protestant tradition. If not as
common, this connection is existent also within Catholic tradition and Ríos
Montt’s statement can therefore not be seen as exclusively Protestant. To con­
clude, Ríos Montt as president was both pious and military strongman when
he acted. There was not a contradiction here.

Ríos Montt and the Catholic Church

For Catholics, the evangelical position of Ríos Montt was explicit, for in­
stance, on the date of the Ascension of the Virgin, the patroness of Guatemala
City. The full name of the capital is Guatemala de la Asunción, which hints at
the ascension of Mary. “La virgen de la Asunción” is celebrated on August 15.
In 1982, Ríos Montt changed custom and rescinded this day as a vacation;
people employed by the state had to work. He also started to name the city

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125 At the time of the centennial Ríos Montt told *Prensa Libre* that he viewed himself as a *mayordomo*. This meant he would serve the people but also God. In the struggle for a new Guatemala one should pray to and have trust in God for victory over the enemy in order that people feel that only God is the giver of all things. Only under the guidance of God is it possible to correct errors such as violence and poverty. *Prensa Libre*, November 29, 1982. In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Ríos Montt said that “Guatemalans are the chosen people of the New Testament… We are the new Israelites of Central America.” L. Schuster, December 7, 1982:1,20.

126 See for example O. Mejía Victores, August 11, 1990:16.

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“La Nueva Guatemala” instead of “Guatemala de la Asunción,” which was evident on his letterhead. Catholics interpreted this as an intention to marginalize the Catholic Church.

Other than the Protestant centennial, another religious manifestation during the time of Ríos Montt was the visit of the Pope John Paul II the first week of March 1983. The Pope’s visit to Central America occurred within a very delicate political situation with escalating conflicts in the different countries. Not all forces in Central America were happy with this visit; a month prior Cardinal Casariego in Guatemala received death threats against himself and the Pope.127

The Pope visited all Central American countries, including Panama and Belize, and his visits gathered about six million people in mass meetings and manifestations. The purpose of the visit was to promote unity inside the Catholic Church and justice without violence.128 In Guatemala and Nicaragua the visit can be seen as a manifestation against the governments, albeit with different ideological indications.

In Guatemala the Pope preached in the capital and in Quetzaltenango. He spoke out against human rights abuses and stated that these crimes are an offense against God. To consolidate a real peace, justice must be made possible for the most vulnerable in the society. In Quetzaltenango he spoke to Mayan peasants and encouraged them to attempt concrete solutions, as hinted in Catholic social doctrine. He also emphasized that people should avoid violence.129

The Pope’s visit implied increased confrontations between the Catholic Church and the Ríos Montt regime. One reason for tension was the special tribunals Ríos Montt established to judge and execute those the government considered to be “terrorists.” These tribunals were outside the ordinary judicial system. Less than five days before the arrival of the Pope, six persons were executed. The Pope had asked Ríos Montt to call off the executions and threatened not to come to Guatemala. Despite this plea the executions were carried through. The response from the Ríos Montt administration was that the president had to follow the laws of the country because Guatemalans were weary of leaders who did not follow the laws. The minister of defense, Mejía Victores, said that the Vatican not should intervene in the internal affairs of Guatemala.130

The executions caused damage to the image of the Ríos Montt regime, both nationally and internationally. In many Christian circles the executions were seen as an offense against the Pope, as the pontiff had asked for mercy. Because of these denouncements the regime had to change its tactic. Instead of trying to defend the executions the administration maintained that the

129 Inforpress Centroamericana, March 10, 1983a:2–3.
Pope's request never came to Ríos Montt. To save face Guatemala's ambassador to the Vatican was removed from employment. Gospel Outreach apparently never understood these complicated issues but continued to defend the executions in its Ríos Montt historiography.

At the end of May, 1983, the conflict between the Catholic Church and Ríos Montt escalated when the pastoral letter *Confirmados en la Fe* was published. It analyzes the situation in the country and criticizes government, army, and guerrillas. The bishops were concerned about the growing militarization in the country and the economic costs for new military bases. The bishops also criticized the “civil patrols” that forced peasants to participate in the counterinsurgency war and in this way become targets for the guerrilla.

The bishop conference condemned “the aggressive escalation of a large number of Protestant sects, motivated by a stubborn zeal to win proselytes.” The bishops wrote that they respected the freedom of faith but could not accept that the Catholics became targets of pressure to leave their faith and thereby divide communities. The result could be a religious war with unforeseen consequences, which could not be in accordance with the divine plan of salvation.

Defense Minister Mejía Victores criticized the pastoral letter. He accused the bishops for being unable to control religion: “They have never been able to control their believers and unfortunately they have lost ground.” The defense minister also said that earlier in time the church and the army were the only ones that could defend the country against Communism, but this had now changed.

The statement by Mejía Victores provoked the church to response. Msgr. Ramiro Pellecer answered that the Catholic Church as an institution was unified concerning bishops, priests, religious orders, and the lay people. There were members in the church who had been involved in “subversion,” but this was something natural, due to the situation in the country, he maintained. Msgr. Pellecer also emphasized that at the present time the church had an adequate control over its priests in the highlands and therefore could guarantee that none of them were involved in the “subversion.”

The Struggle for Control of the Evangelical Churches

Before considering the support for Ríos Montt among evangelical churches, and the reasons for this, it is necessary to note the situation in which the Guatemalan evangelical churches found themselves. Things were generally

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132 *La Razon*, June 7, 1983a; see also *Inforpress Centroamericana*, June 16, 1983b:5.
133 *La Razon*, June 7, 1983b.
134 *La Razon*, June 7, 1983b; see also *Inforpress Centroamericana*, June 16, 1983b:5.
135 *La Razon*, June 7, 1983c.
136 Ibid.
137 *El Impacto*, June 8, 1983.

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similar as for the rest of the population. Churches like the Central American Church now found that many of their members fled to Mexico or became internally displaced in the highlands of El Quiché and remote jungle areas of Ixčán. The Central American Church had a strong presence in the recently colonized areas of northern Huehuetenango and El Quiché, from where most of the refugees who crossed the frontier when the army raided these parts during the first months of Ríos Montt came. Evangelical churches, including denominations and independent churches, were met with a similar fate as was the Catholic Church. Evangelical pastors and church members were killed in massacres, and their chapels were burned in the “scorched earth” campaigns. When a group of evangelical leaders went to Ríos Montt to complain about the army’s destruction of temples, they were told that no building is needed to glorify God.\(^{138}\)

The ecumenical Protestant movement was no longer visible because of army repression. Progressive Protestant leaders since long were forced underground or had to leave the country. In addition, influence from transnational evangelists, foreign evangelical missions and development organizations destroyed local efforts. Many of these organizations aimed at direct contact with individual church members. Their work was not in accord with democratic decisions inside the churches, and the result was that local congregations were divided and new churches established. Many local congregations lost their potential to be a community in which common problems could be discussed and reflected upon theologically. Guatemalan evangelicalism was more conservative than other popular movements, but this tendency was even more reinforced by the work of U.S. evangelical organizations. In the words of Jorge Pixley, the transnational evangelical organizations “are not interested in building up the cells of the base in a church or a denomination, but to form a mass that is ruled by a group of charismatic figures connected with foreign countries.”\(^{139}\)

Of great importance for evangelicalism in all of Latin America was the establishment of Conferencia Evangélica Latino Americana (CONEIA) in the beginning of 1982. This organization was a conservative evangelical response to the mainstream Protestant Consejo Latino Americana de Iglesias (CLAI), which had an ecumenical orientation and was connected to the World Council of Churches. There was great pressure on the evangelical churches to join CONELA; these were forced to choose between CLAI and CONELA, as the latter did not accept that churches could be related to both groups. The director of CONELA was the Ecuadorian Galo Vásquez. As noted earlier he was the director of Overseas Crusades in Guatemala before working at CONELA, and he was also executive secretary in the Protestant centennial committee. The conservatism among evangelical churches in Guatemala was not only a “natural” matter of fact, but also a result of a power

\(^{138}\) Author’s diary.
\(^{139}\) J. Pixley 1982:69.
struggle from conservative forces at home and abroad to control evangelical believers.

Something that is important to a religious movement's identity and self-understanding is its historiography, that is, how the history of the movement is perceived. One of the projects of the centennial celebration was to write a history of Protestantism in Guatemala, a task accomplished by Virgilio Zapata Arceyuz in 1982. This is the first comprehensive history of all Protestant movements in Guatemala. It is valuable because it gives an overview about different church establishments, church divisions, and different theological tendencies. The book is not a scholarly church history, but rather a chronicle with an obvious tendency to place Guatemalan Protestantism within a special salvation history.140

Zapata notes a Protestant history that develops in a straight line from Justo Rufino Barrios to Efraín Ríos Montt, without any conflicts or contradictions. It is a history that follows one track; the whole of Protestantism concerns the fulfillment of the reformist project that Barrios began. Guatemala has a Protestant folk who have common interests without contradictions. These interests received their most prominent expression in the government of Ríos Montt. The Mayan population and the development inside their churches are hardly mentioned in Zapata's book.141

The Evangelical Churches and Ríos Montt

The strongest evangelical support for the government of Ríos Montt was among the Pentecostals and the neo-Pentecostals, while other groups were more reserved.142 These churches were also most positive to quantitative church growth in accordance with Overseas Crusades.

Leopoldo Colom Molina has made a distinction of Protestants of conservative, liberal, neo-Pentecostal/charismatic bent vis-à-vis their views on politics during the time of Ríos Montt. The conservatives did not want to mix religion and politics but keep spiritual and worldly dimensions separate. Their attitude on politics was expressed by remaining absent from socio-political realities in Guatemala. But they did have a civic attitude that implied obeying the government and all authorities in power, whoever they were, and to pray for the president. Liberals, however, advocated an attitude that included social, educational, and cultural aspects. To them society was an arena for action, in which Christians could influence with a message. They were critical toward society and had an ecumenical orientation, which implied an effort to eliminate conflicts among Protestants as well as between Protestants and other religious movements. The charismatics and neo-Pentecostals were the most positive toward Ríos Montt. They demonstrated open support.143

140 V. Zapata Arceyuz 1982. See also J. Pixley 1982 for a critical review.
141 Ibid.
Classical fundamentalists and Pentecostals were conservatives if the distinction of Colom Molina is applied. The difference between these groups and the neo-Pentecostals was that the latter supported Ríos Montt in a direct and open way, with a perspective that Christians should be involved in politics. Most Pentecostals and fundamentalists, however, supported Ríos Montt in a more passive way, from the perspective to obey and submit to authorities. These two groups, Pentecostals and fundamentalists, were the majority of the Protestants in Guatemala.

Passive support was, however, an important way to legitimize the Ríos Montt government as well as active support. This is illustrated by the magazine *Testimonio Cristiano*, established from a neo-Pentecostal initiative but containing a fundamentalist dominance on the editorial committee. Only a few days after the coup that brought Ríos Montt to power, the largest periodical in Guatemala, *Prensa Libre*, began to publish an evangelical Sunday supplement of eight pages called *Testimonio Cristiano*.144 The editor was Rafael Escobar Argüello, who was appointed secretary of public relations by Ríos Montt. He was also a member of Christian Fraternity.

Escobar Argüello belongs to the first group of journalists who graduated from the state university San Carlos in 1955. He then worked at *Imparcial, El Gráfico* and finally at *Prensa Libre*, where he was employed at the time of the Ríos Montt coup. Escobar Argüello also worked as secretary of public relations in 1964 for the military regime of Peralta Azurdia. He joined Christian Fraternity in 1981 after hearing a sermon by Sandra Baker Howell. His idea for an evangelical Sunday supplement developed after seeing a preacher from Puerto Rico on television. The Mateo Flores stadium was crowded by Guatemalans who listened to this evangelist. Escobar Argüello understood that the *pueblo evangélico* was great enough to make an evangelical Sunday supplement profitable. He convinced the leaders of *Prensa Libre* that the circulation of 28,000 would increase to 60,000 after the paper included an evangelical supplement. This turned out to be a correct calculation. After ten months the circulation reached 70,000. The contract with *Prensa Libre* implied that the periodical paid for four of the eight pages, while Escobar Argüello collected the remaining amount from evangelical churches.145

The task of the public relations secretaries was to counter information about the human rights atrocities of the government. Escobar Argüello was employed for propagating for the Ríos Montt government at the same time as he was editor of the evangelical Sunday supplement. This did not imply that *Testimonio Cristiano* explicitly supported the Ríos Montt government, how-

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144 The first edition appeared on April 4, 1982, already the second Sunday after the coup d'état. It can be noted that the history of *Prensa Libre*, the largest Guatemalan daily newspaper, is related to the critique against President Arbenz. Some of the leaders of the semi-official *Nuevo Diario* left this daily in 1951 because of discontent with the politics of Arbenz. They established *Prensa Libre*. Guatemalan journalist B, interview March 12, 1991. The name signifies "free press" in contradistinction to Communist-controlled press.

ever. In a few articles an explicit support was expressed, but the number of these can be counted on two hands for the entire term of the Ríos Montt government. Some of them were the above-mentioned articles written by Gospel Outreach leaders. But most articles echoed the themes of Ríos Montt concerning moralism and individualism, giving only implicit support. Almost all articles were written by national evangelical leaders and only a few by North Americans. The only exception here was Luis Palau, who had a column every week. His columns were probably the same as those distributed all over Latin America.

[Testimonio Cristiano] was not really a newspaper in any sense of the word. It did not report about events in the country or about the politics of the government. In only rare cases were church events reported. It principally maintained an apolitical and fundamentalist profile. Human rights and human rights abuses were not discussed. A recurrent theme was that the Christian way to change society would not begin with a change of structures. The Christian way would be to start with the individual, while the Communists sought change of structure with the purpose of changing the individual. Countries like the United States, the Soviet Union, France, Germany, England and Sweden were not ideals to strive for, as their citizens seemed unhappy despite their high standards of living. The problem of the human being is not found in external structures, but in the heart. Together, people with changed hearts could create a new society and a different world. 146

Another theme in Testimonio Cristiano was peace and justice, although the view of these issues contrasts sharply with the views of popular movements and progressive sectors in the churches. According to articles in the magazine, those who follow God's commands are blessed by development and prosperity. God blesses the nations that glorify him. But those who are not Christians are instead victims of revenge, massacre, and violence. There is no peace for those who do not obey the commands of God. Peace in society results only when there is internal peace in people. 147 Another important and continuous theme emphasized conservative views on the family, the subordination of women, and the role of men as the head of the family.

Testimonio Cristiano more or less openly addressed some of the problems in Guatemala, but the interpretation of these problems and the resulting solutions differed from progressive forces. Some of the key words were the same: "change the country," "peace," "justice," "revolution." But the content differed.

Those on the editorial council of Testimonio Cristiano principally came

147 See for example E. de Soto, June 20, 1982:6; J. Alejandro Sanchez, August 1, 1982:6; L. Palau, June 6, 1982:5. The opinions of Luis Palau in this article apparently contrast with what he says in L. Palau, June 20, 1982:5: "Every ruler and president wishes the best for his people: peace, security, happiness and prosperity."
from churches with a fundamentalist tendency, including the Central American Church and the Presbyterian Church. No one from the Verbo Church was on the council, nor were the Pentecostal churches represented. The magazine also had severe problems getting support from evangelical churches in Guatemala. The intention of Escobar Argüello was to unite many groups behind the project, but several churches considered the magazine to be a project of Christian Fraternity. This resulted in severe economical problems. In September 1982 Escobar Argüello left the magazine and the Christian Fraternity leader Jorge Lopez became the new editor.\textsuperscript{148}

It is possible that the difficulties in uniting evangelical churches, especially Pentecostal ones, in support of \textit{Testimonio Cristiano} were due to the fact that the written word did not play a very important role among these groups. Most Pentecostals were poor, many of them were illiterate and Pentecostal churches therefore had few readers of periodicals. It is also important to note the limits of a magazine like \textit{Testimonio Cristiano} in terms of its possibility to promote public support for the Ríos Montt government. Radio is and was the communication channel with most access to common people in Guatemala. In addition, the word, written or spoken, did not play the same important role in Pentecostal churches as in fundamentalist churches.

The story of \textit{Testimonio Cristiano}, like the Protestant centennial, shows that it is not possible to draw a line between newly established neo-Pentecostal churches and the older churches in the country, as related to support for Ríos Montt. Support from leaders of traditional churches was significant, even if these churches were severely divided.

The Ouster of Ríos Montt

On August 8, 1983, Ríos Montt was ousted from power. His minister of defense, General Oscar Mejía Victores, became the new president. According to the army statement, it was proved "that a fanatic and aggressive religious group, taking advantage of the positions of power of its highest members, has used and abused the Government for its own benefit, disregarding the fundamental principle of separation of church and state."\textsuperscript{149}

According to the new regime, this was not a coup d'État, but an internal decision within the army to change the person elected to govern. Irritation concerning the political influence of the Verbo Church was widespread in Guatemala, also in the military. Ríos Montt's use of religion was a disturbing element in his government, and it threatened the military internally and created opposition from important social sectors. Even if an approach toward evangelicals could be of strategic value, no lasting project could be built in


\textsuperscript{149} \textit{The New York Times}, August 9, 1983.
Guatemala without winning the consent of the Catholics. Yet religion was not the decisive factor behind the ouster of Ríos Montt.

The difference between the coup in 1982 and the one in 1983 was that the former took place when the revolutionary forces were on the advance, and the latter occurred when the armed opposition was in a process of retreat. The coup of 1983 was about cosmetic changes in counterrevolutionary strategy for adjusting it to the views of the economic elite. This implied removing some elements that did not fit with this sector. Another background of the coup was to bring in Guatemala within U.S. military plans for Central America. The coup favored the interests of the United States about a change of the Guatemalan government.\footnote{150}

As already noted, the new U.S. Central American policy implied a military escalation to strangle insurgency in El Salvador and destabilize the regime in Nicaragua. Ríos Montt refused to participate in these plans and was against U.S. military participation in the region. The United States wanted a representative government and a strong unified army in Guatemala. Two days before the coup Mejía Victores was in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, where he met representatives from Honduras, El Salvador, and the Southern Command in Panama. He also had meetings with General Frederick Woerner at the U.S. aircraft carrier Ranger, which was located on the Guatemalan Pacific coast during the days before the coup d'état. The new Mejía Victores regime meant a total approach of the United States toward Guatemala. Washington viewed the ouster of Ríos Montt with satisfaction.\footnote{151}

Both Edelberto Torres Rivas and Carlos Figueroa Ibarra emphasize internal factors behind the coup. According to Figueroa Ibarra, the geopolitical factor should not be exaggerated, even if it certainly played a role. The encounter between General Gorman and Mejía Victores was symptomatic, but had less relevance in comparison with many contradictions and conflicts created by the counterinsurgency project. For Figueroa Ibarra the coup in 1983 evidences that in the complex relationship between internal and external factors, internal issues play a more decisive role.\footnote{152}

When Figueroa Ibarra views the fall of Ríos Montt as a result of contradictions in the counterinsurgency strategy, he hints at the conflicts created between this project and the bourgeoisie.\footnote{153} In the counterinsurgency project of Ríos Montt, social reforms were also included. The most important was tax reform and restricted land reform. Strong pressures from abroad forced the Ríos Montt government to deal with these issues.

The economic crisis created increased problems for Ríos Montt in 1983. In April representatives from the Guatemalan government negotiated with the

\footnote{150} C. Figueroa Ibarra 1991:171–173.

\footnote{151} See for example \textit{Infopress Centroamericana}, August 11, 1983:1–3.

\footnote{152} C. Figueroa Ibarra 1991:173,230–231. AVANSCO 1990:99 agrees that even if the coup fit very well with the interests of the United States the motives were strictly internal.

\footnote{153} C. Figueroa Ibarra 1991:176ff.
International Monetary Fund in Washington. The country received a credit of 125 million Quetzales to guarantee the balance of payment. As normal the IMF demanded an economic and financial adjustment to give this credit. Part of the demands also included a tax reform implying that a long array of taxes would be replaced by a new value-added tax (IVA).\textsuperscript{154} No Latin American president has the power to struggle against international credit institutions, like the IMF or the World Bank, no matter about their own will or the will of their constituency. Nor could Ríos Montt.

The proposed tax reform, especially the value-added tax, created a crisis within the employers organization CACIF. It was divided over the issue because of different interests.\textsuperscript{155} Economic policies led to a confrontation between Ríos Montt and the private sector. In addition, the rumors about a land reform were heard. Fear arose because it seemed as if the U.S. State Department wanted to support this project. Experts from USAID did a study called \textit{Land and Labor in Guatemala: An Assessment}, which emphasized the unequal distribution of land on the Guatemalan countryside.\textsuperscript{156} The fear of big landowners is interesting, for the USAID study did not propose structural changes but rather farming of uncultivated land and development of an active market for land. This was not a threat against their land properties, but even insignificant changes of this kind were seen as threats by the landowners. According to Figueroa Ibarra, one possible cause to their fear was that a land reform of this kind could have influence on the landowner's access to cheap labor.\textsuperscript{157}

In addition, Ríos Montt acted on his own. According to the army, he threatened the hierarchy and discipline within the military institution. Even as a former general, he was picked up from outside the army. It was never thought that he should rule the army, but that the army should rule him. Ríos Montt, however, had too extensive influence. Yet the army had nothing against his counterinsurgency strategy.

To conclude, employing the work of Torres Rivas, the private sector was dissatisfied with Ríos Montt's tax and land reform proposals. The political parties were threatened by his messianism. The high command of the army wanted to restore traditional army hierarchy.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{154} Inforpress Centroamericana, April 28, 1983: 12–13.
\textsuperscript{155} Inforpress Centroamericana, June 2, 1983b: 4–5.
\textsuperscript{157} C. Figueroa Ibarra 1991: 194.
\textsuperscript{158} E. Torres-Rivas 1993: 54.
CHAPTER 6
Counterinsurgency with Catholic and Evangelical Contradictions (1983–1985)

Introduction
The government of Oscar Mejía Victores outlined a foreign policy of active neutrality, which would remain during all the 1980s. This policy implied a continuation of the neutrality efforts of Ríos Montt. However, the active neutrality contained the same paradox as the rhetoric of democratization, which took place within a framework of counterinsurgency. The active neutrality policy may be seen as an integrated and necessary part of Guatemalan democratization efforts—to not be dominated by the United States. But as such it also belonged to the necessary conditions to achieve military assistance from the United States.

The policy of Mejía Victores, including promises of democratization and active neutrality, satisfied Democrats in the U.S. Congress. President Reagan could thus achieve the desired consensus concerning the Guatemalan policy, implying increased military assistance. During this period, U.S.-supported low intensity warfare escalated in Central America, while the Contadora group continued to search for peace.

This chapter starts with an examination of the US. Central American policy and its implications for religion. This serves as a context for the next section about the politics of Mejía Victores and his relations to Guatemalan churches. What characters did they take on, now when a Catholic president followed in the wake of Ríos Montt? The chapter then turns to new influences of dominion theology in Guatemala, and efforts to mobilize the evangelicals before the election of 1985. Finally it turns to the work of Overseas Crusades to influence the Guatemalan evangelical churches.

Escalation of Low Intensity Warfare in Central America
Guatemala between Contadora and the Kissinger Commission
In October 1983, the United States invaded the small Caribbean island state Granada. This event provoked a fear in Central America of becoming a new Vietnam. The protests against such a development were strong in civil sectors,
both in the United States and inside the Central American countries. Above all it was strong in Nicaragua, the country most directly threatened by an invasion.

The Contadora group continued to be the most important initiative in search of a peacefully negotiated solution in Central America. The countries behind the Contadora group—Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, and Panama—managed to make a common effort to promote a peaceful solution in Central America. They also had international opinion on their side. Furthermore, they managed to get the representatives from Central American countries to sit down at the negotiation table in spite of their differences and conflicts.¹

On January 11, 1984, the Kissinger Commission (the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America) presented its final results on Central America to President Reagan. This commission was established by the president with the intention of achieving a consensus concerning U.S. Central American policy. The purpose was to "study the nature of United States interests in the Central American region and the threats now posed to those interests."² Public opinion in the United States was divided concerning Central America policy, as well as opinion in the Congress.

The report from the Kissinger Commission was a major success on the domestic level in the United States, for it managed to create the consensus, sought by President Reagan, among broad sectors of Republicans and Democrats.³ It became the most important base for the outline of Central American policy during the rest of the 1980s. The commission proposed a new alliance for prosperity and democracy in Central America with the purpose of avoiding a strategic coup from the Soviet Union. In its report, the commission returned several times to the statement that domestic social changes, and even revolutions in Central America, were not a threat against the national security of the United States. Domestic discontent was real, but it was exploited by outside forces, from Cuba and the Soviet Union operating through Nicaragua. The Central American crisis was consequently considered to be a result of both internal and external factors.⁴ But Cold War perspectives were emphasized, and policies that were proposed were related to this concern. Talk of domestic factors remained at a rhetorical, not very analytical, level:

We have stressed before, and we repeat here: indigenous reform movements, even indigenous revolutions, are not themselves a security concern of the United States. History holds examples of genuinely popular revolutions, springing wholly from native roots. In this hemisphere Mexico is a clear example. But

¹ See for example Informe Centroamericana, January 12, 1984:6–7; July 19, 1984:12; September 6, 1984a:1–2.
³ L. Hufford 1987:20–21. According to L. Hufford, the report got legitimacy because it was written by twelve influential and respected representatives from both parties.
during the past two decades we have faced a new phenomenon. The concerting of the power of the Soviet Union and Cuba to extend their presence and influence into vulnerable areas of the Western Hemisphere is a direct threat to U.S. Security interests. This type of insurgency is present in Central America today.  
Whatever the social and economic conditions that invited insurgency in the region, outside intervention is what gives the conflict its present character.  

In the statement concerning outside intervention the Kissinger report obviously had only the Soviet Union and Cuba in mind. The United States was not seen as one of the countries or forces causing conflict. The United States only responded to events. At the same time that the Contadora group was working for peace and disarmament, the Kissinger Commission suggested continued military assistance from the United States to Central America. Based on the logic of the commission, one of the causes of brutal counterinsurgency warfare in Central America was that the states had not received enough military aid from the United States. According to the report, the fact was that a more humane counterinsurgency warfare was more expensive than a brutal one:

Yet these methods are expensive. In addition to continued action on the economic and social fronts, they require two forms of military action, to be carried out by two distinct types of forces. First, local popular militias must be formed throughout the country [El Salvador] (with whatever minimal training is feasible and with only the simplest weapons) to prevent the insurgents from using terror to extract obedience. These must include members trained as paramedics to deliver basic health care, which evokes strong local support for these forces. Since this localized protective militia cannot be expected to resist any sustained guerrilla attack, U.S. counter-insurgency methods also require the availability of well-trained and well-equipped regular forces in adequate numbers. These methods assume that the regular units will be provided with efficient communications and suitable transport, notably helicopters, to enable them to provide prompt help for village militias under attack, and to allow them to pursue guerrilla bands on the move... In the Commission’s view it is imperative to settle on a level of aid related to the operational requirements of a humane antiguerilla strategy and to stock with it for the requisite period of time.  

On this basis the commission argued in favor of increased military aid to El Salvador:

While the objectives of security and human rights are sometimes counterpoised against each other, they are actually closely related. Without adequate military aid, Salvadorian forces would not be able to carry out the modern counterinsurgency tactics that would help keep civilian losses to a minimum.

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5 Ibid.:100-101.  
6 Ibid.:103.  
7 Ibid.:114-115.  
8 Ibid.:124.
The commission argued that increased military support, together with pressure to diminish human rights abuses, would promote both security and justice. Military aid would be conditioned by improvements concerning human rights. The same policy should be applied toward Guatemala. Among the conditions made concerning human rights improvements were, for example, "demonstrated progress toward free elections." Proposals concerning human rights were not more strict than the ones already carried out in Central America.

In the Kissinger report, the Catholic Church and the theology of liberation are not mentioned in the same negative way as in the Santa Fe I document. The Catholic Church is twice mentioned in a positive way:

Fifteen years ago at the Conference in Medellin, Colombia, the Catholic Church spoke of the need for a "preferential option" to concentrate public policy and public effort on a social ethic of responsibility for the poor. That need is more pressing today. Poverty is on the rise everywhere in Latin America.¹⁰

Later the report stated:

As the Final Document of the Catholic Conference of Latin American Bishops at Puebla, Mexico recognized in 1979, there was a "growing gap between rich and poor," which the conference characterized as a "contradiction of Christian existence." This contributed to a growing political frustration in several countries, intensified by the fact that some sectors of these societies were enjoying economic success.¹¹

But words on poverty were not much more than rhetoric. Proposals concerning economic development were much more limited than the proposals from the Kennedy administration brought out twenty years earlier in the Alliance for Progress. According to Larry Hufford,

The fundamental flaw with the Bipartisan Commission Report, specifically, and low-intensity warfare, in general, is that both have as an ultimate goal, continued American domination of the region. The Bipartisan Commission Report

¹¹ Ibid.:47.
reflects LIW [low-intensity warfare] theory by assuming the United States would take direct responsibility for organizing the economies, political structures, military structures and cultures of the region. U.S. personnel would train Central America's teachers, doctors and police. Experts from the U.S. would design the region's land and urban reform programs; U.S. union (AFL-CIO) representatives would guide Central American unions; U.S. political scientists would create Central American democratic institutions. 12

Lars Schoultz has made a division of U.S. policy makers into three groups, in accordance with their views on the Latin America policy in the 1980s: the conservatives, the moderates, and the liberals. What distinguished them was how they viewed the causes and consequences of instability in Latin America. The conservatives considered Communism to be the cause of instability, and they argued that instability was a high-risk threat to U.S. security. According to the moderates, poverty and injustice were the basic causes of instability, but the consequences were Communist manipulation and intervention. They considered instability to be a high risk to U.S. security. The liberals, as well as the moderates, viewed poverty and injustice as causes of instability. But they argued that this did not imply a threat to the security of the United States. The moderates thus shared the liberals' view on the causes of instability, while they were in accord with the conservatives concerning the consequences of instability. 13

The Kissinger report can be seen as a major success in the efforts of the conservatives to win the moderates to their side. To win moderates to their side, conservatives had to get them to emphasize the consequences of instability (Communism) above the causes of the instability (poverty). The Kissinger report reflected the moderate view that both indigenous (poverty) and foreign (Communism) factors were involved in Central American conflicts. However, the risk of Communism was emphasized above the problems with poverty, and the proposals were stated accordingly.

The gradual turn of the moderates, above all the ones in Congress, in favor of the conservative view, was related to lobbying from voters who had moved to the right. This also had to do with growing instability in Central America. Concerning Nicaragua, the turning point in the U.S. Congress in 1985 clearly demonstrated the logic that moderates would emphasize the poverty aspect in situations of low instability, and the Communism aspect in situations of high instability: in April 1985 the House of Representatives, with a small margin voted against President Reagan's proposal to support the Contras. But soon after, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega went to Moscow, an action considered to be a major threat to U.S. security. In June the same year the House of Representatives voted in favor of 27 million U.S. dollars in humanitarian assistance to the Contras. 14 A necessary condition for consensus

14 Ibid.:318.
in Congress concerning the Guatemalan policy was President Mejía Victores' promises of a democratic process. This meant renewed military assistance to Guatemala.

It is interesting to note that U.S. public support for U.S. intervention in Central America did not imply that the U.S. public really knew what was going on. Schoultz refers to a CBS News/New York Times poll from mid-1983, which demonstrated that only 8 percent of the U.S. public could explain which side the United States supported in both Nicaragua and El Salvador. Nonetheless, of the 92 percent of the respondents who did not know what side the U.S. supported, 86 percent had an opinion, pro or con, on U.S. policies toward the two countries. Stated differently, almost nine out of every ten citizens who do not know what U.S. policy is nevertheless have an opinion of that policy. 15

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Catholic and Evangelical Support for Reagan in Central America

The positive statements about the Roman Catholic Church in the Kissinger report perhaps reflected a growing accord between the Vatican and the Reagan administration concerning policy in Nicaragua. Even if a significant group of evangelicals in Nicaragua supported the Contras, the Sandinistas managed to win the consent of the majority of the Protestants. At the same time, the Roman Catholic Church, led by Archbishop Msgr. Obando y Bravo, became an important ideological force that counteracted the Sandinistas and had generally close relations with the Contras. The Catholic Church in Nicaragua was deeply divided. Theologians of liberation and Catholic base communities supported the Sandinistas, while the conservatives, including the Catholic charismatic movement, supported the opposition that was strongly cherished by the Reagan administration. The policy of the Vatican became obvious when Msgr. Obando y Bravo was appointed cardinal of Central America. The former Central American cardinal, the Guatemalan Archbishop Msgr. Casariego had died in 1983.

The Central American religious situation, and connections with different religious groups in the United States, demonstrated the complexity of the Reagan administration’s policy concerning religion in Central America. It was not a one-sided policy intended to promote evangelicalism and counteract Catholicism. Instead it was a policy to promote conservative forces and counteract liberal ones inside all churches in Central America. Within the United States private groups helped to counteract support from U.S. churches to liberal religious forces in Central America. 17

15 Ibid.:316.
16 Ibid.:317.
17 See next page.
It is important to note that Catholics were among the influential people concerning the Central America policy of the Reagan administration, not only evangelicals. Among these Catholics were Jeane Kirkpatrick and William Casey (the CIA director). Not only evangelicals, but also neoconservative Catholics, who earlier had been Democrats, turned to the Republicans in the election of 1980. In addition, the achieved consensus expressed in the Kissinger report anticipated Catholic consent in Congress. Further, it was not until 1984 that the Pentagon recognized extensive sociological changes in the church life of the United States and allowed recently born nondenominational churches to begin sending chaplains to the army.18

However, in a meeting for religious leaders in the White House in March 1984, where the purpose was to discuss U.S. policy in Central America and the Middle East, only Jewish and evangelical leaders were invited.19 Obviously it was in the interest of the Reagan administration to involve these leaders in discussions of the policy on Central America and the Middle East. The reason why no Catholics were invited could have been due to the evangelical stand of the one inviting, the Organization of American States Ambassador William Middendorf. But other reasons are possible. Even if there were agreements between the Reagan administration and some Catholics concerning Central American policy, such an accord would seem more difficult regarding Middle East policy. In addition, the present Central American policy had no support from the National Catholic Bishop Conference of the United States.

At about the same time the United States also began to give non-governmental organizations, religious and nonreligious, free freight on supplies to Central America. The Denton Amendment made it possible to use U.S. military transport free of charge when space was available. Even USAID helped some non-governmental organizations with their ocean freight to Guatemala.20 USAID supported food aid programs in Guatemala since long time.

17 The National Council of Churches, located in New York, was hit especially hard. In 1983, a segment of CBS's "60 Minutes" and an article in Reader's Digest echoed accusations from the Institute on Religion and Democracy, maintaining that the council supported left-wing guerrillas in the Third World, both verbally and financially. Among other things, the council was accused because of its support for the respected human rights group Washington Office On Latin America. The United Methodist Reporter had a series of antipathetic articles about the left-wing leaning of the NCC. See for example C. McCarthy 1983:H4–H5; S. Goode 1989:49.

One of the important private groups behind the accusations against left-wing tendencies in the mainstream churches was the Institute for Religion and Democracy. This organization was founded in 1981 by Michael Novak and Penn Kemble. On the board of directors were well-known neoconservative personalities like Carl F.H. Henry (World Vision), Lutheran theologian Richard John Neuhaus, and Roman Catholic theologian George Weigel. The board of advisors included, among others, sociology professor Peter L. Berger and political science professor Paul Seabury. Board members were listed in IRD's writing-papers. See for example Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center. Group Watch 1989a; J.M. Swomley 1989:10–11; L. Howell 1989:234–235; and A.M. Ezcurra 1983.

18 See S.M. Burgess, G.B. McGee et al. 1988:640, concerning the possibility of non-denominationalists to send chaplains to the army from 1984.


During the Ríos Montt regime this food aid became a significant part of the counterinsurgency strategy in the conflict zones. Beginning with the Mejía Victores regime in 1983, food aid and medical supplies from USAID expanded as part in the strategy to build up model villages and development poles in Guatemala. Still, official military assistance from the United States to Guatemala was at a low level during the Mejía Victores government. The main instrument financially to support the counterinsurgency was through food aid and development assistance via USAID.

In April 1984, Ronald Reagan and the National Security Council decided they would coordinate a U.S. private support network for Contras in Nicaragua. In October 1984, Lieutenant Oliver North became the responsible for this coordination. Both Catholic and evangelical organizations participated in this network, and some of them also began to function in Guatemala. The organizations that cooperated in Oliver North's Contras network were clearly involved in low-intensity warfare in Central America, which is why it is important to note those working in Guatemala, and how they worked.

One of the organizations in Oliver North's Contras network, which started to work in Guatemala during this period, was AmeriCares, a relief organization related to the Catholic lay order the Sovereign Military Order of Malta ("Knights of Malta"). During the 1980s the chairman of the U.S. chapter was Peter Grace, mentioned earlier in this study as director of W.R. Grace & Co. (were Pat Robertson had worked) and as a cofounder of AIFLD (the American Institute of Free Labor Development). The U.S. board included CIA director William Casey, former secretary of state Alexander Haig, and prominent businessmen. In 1983, Peter Grace organized an agreement with AmeriCares that this organization would ship and distribute medical assistance supplied by the Knights of Malta in Central America.

AmeriCares was founded in 1982 by Catholic businessman Robert C. Macauley. According to the founder himself, the organization was born because of a request from Pope John Paul II. In a meeting with Macauley the Pope asked him to assist Poland with medical supplies. Between 1982 and 1988 AmeriCares donated medicine and relief supplies worth 266 million U.S. dollars to countries around the world. These supplies were donated mainly by large companies.

21 See Chapter 7.
22 See R. Garst and T. Barry 1990, for critique of USAID assistance to Central America. On page 201 the amount of U.S. food aid to Guatemala is listed. While it had been 3.2 million dollars in 1980, 7.3 in 1981, 3.7 in 1982, 5.5 in 1983, 6.4 in 1984, it increased heavily to 20.5 million dollars in 1985.
23 The complete name is the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta.
According to the Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, in 1985 and 1986 AmeriCares and the Knights of Malta donated medicine worth 6–7 million U.S. dollars to Guatemala. The supplies went indiscriminately to a large number of nongovernmental organizations of different religious or non-religious orientations. Among them were the neo-Pentecostal church Living Water Teaching and Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network. AmeriCares also received funds from USAID for its work in Guatemala.26

Another organization in Oliver North’s Contras network was Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network. In 1985, the relief branch of this organization, Operation Blessing, established a permanent presence in Guatemala. From the beginning Operation Blessing had a Guatemalan director. However, it did not have its own juridical person but worked with other organizations that had juridical person. The first project of Operation Blessing was nutrition for children. Later, other medical programs and agricultural programs started. Operation Blessing brought materials, like food aid, from the United States.27

Some years later I had the chance to take a closer look at the aid distributed by Operation Blessing. When I visited the office in Guatemala City in 1994, food provisions were stored there. This food consisted of pinto beans, mashed potatoes powder, and minestrone powder. There were also seeds for lemons and herbs. I was informed that this particular shipment was a donation from the evangelical relief organization Feed the Children.28

In Guatemala, Operation Blessing cooperated with the National Reconstruction Committee led by the Guatemalan army. All organizations that brought material aid into the country were to cooperate with this committee. In the work of Operation Blessing, relief aid always arrived in conjunction with the preaching of the Gospel, according to the Guatemalan director. But there are places where people were not interested in listening to the Gospel. In that case, one can start with agricultural questions; thereafter, people are interested in hearing the Gospel, said the director.29 According to two Guatemalan employees in Operation Blessing: “we try to alleviate the hunger and also tell about the Gospel. It is this way of working that has escalated evangelical growth in Guatemala.”30

26 Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center 1988:19,47.
28 Anonymous: Two employees at Operation Blessing and Waljok, visit and conversation February 16, 1994. I was told that Waljok was the Quiché name for Fundación Rural de Desarrollo Integral, a development organization of the Nazarene Church. At the time of my visit Operation Blessing operated under Waljok, which was the juridical person. In the 1980s, however, Operation Blessing worked under another organization named Bethel, according to J. de Leon, interview, February 18, 1994.
30 Anonymous: Two employees of Operation Blessing and Waljok, visit and conversation, February 16, 1994. Author’s translation from Spanish.
Mejía Victores and the Guatemalan Churches
The Politics of Mejía Victores

As with the Ríos Montt government, the government of Mejía Victores had two sides. But while the aspects of the Ríos Montt regime were counterinsurgency and piety, the two faces of Mejía Victores can be expressed as counterinsurgency and democratization. These were in line with the policy of the United States as reflected in the Kissinger report: U.S. military aid would be conditioned by human rights improvements. The Mejía Victores government came to power because of increased pressure for a democratic process in Guatemala. The regime would be an interim government until a democratically elected one was installed in January 1986. Important tasks were to prepare for these elections and for the writing of a new constitution. But the army was not united behind the strategy to support democratic elections. Some officers wanted to continue a hardline policy against URNG and the political opposition with an emphasis on military operations that did not include measures like democratization. These groups inside the army tried to counteract the policy of the Mejía Victores government.

The counterinsurgency strategy was carried on as had been planned from the time of Ríos Montt. The expansion of the PACs (civil patrols) continued, and at the end of Mejía Victores' term approximately 800,000 to 900,000 men were forced to serve in these paramilitary units. This was almost 10 percent of the Guatemalan population. The new government also continued its expansion of military bases in different parts of the country.

In 1983 and 1984, the army created development poles and model villages in the conflict zones. Every development pole consisted of several model villages. The philosophy behind this strategy was to use development as part of the counterinsurgency strategy. Development should be subordinated to the army and National Security goals, and would be a mean to get the population in the conflict zones under military control. The model villages were usually ones that were razed by the army during the war. Now they became reconstructed in accordance with army priorities, and the population was forced to live in them. The first model village was Acul in the Ixil area, which was inaugurated on December 22, 1983. In 1984, six development poles were constructed by the army. All of them were located in the conflict zones in the northern parts of the country.

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33 See more about this strategy in Chapter 7.
34 Ejército de Guatemala 1985:2.
35 The development poles were Chacaj in Huehuetenango, Triangulo Ixil in El Quiché, Playa Grande in El Quiché, Chisec in Alta Verapaz, Senahu in Alta Verapaz, and Yanahí in Petén. See for example IGE 1989:29.
The strategy with model villages and development poles was not a new idea but drew on the strategy of the United States in Vietnam during the first years of the 1960s. In Latin America the "strategic hamlet" program was attempted for the first time in Guatemala. It was initiated with Ríos Montt but was not developed on a full scale until Mejía Victores.

The most obvious step to legalize the army's control of the conflict zones was institutionalization in 1983 of the National Inter-institutional Coordinator, which existed de facto beginning in 1976. The Inter-institutional Coordinators appeared for the first time after the earthquake in 1976, but after the emergency period the participants from the public sector returned to their traditional way of working. In 1982, these coordinators had appeared again because of an initiative from the army and the National Reconstruction Committee. The purpose of the change made in 1983 was to legalize military control over conflict zones and to use all possible resources for reconstruction and development. The National Inter-institutional Coordinator was directed by the Army Chief of Staff and integrated by the vice ministers of the cabinet, the secretary for economic planning, and the directors of different governmental institutions. Local Inter-institutional Coordinators worked on provincial and municipal levels. These were directed by local military authorities with the participation of nongovernmental organizations and the governmental institutions that operated on every level. The coordinators were responsible for development and military civic action programs. In addition, local development committees were established in the villages. At the end of 1984 further steps were introduced to strengthen army control within the Inter-institutional Coordinators. These changes were implemented to guarantee military control during a civil regime as well.

The great difference between the Mejía Victores government and the earlier governments in Guatemala was, in the words of Susanne Jonas, that the army during the latter wanted to bring in bourgeoisie parties as "generators of consensus between the state and civil society." The plans to install a civil government were designed mostly to bring about a process of legitimization rather than to restore true legitimacy. The army had no intention of creating a true democracy. Rather, its purpose was to generate a popular consent that would oppose the revolutionary movement and support governmental counterinsurgency.

The army and the political violence in the country decided the limits for a political openness. It is clear that the army was setting the rules for the transition to democracy. It supported this as the best alternative as seen from a counterinsurgency perspective. Consequently, there were questions that the army did not consider to be valid for civilian politicians. These questions

38 Ibid.:154-155.
concerned the counterinsurgency war. In this case, the opinion of the presidential candidates did not matter. The army made it clear to the politicians that it would continue to take care of these matters. 

During a press conference for the local and international press in November 1985, Mejía Victores expressed his view on the future relationship between the army and the civilian government. He explained that the task of the army was to defend and maintain the sovereignty of Guatemala. According to the constitution, the future president should be the highest commander-in-chief of the military. The military should be absolutely loyal and obey unconditionally. The president should give orders to the army via the defense minister, who must be a military officer with grade of general or colonel and have served the army without interruption for twenty-five years. The defense minister should be elected according to the constitutive law of the army. Thus, with this kind of defense minister, the privilege to formulate national security policies and counterinsurgency strategy still would be in the hands of the army.

The unified guerrilla front URNG called for a boycott of the elections and intensified its military operations when the elections were drawing near. URNG and other left-wing organizations considered the election process not to be a real alternative for the Guatemalan population, as the situation in the country did not permit democratic forces to participate. Other sectors viewed the elections as a possibility gradually to change the present situation in the country. Christian Democrats and some of the Social Democrats who previously lived in exile, returned to Guatemala to participate in the elections.

The procedure for the army's handing over of power to a civilian democratic government was that elections to a National Constituent Assembly would be held on July 1, 1984. This assembly would draw up a new constitution. In November 1985, democratic elections for president, Parliament, and mayors would be held. The civilian government would take up its duties in January 1986.

The National Constituent Assembly initiated its work on the new constitution amidst severe violence in the country. Strong pressures also came from sectors that wanted to delay or frustrate the democratic process. Above all, the Maya representatives with seats in the assembly received death threats. The work with the constitution ended in May 1985 and would take effect on January 14, 1986.

39 See for example Inforpress Centroamericana, September 26, 1985:7. The newspaper quoted Colonel Edgar Hernández, who was the commander of the military base in Cobán, Alta Verapaz. The colonel said that the new civilian government should maintain and respect the hierarchical order of the army, including military plans against "subversion."


41 Inforpress Centroamericana, October 24, 1985:1.

42 In 1984, the leader of PSD (Partido Socialista Democratico), Mario Solórzano Martínez, returned after six years in exile. He was invited by the Mejía Victores government to return and participate in the elections, but had to declare that he was not a Communist. Inforpress Centroamericana, September 6, 1984b:10.

43 See for example Inforpress Centroamericana, August 9, 1984:8; November 29, 1984:5; June 20, 1985:9–10.
The Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church was satisfied with the ouster of Ríos Montt and initially maintained a positive attitude toward the Mejía Victores government. Msgr. Pellecer, the highest representative from the death of Msgr. Casariego to the installation of a new archbishop, regarded the Ríos Montt government as an accident in the history of Guatemala, and he hoped that the Catholic Church could work in a more safe environment during the new regime. Mejía Victores declared he was a Catholic and promised to eliminate the special tribunals established by the Ríos Montt regime. 44

Clearly, both the Catholic Church and the Mejía Victores government had intentions to improve relations between church and state. The expectations Msgr. Pellecer placed on the Catholic military dictator Mejía Victores were not far from the hopes many evangelical leaders had concerning the evangelical military dictator Ríos Montt. Some evangelicals supported the Ríos Montt government because an evangelical president would promote evangelical influences in the country. Now some Catholics hoped that Mejía Victores would help the Catholic Church retake what it had lost during the Ríos Montt regime.

Yet soon the relations between the Catholic Church and the government worsened. “Only” one Catholic priest was killed during the Mejía Victores government, in November 1983, but repression against and persecution of Catholics involved in pastoral work continued, in addition to repression against other citizens. 45 Only some weeks after the coup, Msgr. Pellecer changed his initially hopeful attitude toward the government and expressed concern about illegal arrests and continued repression. 46 The new archbishop was installed in December 1983 in a situation of growing confrontation between the Catholic Church and the government. 47 The latter wanted the Catholic Church to work in accordance with the counterinsurgency strategy, but this was not compatible with the pastoral plans of the church.

The time of the Mejía Victores government was a period of consolidation for the Catholic Church in Guatemala. Factors that promoted unity and counteracted divisions included the death of the conservative Msgr. Casariego, as well as the fact that so many liberationists within the clergy, in religious orders, and among the catechists had been killed, displaced, or left the country.

The new archbishop, Msgr. Prósperos Penados del Barrio, attempted to unify the church behind a centrist position concerning pastoral work. This meant working actively to promote peace, justice and human rights, but with-

44 El Impacto, August 11, 1983.
45 El Gráfico, November 30, 1983. According to this article, the minister of the Interior was prepared to apologize to the Catholic bishops because he had accused them of anti-patriotism. This demonstrates that the regime did not want to alienate the Catholic Church.
47 See for example Infópress Centroamericana, December 8, 1983:11–12.
out involvement in left-wing movements. The Pope strongly promoted this pastoral policy after his Central America trip in March 1983. This was the same policy the Vatican had for all Central America.\(^{48}\)

This policy, however, had different consequences in various Central American countries. In Nicaragua, where large numbers of Catholics were involved with the Sandinistas, the policy of the Vatican appeared conservative and alienated large numbers of Catholics involved with popular movements and the theology of liberation. In Guatemala, popular movements were severely affected by the war. The same Vatican policy appeared reformist. The consequences of pastoral work frequently turned out to be support for a reconstruction of the destroyed popular movements. Evidently, the differences between Nicaragua and Guatemala also had to do with varying interpretations of the pastoral letters from the Pope.\(^{49}\) According to the Mejía Victores government, the pastoral policy of the Catholic Church was support for what the regime viewed as "subversion."\(^{50}\)

Evangelical Churches

At the beginning of the Mejía Victores government, many evangelicals were worried about the new government and how it would relate to evangelical churches. They were afraid they would suffer persecution. A few days after the coup some evangelical leaders gathered at the office of World Vision to discuss what to do in the new situation. The result was the establishment of COCIEG (Comisión Coordinadora de la Iglesia Evangélica de Guatemala), which had broad support among evangelical leaders. The participants in the commission prepared a manifesto to deliver to Mejía Victores. Information was offered concerning evangelical churches in Guatemala and the basic Christian principles confessed by them. The law of religious freedom from 1873 was emphasized, and it was stated that the evangelical churches had no interest in political power, only in the change of the individual with help of the Gospel of Christ.\(^{51}\)

Mejía Victores was just as concerned as the evangelical leaders. He was afraid that evangelicals would denounce persecution and intended to have
good relations with them. This implied that they would have more privileges and facilities than they had during the time of Ríos Montt. During the government of Mejía Victores, evangelical pastors were not disturbed by military service or duties in civil patrols. During Ríos Montt, the pastors were treated as the rest of the population concerning these issues. Mejía Victores also gave a financial gift to the evangelical community (to be administered by the Bible Societies), which would be used to build a biblical monument.\footnote{52 M.T. Cajas, interview, April 20, 1994.}

The most worried over the new government was the Verbo Church/Gospel Outreach. Its rationale for the ouster of Ríos Montt was clear from the earlier mentioned Ríos Montt historiography. The first edition had the name \textit{He Gives—He Takes Away}. Even if it was not explicitly stated in the book, the title reveals that according to the view of Gospel Outreach, the ouster of Ríos Montt somehow was connected to the purpose of God.

The Verbo Church maintained a low profile in order not to get into trouble with the new government.\footnote{53 Ríos Montt himself was silent until January 1984 when he made a statement to a group of U.S. pastors in Puebla, Mexico. At this conference he advocated the sending of Christian pastors to Guatemala and defended himself against the accusations made against him while in government. \textit{Charisma}, May 1984.} But during the years of Mejía Victores the Verbo Church increased its operations. A new congregation was established in zone seven in the capital, a district where the church had not worked before. Another congregation was established in Río de Janeiro in Brazil. But more significant was the focus on evangelization inside the United States. In 1984, the former advisor of Ríos Montt, Alvaro Contreras and his family, left to start a Verbo Church in Miami. Their intention was to work among Spanish-speaking people. The same year a Spanish-speaking church in New Orleans joined the Verbo Church. The founder, Carlos Velásquez, was in contact with International Love Lift since the beginning of the 1980s. Now Velásquez handed over responsibility of his church to other people, while he himself and his family moved to Guatemala in November 1984.\footnote{54 Verbo Christian Ministries 1989; \textit{Frontline Report} [1984]: "Verbo 15 años. Separata de Revista Hechos," July 1991:5.} New operations were continued by the Verbo Church in Guatemala, not by the original organization, Gospel Outreach in California. By this time the Guatemalan Verbo Church can not be seen as a "daughter organization" to Gospel Outreach anymore. In spite of organizational affiliation the Verbo Church in Guatemala in practice appeared as an independent organization making its own decisions and giving itself the responsibility for evangelization in the Americas. This development was the result of new contacts that the church had with different evangelical groups in the United States during the Ríos Montt government. Gospel Outreach became one of many contacts. Still, the Verbo Church in Guatemala was small, with only 1,200 members in 1983.\footnote{55 The number 1,200 by 1983 comes from J. Montgomery et al. 1983:81. According to S. Berberian, in 1986 the number had grown to 1,500. S. Berberian July 1986.}
In Guatemala the Verbo Church had a special relationship with Elim and the Calvary Church. In addition, the Verbo Church had contacts with a charismatic movement within the Episcopal Church. The Episcopal priest Arturo Fernandez was a leader of this charismatic movement. The tensions concerning this charismatic movement led to a schism. Arturo Fernandez left the Episcopal Church and founded Comunidad de Renovación Cristiana de Guatemala. Later this group joined the Verbo Church. The Verbo Church was involved in development work mainly in the Ixil area, which it coordinated with other evangelical organizations. Wycliffe Bible Translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics has already been mentioned, and it is worth noting the cooperation between Verbo, Wycliffe, and people in the English-speaking Union Church. This is the United States’ church abroad, which serves U.S. citizens who live in other countries. The worldwide network of English-speaking Union churches is coordinated by the National Council of Churches in New York City. The Verbo Church thus had contacts with churches generally considered to be within mainline bodies. At the same time, the church had limited contacts with Pentecostal churches, which constituted the majority of evangelicals.

In general, however, and compared to many other churches at the time, the Verbo Church had limited contacts with other churches in Guatemala during the time of Mejía Victores. It was not even a member of the Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala. The contacts with Overseas Crusades were limited, and the church did not belong to the enthusiasts for the church growth program set up by this organization. Perhaps this was connected to the importance of church discipline as compared to numerical growth, even if the latter not was seen as being insignificant.

In Search of an Evangelical Folk in Guatemala

New Influences from Dominion Theology

During the Mejía Victores government theological ideas of North American dominion theologians Paul Jehle and Francis Schaeffer reached Guatemala. These were not the only influences from dominion theology, but were especially significant for certain reasons. The influence of Paul Jehle in the Verbo Church was the first sign of reconstructionist thoughts I noted in Guatemala. Francis Schaeffer, who represented a softer form of dominion theology, inspired Marco Tulio Cajas, the campaign leader for Jorge Serrano Elías during the presidential campaign of 1985.

Paul Jehle was leader of the New Testament Christian School, which belonged to the New Testament Church of Cedarville in Plymouth, Massachu-

56 The notes on the Episcopalian charismatic movement are found in Verbo Christian Ministries 1989.
57 See more about this in Chapter 7.
setts. That church maintained a reconstructionist doctrine and established its school in 1980. As we have seen before, reconstructionism was primarily an educational movement aimed at influencing the coming generation through education of school pupils. The special pedagogy of the New Testament Christian School was called “the Principle Approach.”

The Verbo Church in Guatemala also started its school in 1980. In 1986, the school had 600 pupils. It was open not only to children in the Verbo Church but also to others. In 1984, the Verbo school started to use the Principle Approach by Paul Jehle, and spread its ideas to other evangelical schools in Guatemala and Latin America. In 1984, Verbo leader Carlos Ramírez wrote that the school had a deficit of 60,000 U.S. dollars because “we’re strongly investing in developing the Principle Approach to Education for Latin America.” In 1985, the school started to give seminars on the Principle Approach. Consequently, evangelical schools became the base for a distribution of reconstructionist thoughts in Latin America.

Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984), on the other hand, in 1938 became the first ordained pastor in the Bible Presbyterian Church. This church was a result of a division in the 1930s over the liberal-fundamentalist controversy. In 1948, Schaeffer moved to Switzerland as a missionary of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions, and in 1955 he founded an international studies center called L’Abri. From here he held courses that criticized secular culture from a Christian perspective. He wrote twenty-four books, translated to more than twenty languages, and also produced films. He was one of the leading personalities in the evangelical resurgence of the 1960s and 1970s. Schaeffer was not among board members of New Religious Political Right action groups, but he had influence because of his books, not least of which on militant anti-abortion campaigns in the United States.

Schaeffer studied theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, where he had Cornelius Van Til as a teacher. Rousas Rushdoony also studied under Van Til and credits him as the founder of reconstructionism; however, it is better to see Rushdoony as founder of the movement. The influence of Van Til did not make Schaeffer a reconstructionist. Surely he wanted “reconstruction,” but Schaeffer and his followers took a stand against the reconstructionists’ modern application of the Old Testament laws.

The following description of the views of Schaeffer comes from his A Christian Manifesto. For Schaeffer, an Old Testament theocracy (or theonomy, as the reconstructionists themselves prefer to say) is not the ideal but the United

58 See for example P. Jehle 1984.
59 C. Ramírez [1984].
60 Frontline Report [1987]; see also Ministerios Verbo [1986].
62 People like John Whitehead in Coalition on Revival, and Randall Terry, the founder of Operation Rescue, have told that they were heavily influenced by Francis Schaeffer. F. Clarkson 1994:6.
63 Dictionary of Christianity in America 1990:1050.
States around the year 1900 is. That was before "humanism" started to infiltrate the political institutions and culture of society.\textsuperscript{65} Like other dominion theologians Schaeffer was not against the separation of church and state, but was against the separation between the state and God. He advocated a "form-freedom balance" in government, implying that freedom would be contained by a Christian consensus.\textsuperscript{66} The state and the law should be based on Christianity. That would imply, for instance, prohibition of abortion and censorship of mass media when it came to religious issues.\textsuperscript{67}

According to Schaeffer, Christianity and humanism were two worldviews impossible to reconcile. The great contribution of the Christian worldview concerning government was the "form-freedom balance." The United States Constitution was founded on this principle, but against this stood the legacy from the Enlightenment, humanism. If the dominance of humanism was not ended, the result would be chaos, anarchy, and an authoritarian political system. According to \textit{A Christian Manifesto}, everything basically good in present society has to do with Christian influence, while everything basically bad is related to an Enlightenment-humanist influence.\textsuperscript{68}

In the booklet \textit{La Tarea Politica De Los Evangélicos}, Marco Tulio Cajas explicitly recognizes the influences from Schaeffer, and notes that he had the opportunity to study \textit{A Christian Manifesto} under the directorship of the author.\textsuperscript{69} Earlier he also took courses at L'Abri in Switzerland.\textsuperscript{70} Cajas writes about his hope for a new Guatemala characterized by peace, justice, democracy, pluralism, and respect for human rights. Christians were more capable of creating such a society than any other people, as only they were able to discern the original and true fundamental of the authority of the state, that is, the law of God. Evangelicals should place themselves among moderate political forces. As the best organized minority in Guatemala they were responsible to fill the ideological and ethical vacuum created by political confrontations. In the view of Cajas, democracy was related to the Protestant reformation of the sixteenth century and was totally opposite to humanism, which was related to the excesses of the French Revolution. Cajas had the same view as Schaeffer concerning a form-freedom balance in government, implying that freedom should be contained within a Christian consensus. How this would fit together with plurality and pluralism is not clear, however.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. According to Schaeffer, "humanism" started to take over about 80 years ago, and above all since 40 years ago.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.:28–29.

\textsuperscript{67} F.A. Schaeffer 1982. See for example page 61 about censorship against mass media, and what to do about the biases against Christianity in mass media: "The solution is not the one Gronhite gives in his interview perhaps changing to a political philosophy different from democracy. The solution is to limit somehow television's power to use its bias in 'the editorial' reporting of events, and most specifically to keep it from shaping the political process."

\textsuperscript{68} F.A. Schaeffer 1982.

\textsuperscript{69} M.T. Cajas 1985.

\textsuperscript{70} M.T. Cajas, interview April 20, 1994.

\textsuperscript{71} M.T. Cajas 1985.
There were also important differences between Cajas' booklet and *A Christian Manifesto* by Schaeffer. Anti-abortion, civil disobedience, and the right to overthrow a tyrant are issues discussed in *A Christian Manifesto*. None of them is mentioned by Cajas. His form-freedom balance in government is not filled with any concrete political content. Consequently, the views of Marco Tulio Cajas come very differently to the Guatemalan context in comparison with how Schaeffer was viewed in the United States or Europe. *A Christian Manifesto* is a call for right-wing radicalism, while the main impression of Cajas' booklet is a call for evangelicals to support the democratic process, because it is the will of God. Because of this many Guatemalans viewed Cajas as more progressive and open-minded than other fundamentalists. Due to the lack of a more concrete political content, it is impossible to discern if Cajas desired counterinsurgency democracy or a genuine democratic consolidation in Guatemala.

The booklet by Cajas should be seen in relation to his role as the leader of the presidential campaign of the evangelical Jorge Serrano Elías. Cajas' main purpose was to get the evangelicals to vote in favor of Serrano Elías. Because of the other-wordly orientation of many evangelicals, this was not necessarily self-evident for them. There was a risk of a higher level of abstention among them than among other citizens. The first challenge was therefore to convince evangelicals about their duty to vote, which was explained by Cajas through references to evangelical social and political responsibility. The second challenge was to convince evangelicals that Serrano Elías was the best choice, for he was an evangelical. The use of dominion theology was thus an instrument for this purpose, and a concrete discussion about the political platform of Serrano Elías was not engaged.

**Political Evangelicalism and the Elections**

During the time of Ríos Montt, evangelicals discovered their great number of believers and thereby their potential for political influence. A significant minority, including Jorge Serrano Elías and Marco Tulio Cajas, questioned the traditional point of view that evangelicals should not involve themselves in politics. The evangelical community was seen as a *Pueblo Evangélico* ("evangelical folk"), a community with a common interest.

Serrano Elías was president of the state council during the Ríos Montt government, and he was a member of the church Elím. In 1984, he became the presidential candidate for PDCN (Partido Democrático Cooperación Na-

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72 All literate citizens were obliged to vote, but on the other hand, sanctions against abstention were not very likely.

73 Serrano Elías was born in 1945. He had a Guatemalan father and a Lebanese mother. While he had several university degrees his basic was as industrial engineer, and he has his Ph.D. in education. In his youth he participated in the Christian Democratic student organization FESC, but then turned to the right. When he was twenty-eight years old he was born again and became a member of Elím.
cional), a party based on cooperativists. The cooperative movement connected with this party and the evangelicals became the two important bases for the candidacy of Serrano Elías. Under the directorship of Cajas, who himself ran for Parliament, a mass movement was built, consisting of cooperativists and evangelical leaders. Some evangelical churches participated openly in this campaign. The organism to connect evangelicals with the presidential campaign was OCG (Organización Civica de Guatemala), established in 1984 by Cajas, who also was the president, to support Serrano Elías. OCG was a national organization, and evangelicals from all denominations participated. Cajas' idea was to unify the evangelicals into a political party, in something that was their own. The above mentioned booklet by Cajas was an attempt to give content to this political work.74

Soon Serrano Elías was considered by the newspapers to be the most important among the newcomers in the political game. The political position of Serrano Elías and PDCN was moderate right, as seen in the Guatemalan context. Like most of the other presidential candidates Serrano emphasized the socio-economic factors behind the growth of guerrilla movements, while at the same time he was in favor of continued counterinsurgency. Serrano was totally against negotiations with the guerrillas but expressed the view that the left-wing organizations, including the Communist party, should be allowed to work politically. That put him in a place between MLN, which maintained the most militant position, and the Christian Democrats, who emphasized negotiations more than militarism.75 Concerning economic policies and the responsibilities of the state, Serrano Elías was one of the candidates close to the New Right view. Most of his platform reflected the views of the Kissinger report. Most of the other candidates' programs, however, also did. As noted earlier, the essential content in the political program of Serrano Elías was not mentioned by Cajas in his book. Evangelicals were mobilized on the notion that an evangelical president would be the best alternative, whatever the political content.

In the beginning of the campaign Serrano Elías was indirectly supported by the evangelical newspaper La Palabra. It was founded soon after the ouster of Ríos Montt, on the initiative of Rafael Escobar Argüello (secretary of public relations in the Ríos Montt government and editor of the evangelical Sunday supplement Testimonio Cristiano in Prensa Libre). La Palabra was a continuation of Testimonio Cristiano and became a regular daily newspaper between 1983 and 1985, after which it was closed down.

Escobar Argüello looked for funds for creating an evangelical daily newspaper and turned to a couple of well-off landowners in the church where he was a member, Christian Fraternity. This couple was Roxanne and Roberto Sandoval. She was a devoted charismatic evangelical, while the husband not was

75 Inforpress Centroamericana, July 4, 1985:12.
so interested in religion. But he was aware of evangelical growth in the country and thought that an evangelical newspaper could be a profitable business. When the evening paper *La Hora* moved to another office, Roberto Sandoval bought the old building and started to publish *La Palabra*. The positive statistics on evangelical growth did not help the newspaper, which did not have much support from evangelical churches, and the business did not turn out to be profitable. Consequently, Sandoval decided to change directions and started to support the presidential candidate from the Christian Democratic party, Vinicio Cerezo. He tried to make *La Palabra* a Christian Democratic newspaper. The evangelical editorial committee refused, and the newspaper was closed down.76

The fate of *La Palabra*, in trying to switch political loyalties, was not an isolated event. Opinion polls pointed at Vinicio Cerezo as the winner of the election. Many evangelicals reacted against the open use of evangelicalism in the campaign of Serrano Elías and preferred Vinicio Cerezo. It was no surprise that the use of religion by Serrano Elías provoked Catholic reactions and criticisms. Already in 1983 Msgr. Pellecer, as the highest representative of the Catholic Church, denounced similar efforts among Catholic politicians in using the Catholic faith for political mobilization. According to Msgr. Pellecer, such efforts instrumentalized the good faith of the Guatemalans.77

In a newspaper article in July 1985 the president of the Guatemalan Bible Society, Miguel Angel Suazo, defended evangelical pastors against accusations that they tried to get church members to vote for Serrano Elías. According to him, none of the pastors who were members in the Bible Society, around 60–70 percent, behaved like that.78 Even if it seemed risky to maintain that none of them supported the campaign of Serrano Elías, certainly Rev. Suazo was right that most Guatemalan pastors were against the mixture of religion and politics.79

In the end, many evangelicals did not vote for Serrano Elías, partly because PDCN made an error in making an alliance with PR (Partido Revolucionario). This latter party had a reputation of being corrupt, sometimes leftwing and otherwise rightwing. Serrano Elías was seen as being a pragmatic politician who used religion for his own ends. It is interesting to note that many evangelicals apparently had more problems with Serrano Elías than with Ríos Montt. Even if more fanatic, Ríos Montt was generally considered to be more pious than Serrano Elías, an opinion even among their adversaries. But there were also other reasons behind the lack of evangelical support for Serrano

77 *Prensa Libre*, September 20, 1983.
78 *Prensa Libre*, July 28, 1985:7. The same view was announced by Ricardo Pellecer Robles, an elder in the Central Presbyterian Church.
79 J. Serrano Elías 1990, clearly demonstrates that he still struggled for mobilizing the “apolitical” evangelicals. This indicates that at least as many or even more were against a mixture of religion and politics in the elections of 1985.

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Elias. Some liked neither Serrano Elias nor Rios Montt because of the content of their ideology. To these evangelicals peace and justice were more important issues than the religious orientation of the president. The perspectives of change in Guatemala were considered to be better with the Christian Democrat Vinicio Cerezo as president.

When he lost the presidential election, Serrano Elias had problems with the relationship to the leader of the Elim church, Otoniel Rios Paredes. A major controversy arose inside Elim. One of the other pastors, Vladimiro Vásquez, left with an array of people and built a new church called Visión de Fe (Vision of Faith). The members who left considered Rios Paredes to be too conservative and rigid. According to Vásquez, this attitude was expressed, for example, in the view Rios Paredes had concerning Serrano Elias. Before the election, Serrano tried to mobilize the people in his church by telling them that it was God's will that he become president. Elim was not the kind of church in which members and leaders were enthusiastic about political involvement, and many reacted negatively. However, Serrano managed to convince Rios Paredes. But in the view of Rios Paredes, after the elections it was clear that Serrano could not have been sent by God, for in that case he would have won. So who else could have sent him? If it was not God it had to be the Devil, thought Rios Paredes, according to Vásquez. Because of this controversy Serrano had to leave the church. He did not join Vision of Faith like other dissenting members. After a while he instead joined another recently founded neo-Pentecostal church, El Shaddai.\(^80\) The view of Rios Paredes concerning Serrano Elias is understandable when seen from the perspective of the prosperity theology. If God was with him he would have been successful and not lost the election.

Most voters in Guatemala, whatever their religious orientation, voted for Vinicio Cerezo of the Christian Democratic Party. This was a vote for negotiations and peace, and for expected structural changes in the country. Vinicio Cerezo also declared that he did not accept orders from the army. As commander-in-chief he would give orders to the military forces. The Christian Democrats won both the presidency and a majority in the Parliament and the municipalities. In the second round of the presidential election about 1,800,000 citizens voted. Still, this was less than half of the 3.6 million Guatemalans of voting age.\(^81\)

Other sectors did support Cerezo because of other reasons. In the second round of the presidential election—when the competition was between Víctor Cerezo and Jorge Carpio Nicolle (1933–1993) of Unión del Centro Nacional, UCN—the traditional right-wing, including the extreme right, supported Cerezo despite the fact that Carpio Nicolle was more to the right. The reason was not that they liked Cerezo but that they disliked Carpio Nicolle. According to

\(^{80}\) V. Vásquez, interview, April 9, 1991.

\(^{81}\) See for example Infórmex Centroamericana, October 24, 1985:2; December 12, 1985:1–2.
the analysis made by Inforpress Centroamericana some days after the elections, the traditional right-wing did not want to strengthen UCN because this party could be a severe competitor to the traditional right-wing parties. A weakening of UCN also meant more political influence for the traditional right.\textsuperscript{82} But even the rhetoric of DCG (the Christian Democratic Party) shifted more to the right between the first and second rounds of the elections. Before the elections, DCG was careful not to show tendencies toward the left. This attitude was reinforced before the second round to avoid UCN getting more votes because of its outspoken anti-Communist rhetoric.\textsuperscript{83} The outcome of the elections also reflected that MLN no longer had support from the most powerful parts of the business sector and that the ties between this party and the army were at a low level. MLN received severe competition from other parties that claimed to represent the ideological right-wing.

The Goal of Overseas Crusades: One-half Evangelicals in Guatemala by 1990

There is no material showing that U.S. missionaries from Overseas Crusades and other U.S. evangelical organizations were involved in the campaign of Serrano Elías, even if the goal of Overseas Crusades was to make half of the Guatemalan population a part of the evangelical community, which evidently fit well within efforts to mobilize evangelicals for political purposes. The ambition of Overseas Crusades was to create a social base for political mobilization. As earlier noted, one purpose behind these efforts was that political change would take place when a large part of the population of a country became evangelical. But all missionaries of Overseas Crusades did not necessarily see this as a goal. The same was true for the Guatemalan evangelicals who participated in these efforts. The attitudes of Guatemalan evangelicals toward the Discipling A Whole Nation project concerned how they viewed the purpose of the work of their own church, and if it was stated in quantitative or qualitative terms.

The question whether or not Overseas Crusades would reach its goal (which it did not), and the implications this would have, is not the only interesting question to ask about this project. The role this project had during the period of time to reach the goal is also important. Overseas Crusades wanted the churches to be occupied exclusively with their own quantitative growth, implying that attention would be diverted from social and political concerns.

\textsuperscript{82} Inforpress Centroamericana, December 12, 1985:1-2. Jorge Carpio Nicolle was the owner of the second largest newspaper \textit{El Gráfico}. He established UCN in 1983. The party soon became one of the most important in the country. UCN, a member of the Liberal International, was supported by its Spanish equivalent, and tried to advocate a center profile. However, it is clear that the party belongs to the right. It has been characterized by right-wing populism. See more in Chapter 8 in relation to the election of 1990. Jorge Carpio Nicolle was assassinated on July 3, 1993.

\textsuperscript{83} Inforpress Centroamericana, November 7, 1985a:1-2.
The Amanecer Congress (Discipling A Whole Nation Congress), which Overseas Crusades planned for Guatemala in 1983, was postponed because of the lack of interest among evangelical church leaders. It took place May 7–11, 1984. At this time the direction for an Amanecer Committee was already organized. The president of this committee was Emilio Antonio Nuñez from Seminario Teologico Centroamericano, the seminary of the Central American Church. Edwin Martínez D., who now was the Guatemalan director of Overseas Crusades, was executive secretary of the Amanecer Committee.\(^84\)

The Amanecer Congress in Guatemala was the first Discipling A Whole Nation (DAWN) congress held in Latin America. Present were 431 delegates who represented 33 denominations, 41 parachurch agencies, and 33 service agencies. According to Roy Wingerd (working for Overseas Crusades), the delegates affirmed and committed themselves to the goal suggested by the Amanecer Committee. This goal was expressed in two ways: 50 percent evangelicals by 1990, and one evangelical church in every community with 500–1000 inhabitants.\(^85\)

The Amanecer Congress was held at Hotel Ramada Inn in Antigua, and also had visitors from other countries: Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Peter Wagner, professor at the School of World Mission at the Fuller Theological Seminary, was invited as the keynote speaker. Wagner worked as a missionary in Bolivia for eleven years and could consequently hold his lectures in fluent Spanish.\(^86\) In the opening speech, he said that if Discipling of A Whole Nation was to be a model for the rest of Latin America, it would be a historical moment:

Guatemala is one of a half dozen flash points in the growth of the Church worldwide. With over 1.5 million believers, this nation is now roughly 25 percent evangelical. The Church is growing more rapidly here than anywhere else in Latin America.\(^87\)

Favorable views of the congress emphasized the participation of so many churches, and the great manifestation of unity this implied. Church historian Virgilio Zapata commented in the following way:

Amanecer 84 is very unique in the history of our church. While denominations are challenged to work toward a common goal, in this case a 50 percent evangelical nation by 1990, they are not required to compromise their own individuality. We are free to be ourselves, to march under our own flags. But the key thing is that we go from here marching together.\(^88\)

At the end of the Amanecer Congress the participants discussed if present

\(^{84}\) J. Montgomery et al. 1983; R. Wingerd 1987. The vice president of the Amanecer Committee was Baudilio Recinos, who was director of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary. In the direction was also Leonel Motta from Campus Crusade for Christ.

\(^{85}\) R. Wingerd 1987.

\(^{86}\) T. Olsen [1984]:374.

\(^{87}\) Ibid.:373.

\(^{88}\) Ibid.:374.
church representatives publicly should report the church growth goals they wanted to set for their own denominations. The alternative point of view was to wait and leave this to the churches to work out in their own time-frame. The congress decided on the second alternative. Some from the United States, among them Jim Montgomery, were disappointed. They wanted church representatives to set up goals for quantitative growth at the congress. This implied to not consult their churches. But Edwin Martínez agreed that the churches did not have enough time to think about their church growth goals.89

Among the participants at the Amanecer Congress were different opinions about its purpose. One opinion was that it should deal with quantitative church growth, but according to another opinion the purpose was “holistic church growth,” including both quantitative and qualitative aspects. This terminology is a translation to English of the Spanish term crecimiento integral. Missionaries from the United States represented the former opinion, while Amanecer president Emilio Antonio Nuñez advocated holistic church growth, which included growth in numbers but also a search for Christian maturity in every believer, that is, to know the word of God and the meaning of Christian discipleship. Nuñez also included social responsibility in holistic church growth. The views of Nuñez are apparent in the book La Hora de Dios para Guatemala, which was noted in the former chapter. It is interesting to note that in the English version of this book only the chapters written by Jim Montgomery are included. The Guatemalan perspective on “holistic church growth” was thus excluded in the English version.90

In the following description of the Guatemalan reception of ideas on quantitative church growth, the author’s interviews and conversations with Guatemalan evangelicals play an important role. Nuñez accepted the presidency of the Amanecer Committee on the condition that it would promote holistic church growth. In his view, this was the theme for the Amanecer Congress. But according to Nuñez, not everybody at the congress understood holistic church growth because it was more easy to understand growth in numbers. The views of Nuñez did not get attention within the Amanecer Committee. As a result he left Amanecer after 1984.91

Nuñez was not alone with his views. Many other evangelical church leaders in Guatemala were critical of the quantitative church growth programs of Overseas Crusades and the book La Hora de Dios para Guatemala, which was not considered to be a reflection of Guatemalan evangelical churches. Some of the teachers at the Seminario Teologico Centroamericano talked to Peter Wagner and tried to help him understand their perspective, but had no success.92

The conflicting views on church growth were not a marked contradiction

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89 Ibid.:379.
with liberal and progressive evangelicals on one side and conservative evangelicals on the other. Conservatives were on both sides. The charismatics, including both Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals, generally had a more positive view of quantitative church growth programs, while other churches had more reservations. To many members in small churches with a fundamentalist, non-charismatic tendency, a strong emphasis on quantitative church growth was unacceptable. These churches usually cared most about doctrinal purity among their members and did not want to compromise their orthodoxy by trying to attract as many members as possible. For evangelicals who slowly had begun to integrate the perspective of social responsibility after the earthquake in 1976, the question about evangelical social concern was more urgent, or at least as important as quantitative church growth. For Protestants of an ecumenical tendency, proselytizing among Catholics, as implied in the program Discipling A Whole Nation, was unacceptable.

All Protestants, liberals or conservatives, who did not like Overseas Crusades' quantitative church growth program, shared a view of a more profound meaning of Christian discipleship—even if liberals and conservatives diverged concerning the content. This common view meant that 50 percent of the Guatemalan population becoming members of the evangelical community did not necessarily imply that they also would be disciples of Christ. However, for the time being, Overseas Crusades won the battle about the content of the Amanecer movement. The content should be an exclusive emphasis on quantitative church growth. This fact is important, for Amanecer was a major effort to unify the Guatemalan evangelical churches around a common goal.

After the national Amanecer Congress in Guatemala, local congresses were held in different parts of the country. Their purpose was basically to teach two principal ideas: God wants his church to grow and the current political and economic crisis in Guatemala was used as an instrument by the Holy Spirit to make people responsive to the Gospel. Bible texts that fit with these views were studied. The plan was for the Amanecer Committee to return to every place and evaluate if the established goals were being reached.93

In 1985, Jim Montgomery founded DAWN Ministries with himself as leader. It continued to work closely with Overseas Crusades, but by now the Discipling A Whole Nation project was not just a name of a project set up by Overseas Crusades and the Guatemalan evangelical churches. It became the name of an organization, and Jim Montgomery was the one who defined its content. By this time similar projects had been set up in some other countries.94


94 Amanecer, January 1990:1.
CHAPTER 7

Evangelicalism and the Turn of the War in the Ixil Region (1982–1985)

Introduction

During Ríos Montt’s regime, the tide turned in favor of the army in the Ixil region, and by the term of Mejía Victores the army controlled most of the area. Many Ixils thought that the Lucas García regime planned to totally exterminate the Ixil people. Consequently some of them viewed Ríos Montt as a savior. Even if Ixils continued to be persecuted and murdered, there was a growing hope that submitting to the army would ensure survival. There were incentives to submitting to the army: a house might be rebuilt, food and medical aid could be available, or, in some cases, land might be distributed. The amnesty law in May, 1982, opened the possibility for Ixils to leave guerrilla-controlled areas and hand themselves over to the army. Some people did. They hoped that the new Ríos Montt government would change the situation. The army made allies of the defectors and gained guides who were familiar with the inaccessible hilly Ixil region. Before the amnesty it was difficult for the army to find its way to some of the villages in the Ixil area. However, many people did not believe in the amnesty and did not surrender.

All those living in the army-controlled areas supported the army as the only option available. The pressure to surrender was increased when the army created alliances with civil and religious leaders who could influence the people. But still a large part of the population was hiding in the mountains.

The evangelical churches continued to grow in the army-controlled areas. The purpose of this chapter is to study the relation between this growth and the counterinsurgency war. Did evangelicalism play a role in turning the tide of war in favor of the army? The chapter starts with the army strategy in the Ixil region and how it was put into practice. Then it turns to the evangelical service foundation FUNDAPI, which gained extensive influence in the Ixil region during the time of Ríos Montt. It continues with the role of the evangelicals in the establishment of the civil patrols, and finally turns to the consequences of the relationship between evangelicalism and the army in the Ixil region.
The Army Strategy in the Ixil Region

The Army's Strategy for National Integration of the Ixil People

The ultimate purpose of the developmentalist strategy, advocated by the Guatemalan army during the Ríos Montt and Mejía Victores governments, was to integrate the Mayas in the conflict zones with the larger Guatemalan society. The local coordinating committees (the local extensions of the Inter-institutional Coordinators) should be a “vanguard” to raise a nationalist fervor and spirit of developmentalism in the rural population. The army talked about its “developmentalist philosophy,” which was outlined for public consumption in the document *Polos de Desarrollo* (“Development Poles”).¹ The strategy that would be implemented during Ríos Montt and Mejía Victores can be traced back to the document “Operación Ixil. Plan de Asuntos Civiles” from 1980–1981. These proposals about the Ixil area were presented to President Lucas García by military officers, but were rejected. “Operación Ixil” represented thoughts among those military officers who wanted to oust Lucas García and bring about the “counterinsurgency reformism” described in Chapter 5 in this study. When Ríos Montt was president “Operación Ixil” was published in *Revista Militar* and it is in this form it has been accessible to the author.²

In “Operación Ixil” a first phase of the operation was settled from June 4, 1981, until February 28, 1982. During this phase the civic action projects would be planned, the “subversive” groups eliminated, and civil self-defense organized. In addition, during this phase an ideological campaign would be implemented and with this purpose a radio station installed, broadcasting 30 percent of the time in Spanish and 70 percent in Ixil. During the second phase, from the first of March, 1982, until July 2, 1986, the civic action projects would be carried out in coordination with a number of government agencies.³ The purpose of the civic action plans in the Ixil region was “the restoration of law and order in the Ixil area through winning the will of the inhabitants to the national mode of being.”⁴ In “Operación Ixil” different ways in which the army could relate to the Ixil population were discussed. The three alternatives were as follows:

No. 1: Use all effort of the Unity of Civic Actions to fulfill the assigned mission through intensifying the ladinoization of the Ixil population, so that it will disappear as a cultural group who is alien to the mode of National Being.

No. 2: Use all effort of the Unity of Civic Actions to fulfill the assigned mission through continuing a policy that is based in the respect of the Ixil identity, their customs and language, giving them the opportunity to contribute, together with the Army, in the defense of their communities.

⁴ Ibid.:31. Author’s translation from Spanish.
Then the advantages and disadvantages with the different strategies were considered. The advantage with the first alternative was said to be that ladinoization facilitated communication, because everybody would speak Spanish. This might also encourage Ixils to stop thinking as Ixils and accept “the concepts of nationality, mother country, etc.”\textsuperscript{6} In addition, this strategy would be eased by the ladinoization among Ixils already in progress, promoted by the teaching of Spanish in the schools. Finally, following the first strategy the Ixils would “enjoy the benefits of our civilization.”\textsuperscript{7}

However, the disadvantage with this proposal was said to be that Ixils more than other ethnic groups in Guatemala during 400 years since the arrival of the Spaniards had resisted castellanización (after the real name of the so-called “Spanish” language). This factor could render the efforts of ladinoization futile. It was considered that such an effort could be an advantage to EGP, because guerrillas had learnt Ixil and apparently respected the Ixil culture. Thus, a ladinoization effort could increase the resentment of the Ixils and facilitate their joining of EGP.\textsuperscript{8}

The second alternative, to respect the Ixil identity, would be the only avenue open for convincing the Ixils that they were members of a pluralist society in a grand Guatemalan nation, according to “Operación Ixil.” This could neutralize the strategy of EGP by copying the EGP’s methods, but reinforced with more resources for convincing the population. In addition, the strategy would gain in propaganda value as the army could demonstrate its confidence in the Ixils participating in their own defense. The disadvantage with this proposal was that it was considered to be difficult to convince the influential Ladino groups, who governed the country, that this would be the best alternative. In addition, there existed a risk that organized civil defense patrols would give people an opportunity to desert, giving their weapons to the guerrillas.\textsuperscript{9}

According to the third alternative, the Ixil territory would be physically incorporated into Guatemala, something that together with a well-planned policy for motivating the population could marginalize the guerrillas. This strategy would also create work opportunities for the Ixils during the projects. The disadvantages were believed to be that this strategy did not take the Ixil identity into consideration. This could create problems, because it was not certain that the Ixils would cooperate. In addition, it could be too time-consuming to implement this strategy, because of financing. During this delay the “enemy” could have time to further undermine the credibility of the government among the Ixils.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.:46–48. Author’s translation from Spanish.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.:46.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.:47.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.:48.
According to "Operación Ixil," the second alternative was preferable. Respecting the Ixil identity would be the strategy that best fit the purpose of the civic action plans. However, the plan was open to the different alternatives and the final decision would be left to the local commander.\textsuperscript{11} It was emphasized that irrespective of the alternative that was chosen, it must include:

\textit{... an intense, profound and well studied psychological campaign, which saves the Ixil mentality until making them feel part of the Guatemalan nation. The ideological messages of this campaign ought to be more than rhetorical abstractions, which unequivocally convince the audience. In the same way as the EGP has told them realities, like: "You, the Ixils are poor." The Ixils understand this well, because they are poor.}\textsuperscript{12}

Only by offering them realities and immediately carry them out can the action of the enemy be neutralized and the support of the Ixil population be obtained, for the fulfillment of the Civic Actions mission according to at least two of the proposed C/A [Civic Action alternatives, author's remark].\textsuperscript{13}

"Operación Ixil" proposed the army to:

\textit{make a study aimed at the inter-cultural and religious factors with the purpose of avoiding confrontations with the population that could hinder the fulfillment of the Civic Actions mission.}\textsuperscript{14}

The considerations concerning national integration in "Operación Ixil" were not new for the 1980s. Since the time of its creation, the Guatemalan state had faced problems concerning the integration of the Maya population. But the main thrust of integration was never to change the status of the Mayas as second class citizens. It never aimed at giving the Mayas the opportunity to share power of the state and thus had never succeeded.\textsuperscript{15}

It is noteworthy that "Operación Ixil" did not give explicit instructions as to the army's conduct toward the Ixils. The army was given a free hand to experiment and carry out local decisions. None of the three alternatives were practiced in isolation. The implementation was rather a combination of various points of the action plans. Nothing was said about religion in "Operación Ixil." In practice religion was one of the aspects that entered in the army's view on national integration, however. Now we will turn to how the strategy was implemented.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid.:48-49.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid.:44-45. Author's translation from Spanish.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid.:45. Author's translation from Spanish.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid.:44. Author's translation from Spanish.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Similar kinds of integration efforts have been brought out in other Latin American countries with indigenous populations. The dissertation by J. Marin Gonzalez 1992, demonstrates how Summer Institute of Linguistics has participated in the internal colonization of the Peruvian Amazon. In Peru, as well as in Guatemala, the rhetoric of national integration was employed in efforts to extend state control and exploitation of indigenous ethnic groups.
\end{itemize}
Military Destruction and Reconstruction

The scorched earth campaign had started already in October 1981, during the time of Lucas García. Between 1981 and 1983 most of the Ixil villages were burnt down by the army. The goal of the campaign was to move people from their villages and land in order to remove them from the guerrillas. By 1983 the army controlled most of the highlands, including the Ixil area.

Two military bases were created in El Quiché in 1983. One of them was located in the provincial capital Santa Cruz del Quiché and the other in Playa Grande in Ixcán, in the northern El Quiché. From 1984 the army strategy focused on destroying the refuges of the displaced people, and reinstating them in their reconstructed villages now under military control. A phase of destruction was thus followed by a phase of rebuilding. The timing of these two phases varied in different places. In the Ixil area the scorched earth campaigns continued throughout the 1980s. The reconstruction phase started already in 1982 in areas closer to the Ixil towns. Nobody was allowed to live outside the military-controlled villages called "towns of refuge" and later "model villages."

It is difficult to give exact estimations of the numbers of persons killed in the Ixil region. According to the Guatemalan army, the Ixil area had 82,000 inhabitants in 1980. Already at the beginning of 1982 the population was reduced to 60,000 and 49 villages had been destroyed. These numbers were also given by the army, which did not concede its responsibility, but accused the guerrillas. The army admitted, however, that the situation partly was a creation of earlier governments' disregard of the indigenous people in the highlands.

According to a report by the human rights organization Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), based on a visit in 1986, the population in the municipality of Nebaj was reduced to half its former size. Before the violence Nebaj had approximately 35,000 inhabitants and now only about 17,000 to 18,000. Municipal officials estimated that between 3,000 and 4,000 had been killed and that the rest of the population was hiding in the mountains. There were only about 10 population centers, while before the violence began there had been 21 aldeas and dozens of smaller settlements.

The report by WOLA had less exact numbers for the other Ixil municipals. People interviewed in Cotzal estimated that approximately 40 to 50 percent of the population had perished by different means during the violence; many were killed by the army, some by the guerrillas, and many died from hunger and disease following in the footsteps of the war. Cotzal had about 12,000 to 15,000 inhabitants in 1986. About 13–15 population sites existed during the

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18 Washington Office on Latin America 1988:41. The report maintained that there had been 22 towns in Nebaj before the violence. Apparently the 21 aldeas were counted as towns together with the town of Nebaj.
time of the visit by WOLA. Before the violence Cotzal had 29 villages besides the smaller settlements.

Chajul was the Ixil municipality that was least affected by the violence. However, around the border shared with Nebaj, WOLA estimated that about half the population may have been killed. Approximately 70 population sites had been reduced to eleven and the population consisted of about 20,000 to 25,000 in 1986. According to WOLA, in Chajul as in the other Ixil municipalities, the people blamed some of the deaths on the guerrillas but the vast majority were attributed to the army. The figures give an indication as to the condition of the Ixil region during the time of the Ríos Montt and Mejía Victores governments. Large parts of the countryside were devastated. Houses, crops and trees were burnt down. The surviving population was forced to live in a few reconstructed population centers controlled by the army. The situation was similar to the first conquest of the Ixil region in the sixteenth century, when the population had been forced to live in the reducciones controlled by the Spaniards.

Some of the Ixils sought refuge in Mexico, but most of the displaced people hiding from the army, remained in the remote, mountainous and inaccessible areas in the Ixil region where the guerrillas also had a presence. There they were protected from the army by the mountains and the guerrillas. Still in 1982, the only roads in the Ixil region were those connecting Nebaj and Cotzal and extending to the San Francisco plantation, and one between Nebaj and the provincial capital of El Quiché. Between other villages there were only footpaths. The army wanted all the displaced people in the mountains to settle in the army-controlled resettlements and set about hunting the refugees in the mountains. It is clear that some people freely turned themselves in to the army, mainly because of the hardships of life as displaced persons, and that the guerrillas attempted to stop them. However, many people preferred to reconstruct their lives in remote areas far away from the army-controlled sectors. Their version of the situation became more well-known to outsiders some years later when they organized themselves as the Communities of Populations in Resistance (CPRs).

Ríos Montt had three different strategies for fighting the guerrillas: an intensification of the military operations, the civil patrols (PACs), and Plan de Asistencia para Asuntos Civiles (PAAC), which was a social-economic development plan. All three were related to military control of the civil population.

At about the same time as the Ríos Montt government declared the general amnesty (May 24, 1982) another law (May 21, 1982) improved the situation for relatives to soldiers who had been killed in combat. On July 1, 1982, at the onset of the “Victory 82” campaign, a partial mobilization for pressing citizens

20 Ibid.:50–51.
21 See Chapter 9 about the CPRs.
into service for the army was implemented. Now the army changed the strategy for recruitment of soldiers. The army commanders had earlier preferred recruitment of troops in the eastern part of the country, because the inhabitants there were considered to be more reliable than the highland population, which the army considered to be guerrilla sympathizers. But now the army decided to risk recruiting local soldiers from the areas of conflict. The danger with this strategy, seen from an army perspective, was that these soldiers could flee to the guerrillas with their weapons. This would not only increase the guerrillas' arsenal but also deliver intelligence observations on the army's installations and routines to the "enemy." However, the army high command decided to take this risk. The army reasoned that for every 100 locally-recruited soldiers, 15 might desert to the guerrillas during their first three months of service. But if more than 15 of every 100 ran away, the strategy would be reconsidered. According to General Hector Gramajo, this strategy turned out to be a success, especially in the Ixil area. After military service these soldiers would be instrumental in maintaining the "civil defense patrols." 22

This was the concrete content in the army's change from being an "army of occupation" to becoming an "army of integration." It is obvious that when some of the soldiers were Ixils it would become easier for the army to gain confidence among the population and to install the image that the soldiers protected the Ixils from the guerrillas. Both the strategy of having Ixil soldiers—and the army-controlled civil patrols in which Ixil men were forced to participate—meant that the Ixils now became targets for the guerrillas in a way that had been unknown earlier. This was a new situation, implying that Ixils could be killed in combat against the guerrillas, because they had been forced to participate on the side of the army.

The program for social and economic development in the conflict zones included the creation of so-called "model villages" and "development poles." 23 A development pole consisted of an area where model villages and infrastructure were constructed under the control of the army. The army designated the Ixil development pole as "the Ixil Triangle." To the north, in Ixchán, the development pole Playa Grande was established. This policy started during the Ríos Montt government, but was not totally implemented until the term of Mejía Victores. During the Ríos Montt regime, the reconstruction of villages that later would be formally inaugurated as model villages started. The first model village in the Ixil area, Acul, was inaugurated on December 22, 1983, a few months after the ouster of Ríos Montt. 24 Even if the Guatemalan army

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22 H.A. Gramajo Morales 1995:194–197. The Eastern parts, where the commanders had preferred to recruit troops, had been the guerrilla stronghold of the 1960s. After the army's victory these areas also had been a stronghold for the ideological right.

23 For convenience I will use the term "model village" also when talking about the developments during the Ríos Montt government, even if the term was not used until Mejía Victores took office. The phenomenon was the same, only that the army propaganda on developmentalism expanded during Mejía Victores.

24 See for example Ejército de Guatemala 1985.
never recognized the similarities, the model villages were clearly copies of the United States' strategic villages in Vietnam.

The first and foremost function of the model villages was military. The initial villages were located relatively close to the three Ixil towns, in areas to which the infrastructure more easily could be extended. New roads, and also airstrips, were constructed in the Ixil area. Thus, the army had easier access to the reconstructed villages, where they had established a permanent presence. Consequently, some of the first model villages were located along the old roads that connected the town of Nebaj with the towns of Cotzal and Chajul. In 1984, a road was constructed to connect Chajul with the model village of Juil to the north. Another newly constructed road connected Nebaj with Salquil to the northwest. On this road the model village of Tzalbal was located. Another road connected the model village Acul with Nebaj. The roads were constructed by the army together with the local population who received food, and sometimes a small amount of money in exchange for their work. This food was donated by international organizations. With few exceptions, everybody who did not live on these road extensions was considered to be a guerrilla sympathizer and treated accordingly by the army.25

The layout of the model villages differed from the traditional Ixil village. The streets were broad and straight, easing surveillance of the inhabitants and control of all movements. Electricity was a high priority. All model villages had illuminated streets. Even if both electricity and roads also were a service to the Ixil people, and were welcomed by many, the army's top priorities demonstrated the strategic goals behind the model villages. It is not self-evident that the Ixils themselves would have prioritized roads and electricity above other steps in economic development, such as real possibilities to support their families with food and clothing.

Traditionally, Ixils had lived in the near vicinity of the land which they cultivated. The concentration to model villages meant that people were settled some distances from their plots. They had to walk far in order to cultivate their land and they were required to return to the village before nightfall to not be accused of being guerrilla collaborators. In addition, many Ixils who had their holdings outside of the army-controlled area were prohibited from leaving the controlled zone. Many Ixils were hindered from farming. The depopulated countryside also meant that problems with wild animals destroying crops increased. Especially problematic were the wild pigs that could appear in large packs and also be dangerous to humans.

However, according to the army rhetoric, this system was the road to social and economic development in the conflict zones. The army defined its new

25 See map IGE 1989:72. The model villages located on the roads between the Ixil towns in 1984 were Rio Azul, Pulay and Xolcuay. Another model village, Chacalte, was connected only by a footpath to Juil. The people in this village were considered by the army to be more reliable than in the other model villages generally. The roads in the area, both the old ones and the new ones, were unpaved meaning that a car could pass with difficulties.
strategy for exerting influence among the Guatemalan people as follows: A. To extend the military presence into the whole country, which meant establishing new military zones with the purpose of guaranteeing the security and confidence of the population. B. To protect the production on the plantations. C. To control the movements of plantation workers, moving from the highlands to the coastal plantations. D. To coordinate military and psychological operations. E. Finally, the mission of the military operations was said to be to implement:

...operations of security and development, counter-subversive operations, and operations of ideological war. In other words, when once the security is obtained the Army penetrates into the population with the incentive of development, correcting the vulnerabilities that our society presents, because of the condition of carelessness in which it has lived. The subversion has exploited this [situation, authors remark] in a very efficient way, because it had already twelve years of well-made political work in the region. Consequently, it became necessary to counter-act it in the same way. This is why we enter an era of military and developmentalist ideological operations that until now have given very good results.

The army maintained that its developmentalist policy was something new in relation to traditional military civic action, because the plans were more extensive and corresponded to more long-term security and development goals. Nonetheless, this policy was clearly designed to meet the goals of the army, not the goals of the Ixil people or other Mayan groups in Guatemala.

The army-influenced Inter-institutional Coordinators were seen as a force for creating homogeneity in the public sector, and for avoiding duplication of the work. According to the army, they also represented a decentralization because they existed both on national, regional, municipal and local levels. However, the army was present at all different levels and the homogeneity of the public sector was a guarantee that no governmental agency would promote development according to goals other than the ones decided by the army. According to the army, no condition of “peace” was possible in Guatemala without its presence:

We have to understand that for the nation there does not exist a Fiat Pax like the Fiat Lux of the biblical creation. We maintain this concept and reaffirm that the future of Guatemala will originate from the pacification through the action of the Army.

According to the statement, peace for a nation is not the normal state of human society in God’s creation. Instead it is something that must be implemented by military force. The Guatemalan army expressed peace in military

27 Ibid.:57–58. Author’s translation from Spanish.
28 See for example Ejército de Guatemala 1985:63,68.
29 Ibid.:68,88.
30 Ejército de Guatemala 1985:129. Author’s translation from Spanish.
terms. Peace was something that must be conquered: “Re-conquest of the peace and the tranquillity.”31 “In the development poles the peace has returned to govern.”32 “The Army goes first. It combats and re-conquers the land and the peace.”33 Consequently “peace” would come to the Ixil area when the army had conquered the Ixil people and its territory.

Guns, Beans, and Spiritual Diet
Counterinsurgency and Food Assistance

In a situation when the United States not could assist the Guatemalan army with arms, it could at least help in the civic actions project. Humanitarian assistance to Guatemala was not prohibited by the U.S. Congress and food aid with origins in the United States became a major part in the counterinsurgency campaign in the Ixil region.

In the study Feeding the Crisis (1990), Rachel Garst and Tom Barry investigated U.S. food aid and farm policy in Central America.34 According to the authors, food aid since 1982 was an important element of the counterinsurgency campaign of the Guatemalan army. The first Guatemalan leader who recognized the value of food aid for military policy was Ríos Montt.35 We have already seen that food aid was distributed to people in the model villages when the army had burnt the Ixils' crops. Food was also used in Food-For-Work projects, for instance, in road construction.

Garst and Barry discusses the role of the food assistance from the World Food Program (WFP) of the United Nations and the USAID in the Guatemalan counterinsurgency campaign. WFP had operated in Guatemala since the early 1970s and before 1982 its distribution was channeled through the Ministry of Health. With Ríos Montt, however, the government decreed that all WFP food assistance should be channeled through the army-controlled National Reconstruction Committee (CRN). CRN allocated some of the assistance to other government agencies, while retaining allotments destined for the resettlements for creating model villages in the “Community Development Project” 784. A large part of the WFP food came from USAID.36 The army used food to entice refugees to return from the mountains and as a tool for consolidating control of community development projects.37

31 Ibid.:88.
32 Ibid.:126.
33 Ibid.:128.
34 R. Garst and T. Barry 1990.
36 Ibid.:164-166,232. According to Garst and Barry, WFP food donations increased in Central America from U.S. $ 5.5 millions in 1979 to more than U.S. $ 60 millions in 1987. In 1987 at least 70 percent of these donations were supplied by the United States. Their calculations were made up from the basis of sources from USDA, WFP and FAO.
37 Ibid.:172.
There are many problems related to food assistance, when seen in relation to community development, not only in model villages, but in Guatemala and the Third World generally. It has been criticized for being a paternalistic form of aid that creates passivity more than community development. It can destroy local markets for agricultural products, and even more important, it gives the power to the persons who control the food distribution. Another problem is the quality of the food. Because gifts means tax-reductions in the United States many companies give surpluses that they failed to sell inside the country. Also Food-For-Work poses problem, even if seen independently of the context of counterinsurgency. As stated by Garst and Barry:

Community-development experts stress the great importance of grass-roots participation in the design and implementation of programs. By focusing on the quick motivational fix of food FFW [Food-For-Work, author's remark] proponents are glossing over the important questions of organization and consciousness that in the long run may be essential components of the development effort.\(^\text{38}\)

It is hardly surprising that Guatemalan trade unions were outraged against Food-For-Work, while the Guatemalan army found it to be an appropriate method for its goals in the conflict zones. In the Food-For-Work projects the population was maintained in activities decided by the army. The population became dependent on the army not only by force, but because of material needs. Consequently, the army could acquire increased legitimacy. Food aid gives legitimacy to leaders who otherwise would have been ignored with the consequence that other leaders might be de-legitimized. Thus, food aid can be an effective weapon against resistance.

Because of criticisms against the Guatemalan army’s use of USAID assistance the U.S. Congress prohibited using AID funds for model villages and development poles in 1984. After this time AID was careful to not have direct relations with the army programs.\(^\text{39}\) Food assistance from USAID went to model villages through WFP and also through religious organizations, however. Since the 1960s, Catholic Relief Service (the development agency of the U.S. Catholic Bishop Conference) distributed USAID food in Guatemala. In the 1980s, the Guatemalan Caritas was the recipient of this food and distributed it further.\(^\text{40}\) From the time of Ríos Montt, USAID also started to distribute food through evangelical channels in Guatemala. One of those mentioned by Garst and Barry was FUNDAPI.\(^\text{41}\) As we have seen, this organization also received support from evangelical churches in the United States. During the

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\(^{38}\) Ibid.:136–137. Proponents of Food-For-Work argued that the program made the recipient feel more dignity than to just get a handout. The investigation by Garst and Barry in Central America demonstrated the opposite, however. In Guatemala City poor women worked with Food-For-Work projects, while the men felt too humiliated to participate.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.:171.

\(^{40}\) The Interhemispheric Education Resource Center 1988:27.

\(^{41}\) R. Garst and R. Barry 1990:120.
Ríos Montt government, FUNDAPI got an extraordinarily important role in the Ixil region, in a situation when competition from the Catholic Church was almost absent. FUNDAPI cooperated with the army in the reconstruction work in the Ixil area, including the Food-For-Work projects.

As is well-known, food aid, and also other kinds of material assistance, create special problems when given by religious organizations related to missionary work. Food aid invests power in the distributors while delivering an extraordinarily powerful tool for proselytizing among poor people. The religious agents of food aid will easily gain the confidence of the people, who will be more willing to convert.

The Work of FUNDAPI in the Ixil Region

As was described in Chapter 5, Fundación de Ayuda a los Pueblos Indígenas, FUNDAPI, was the Guatemalan partner to International Love Lift in the United States. FUNDAPI was established by three different organizations: Carroll Behrhorst Development Foundation (CBDF), Wycliffe/Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and the Verbo Church. Harris Whitbeck—who had been appointed by Ríos Montt as responsible for the relations between the army’s development plans and the non-governmental organizations, NGOs, in the conflict zones—was a key figure in the putting together of FUNDAPI. As far as I know, Whitbeck had not been involved in missionary work before the time of Ríos Montt. He had earlier been a sergeant in the U.S. Marines and later worked as a building contractor.42

At the beginning of the 1960s, Harris Whitbeck had been one of the founders of the Carroll Behrhorst Development Foundation and sat on the board of directors. This organization was working with health care. At the time of the Ríos Montt coup, Whitbeck was also the Guatemalan chairman of an organization named Partners of Americas. This organization had been established by the U.S. Department of State in the 1960s, under the years of the Alliance for Progress. The purpose had been to connect the United States with Latin American countries through business interests and social bonds. Through this organization, every Latin American country had a corresponding “sister” state in the U.S. The Guatemalan branch of Partners of Americas had a special relationship to Alabama.43

Harris Whitbeck knew the Elliott couple (who had worked for Wycliffe/Summer Institute of Linguistics in Nebaj until they evacuated during the 1980 war), because all of them were members of the same Union Church. Whitbeck recommended Ray Elliott to Ríos Montt and the result was that Ríos Montt appointed him to be the responsible advisor for the Assistance Plan for Civil Affairs, PAAC, in the Ixil area.44 In this way the three organiza-

42 D. Stoll 1990:191 concerning Whitbeck’s areas of work.
43 The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center 1988:53.
tions behind FUNDAPI became closely connected to the civic action aspect of the counterinsurgency campaign.\textsuperscript{45}

In practice, the Ríos Montt government confronted severe problems in the implementation of PAAC. The government could only afford to contribute one million quetzales for the reconstruction of the conflict zones. According to the CRN directive, this meant that only 500 villages with 50,000 affected by the war could get help.\textsuperscript{46} Here the role of non-governmental organizations, like FUNDAPI, came in.

A packet of documents sent from FUNDAPI to a pastor in California on January 3, 1983, gives a picture both of the work of the organization and of how one of its principal representatives in the Ixil area was thinking. The documents were sent by Paul Townsend, who had been working for Wycliffe/Summer Institute of Linguistics as a bible translator in Cotzal for many years. The following quotation shows how FUNDAPI viewed its operations in relation to the government. Because the government lacked resources for the aid programs it welcomed the help from FUNDAPI and other organizations:

FUNDAPI fills one of Guatemala’s most urgent needs—that of an experienced, financially responsible private entity that will honestly help refugees, orphans, widows, and persons who have lost their means of livelihood because of the guerrilla warfare to reestablish themselves. The government itself lacks both internal resources and foreign exchange to carry out all the relief and rehabilitation programs it would like to implement, and for that reason welcomes, and even solicits, FUNDAPI’s help, and through it the help of Christian churches, organizations, and individuals. FUNDAPI’s essential position in relation to the Guatemalan government is to cooperate with official agencies so that:

1. Programs in the public sector will not be duplicated by the private sector.
2. Government relief and reconstruction materials that cannot be moved or distributed effectively through official channels will be distributed rapidly by FUNDAPI for the benefit of the poor and needy, and
3. Access to areas of conflict or other areas closed to the general public will be open to FUNDAPI’s workers so that relief and rehabilitation efforts can proceed without delay.

\textsuperscript{44} R. Elliott, interview February 22, 1994. These events were confirmed by R. Elliott himself, but he did not mention PAAC or Harris Whitbeck. R. Elliott said that he did not know Ríos Montt personally until he was recommended by a person in the church. Then he got a personal invitation from Ríos Montt to be responsible for the contact between the government and the Ixil population. He entered in this position in July, 1982.

\textsuperscript{45} In November 1982, the CRN direction informed the Guatemalan press about the history and the future plans of CRN, including the role of PAAC in relation to the strategy with “rifles and beans.” The role of the army was to struggle against the armed forces, to concentrate the peasant population in refugee camps, and to organize the civil patrols. The role of CRN was to start program directed toward three aspects: 1. Promote social development, 2. Create a front against violence, 3. Establish bases for a democratization. These three aspects formed the content in PAAC. At this time the CRN director was General Federico Fuentes Corado, while Eduardo Wohler was the vice director. Inforpress Centroamericana November 18, 1982:7. From what we have seen from the military strategy above we can conclude that the content in PAAC had to do with the establishment of army control in the conflict zones and FUNDAPI thus became involved in this work.

\textsuperscript{46} Inforpress Centroamericana, November 18, 1982:7.
In short, FUNDAPI works with, but not as a part of, official refugee and relief programs.47

Because FUNDAPI is made up of individuals and organizations that are recognized experts with long experience of relief among Guatemalan Indians, the government recognizes its credibility and:

... has authorized it not only to provide assistance to refugees and needy people in areas of restricted access (because of wartime conditions), but also has given it permission to facilitate and expedite government relief efforts in those zones. The government knows that FUNDAPI works honestly and efficiently to get emergency aid such as clothing, medicine, and building supplies to where it is most needed. The Foundation's directorship has felt the government's favorable attitude toward the organization is a very strong moral—although not financial—encouragement and support for FUNDAPI to utilize its expertise and resources to do for Guatemala what Nehemiah did for Jerusalem: rebuild by "royal permission."48

The work of FUNDAPI in the Ixil area basically concerned reconstruction of houses and infrastructure, food aid, and medical aid. Especially remarkable was FUNDAPI’s concern for “Infrastructure Expansion”:

The productive green Ixil area is quite isolated from the rest of the country. On the fringe of road and telegraph communication and severed by a 9500 foot range of mountains this area has been easy for the revolutionary forces to cut off from the rest of the country. — — — The mayors and even the army have asked FUNDAPI to help in extending the infrastructure of roads and airstrips in the Ixil area because they do not have the resources. The Lord provided a D-7 caterpillar through a generous donation from a church in the States. This machine is on its way down now. The Guatemalan National Forest Service has given us the use of a Case 850 tractor with which we are building the airstrips in Chajul and Cotzal. All we need to do is provide the diesel and oil!49

Other concerns of FUNDAPI were education, health care and medical aid. If all the extensive project plans revealed in these documents had materialized, FUNDAPI almost would have owned the Ixil area and its inhabitants. FUNDAPI’s project plans involved literacy teachers, who would be paid 125 U.S. dollars a month (“we could use 1000”), financial support in the form of loans to 78 persons during 24 months for vocational training, education of 30 nurses, salaries to five medical doctors, and eight office employees to work with the medical programs. In addition came construction materials, food aid, vitamins, drinking-water systems, latrines, lumber mills, and so on.

The project applications did not mention that the problems of the Ixil people were aggravated because of the war and because they were forced to live in the army-controlled settlements. Both malnutrition and disease had increased because of the war, and the health situation became worse when

47 FUNDAPI 1983c:1.
48 FUNDAPI 1983d:12.
49 FUNDAPI 1983e:1.
people were concentrated in areas with insufficient pure water. In addition, many skilled persons among the Ixils had been killed in the war or were refugees in the mountains.  

However, FUNDAPI’s projects never became that extensive, because financial backing did not materialize. The important contributions by FUNDAPI were in the areas of construction materials for housing, food aid, and medical aid. The construction materials went to the army-controlled villages, and part of the food aid as payment to Ixils for work on public projects, like road construction.

The documents from FUNDAPI included a photographic presentation of the Ixil area. After a more general presentation, a photo shows six trucks that FUNDAPI had rented to transport materials to the Ixil people. The photographs document a road before and after the government had paid 400 Ixil workers 2.5 dollars per day “to carve a wider and more direct road towards the line of supply.”

The construction of a smaller landing strip for airplanes in Chajul was also photographed. According to the text, this landing strip was built on the initiative of FUNDAPI, while the government stood for the majority of the cost. The government paid 50 workers to build the strip. More photographs documented food distribution to the war refugees:

... a program where Churches and States work together to meet the needs of Guatemala’s highland Indian People. Guatemalan corn and beans; American dry peas, powdered milk and flour; and World Relief donations of corn all transported through our Foundation, as the notice on the sack says: “In the name of the Lord.”

On the following page two photographs of the road network and abandoned houses are found, followed by a text explaining FUNDAPI’s role in securing the transports of food provisions, reconstruction materials, latrines, medicines, and so on. “Some abandoned houses along the way remind us that still only the towns of refuge are protected by the army.” Photographs illustrating the unloading of trucks in Chajul were followed by the text:

Our Foundation pays $ 150 for the privilege of helping make this food available to the Ixil community which has embarked on the policy of gradual economic evolutionary development. The government donates the food in exchange for work on public projects. — — We always give a word of personal witness to the recipients of the gifts of how and why the Lord has moved us to bring help to them.

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50 For critiques of FUNDAPI and the work of Summer Institute of Linguistics in the Ixil area, see IGE, January 1983 and July 1983. IGE criticizes these organizations for being part of the counterinsurgency strategy and not aiming for any genuine development of the Ixil area.
52 Ibid.:5.
53 Ibid.:8.
54 Ibid.:9.
55 Ibid.:10.
Thus, the aid was always accompanied by evangelization. The documents show that FUNDAPI worked with the army in all areas of material assistance and intended to align themselves with a large part of the population as paid workers. The civil society had been destroyed and FUNDAPI worked together with the army to reconstruct it in accordance with the new blueprint, with major ingredients of military control and evangelization.

While many evangelical organizations certainly cooperated with the army without understanding their role in the counterinsurgency strategy, this was not the case with FUNDAPI. Its representatives demonstrated a high degree of consciousness and understanding of the events. Whitbeck was clearly a counterinsurgency strategist. It is not likely that Elliott had got his position without knowledge about how to deal with the situation. The above statements by Townsend demonstrate that also he was aware that FUNDAPI participated in a counterinsurgency war.

FUNDAPI’s version of Ixil life outside of the army-controlled areas was that the Ixils were confined to EGP “prison camps” in the mountains. This view was spread to the U.S. financial backers. The guerrillas were blamed for the violence while the army abuses not were mentioned.57

Ray Elliott strongly defended the army operations in the Ixil area during and after the Ríos Montt regime. One example was an article published in Christianity Today, 1984. The article was written by Tom Minnery for defending Ríos Montt, and he used the Elliott couple as the most important source of information. The article also tried to counteract a critical report on the Ríos Montt government, written by Allan Nairn and published in New Republic (11 April, 1983). According to Tom Minnery, Allan Nairn’s critique caused an irreparable damage to the Ríos Montt regime, because New Republic, in spite of its small circulation, was very influential in Washington:

The article helped inflame congressional feeling against the government, and it caused some conservative Christian leaders, who had no personal understanding of what was happening in Guatemala, to grow in their disgust for Ríos Montt.58

The article by Allan Nairn probably severely damaged FUNDAPI, which became evident in the lack of support from churches in the United States. The diminishing support was already apparent before the ouster of Ríos Montt.

According to Minnery, the news reports were biased to the disadvantage of Ríos Montt, which created confusion among U.S. evangelicals who had been pleased to see a committed Christian as head of state. A large part of the critique against Ríos Montt was unfair, he maintained. The difficult task for Ríos Montt was to fight the “Marxist revolution” and at the same time punish army troops that abused “innocent Indians.” He was successful in this task

56 Ibid.:11-12.
57 See for example E. Núñez [1984]; Frontline Report [1985].
and both the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala and evangelical missionaries reported that the human rights atrocities in the country decreased.\textsuperscript{59} Amnesty International uncritically accepted reports from the guerrilla's allies, in spite of the fact that anti-government propaganda was a cornerstone of the guerrilla's strategy. Amnesty did not listen to the Guatemalan government or to the U.S. Embassy, according to Minnery.\textsuperscript{60}

In the opinion of Minnery, Ray and Helen Elliott were better sources for understanding what was going on in the Ixil area. The Elliotts had observed a profound change in the way the army treated the Indians after Ríos Montt came to power. When abuses occurred, the Indians reported to the Elliotts, who complained to the government. "They found their complaints were heard in the National Palace."\textsuperscript{61} The article by Nairn gave the impression that the Ixils were against the army's efforts to relocate them away from guerrilla-controlled areas in the mountains. But this was wrong, according to Minnery. Ray Elliott had told him that there were abundant testimonies demonstrating that thousands of Indians with joy would have fled guerrilla-controlled areas and turned themselves into the army if they had thought that they could risk "the brutal guerrilla retaliation that would surely come. Some of those Indians did take the risk."\textsuperscript{62}

The article by Minnery demonstrates that Ray Elliott did not maintain neutrality between the army and the EGP and that he was motivated not only by humanitarian feelings, but by the ambition to fight the guerrillas.\textsuperscript{63} When I interviewed Ray Elliott he said that some things the army did in fact were necessary. He also said that the work of Summer Institute of Linguistics was not primarily about political change, but that this was a by-product. One can choose sides—the Holy Spirit or not. Elliott related he sympathized with the activities of the Ixils, but not with other forces like Catholics and Communists.\textsuperscript{64}

When David Stoll reported from his visits in the Ixil area during the time of Ríos Montt, he wrote that the official FUNDAPI accounts—which were spread to visiting tourists and journalists—were that the Ixil people had been caught between the two armies and that the violence was provoked by the

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.:16.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.:17.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.:19.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.:20.
\textsuperscript{63} The following example illustrates the view of Ray Elliott: "Major Arias became commander of the Nebaj region in July, 1982, two months before Nairn did his interviewing in the area. The Elliotts knew Arias personally, were pleased at his attitude toward the Indians, and they knew that the Indians in return had come to trust the soldiers under Arias. Ray Elliott had also talked to Arias about the Sumal Grande operation. In it, the army was trying to free 2000 Indians who were being herded forcibly toward the Mexican border by the guerrillas who presumably would hide among them and be fed and clothed free by international relief organizations that were active on the Guatemala-Mexico border. This was standard guerrilla strategy to escape the army. T. Minnery 1984:21.
\textsuperscript{64} R. Elliott, interview February 22, 1994.
guerrillas. EGP kept people imprisoned and killed the ones who tried to escape.\textsuperscript{65}

The SIL missionaries were horrified when they heard the evangelicals tell stories about the army abuses, according to Stoll. But they considered an army victory to be a lesser evil than continued warfare, with its cost for the civilians, or a guerrilla victory. The missionaries made recommendations to Ríos Montt on how to treat the Ixil population, including to not shoot unarmed civilians, to remunerate forced labor, provide refugees with food and blankets, and provide the civil patrols with real arms, so they need not fight the guerrilla with machetes and hunting weapons. In Stoll's judgment the advice from the SIL missionaries was followed. The missionaries also managed to obtain the replacement of the previous army commander of Nebaj, who was accused of murdering ninety-seven civilians.\textsuperscript{66}

Stoll's statements do not contradict my own conclusions that at least some of the representatives of FUNDAPI very consciously participated in the counterinsurgency campaign. It is possible that they did this and at the same time tried to mitigate the worst effects of the war. Even if the struggle against the guerrillas had a higher priority than humanitarian perspectives, this does not necessarily imply that the latter were absent. In addition, the missionaries obtained more legitimacy among the Ixils when they acted as an intermediary that could temper the army.

**FUNDAPI and the Battle for Salquil**

According to Stoll, the SIL missionaries wanted to convince the evangelicals in the guerrilla-controlled area of Salquil to surrender. The argument that the army now respected the lives of innocent civilians ought to reach them so that they would return to army-controlled area. Ray Elliott recommended the army to use a light airplane to drop information to the people.\textsuperscript{67} If the airplane was used is not recorded, but on the night of August 3, 1982, the pastor in the Full Gospel Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) led a group of 237 evangelicals from the guerrilla-controlled village of Salquil to Nebaj, after a radio call from the army that all people in the area were summoned to the town of Nebaj. According to the pastor:

> We were put in to the position of being the President's enemies by those people [the guerrillas, author's remark]. As a matter of fact, they insisted that we should oppose the President, that we shouldn't be friendly with him, they said. But we kept remembering the Bible says that we should obey the President, for example that we should get our new papers, because the Bible tells us that people don't come to power just because they decide to, but rather that God is the one who puts them in power, and it made us sad to be made out to be the

\textsuperscript{65} D. Stoll 1988:101.
\textsuperscript{66} D. Stoll 1990:199.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
President's enemies, it was hard for us. For the Bible tells us that we shouldn't join ourselves to the guerrillas—that's what the Bible tells us. But here we were in a situation where they'd kill anyone who refused to do what they said. And they've actually killed some of us who didn't go along with them, and this bothered us a lot. We talked it over, and decided to leave. Thank God for the way he helped us do it.68

The reason why the pastor and his church had come into conflict with EGP was, according to David Stoll, that the church services were so long that they had become a hinder to “the revolutionary task.” In addition, four church members had been killed by EGP, when they were found filling in trenches. The reason for this action was that the church members were afraid that the army would come and find these trenches. Only a couple of months earlier, in May, the army had found a storage space for EGP nearby, and because of this killed twenty-nine church members.69

According to Stoll, the situation meant that the members of the Church of God felt that they had come between two armed forces. EGP had said that they would be winning the war by the time for the election of 1982, but they did not. Instead Ríos Montt came and offered amnesty. Stoll viewed the change of side that the evangelicals in Salquil made as an example of the growing discontent with EGP among the Ixils. The people wanted to be on the winning side. The persons Stoll interviewed argued that EGP told the truth about the economic situation, but that they felt deceived.70 Stoll also maintains that the evangelicals in the Ixil area never expressed themselves as “counterinsurgency” strategists, but had a language expressing neutrality.71

The above statement by the Salquil pastor does not reflect neutrality, but a stand against the guerrillas and in favor of the army. It is not necessarily representative for all evangelicals, but the hardships of the members in this church clearly demonstrated the difficulty to be neutral in this war. Even if the change of side of these evangelicals can be explained by their problems with the guerrillas, it was barely a coincidence that they were evangelicals and decided to flee to the army. Their religion provided a different interpretation of the situation in comparison with a large part of the members in Catholic Action. These evangelicals rapidly had chosen to believe in the amnesty offered by the army.

As in other parts of the Ixil area, the amnesty for people in Salquil meant that the army could use the defectors as guides. The army could thus surround 1,740 persons in Salquil, who were forced to give up the resistance.72

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68 R. Elliott 1982:25–26, who met the pastor directly afterwards and made an interview.
69 D. Stoll 1990:200. According to the interview made by R. Elliott 1982, the pastor also emphasised the hardships of the population in Salquil. They had scarcity of food and medicine.
70 D. Stoll 1992:111.
71 Ibid.:149–150.
72 Ibid.:110, about the number 1,740 persons.
The Evangelicals and the Civil Patrols

The establishment of "civil patrols" (Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil, PACs) and the amnesty that was declared by Ríos Montt in May, 1982, were the two important decisive elements which turned the tide in favor of the army. The establishment of civil patrols had started already during the Lucas García regime, but it was not until Ríos Montt that there was larger-scale development.

As has been emphasized earlier in this study, the civil patrols were paramilitary units; a civil militia in which the male population (in some cases also women) was forced to participate. The patrols frequently performed the dangerous work that the army did not want to do itself, such as conducting night patrols which risked encountering guerrilla attacks. The civil patrols also had to participate in attacks against the guerrillas and against displaced people. They could be ordered to kill "subversive" individuals and they were obliged to inform the army about events in the village and its environs.73 Because of the civil patrols, the population was forced to side with the army against the guerrillas. The role of the civil patrols did not stop with the military functions, however. In the words of Cesar Sereseres:

> The civilian defense units were not just paramilitary organizations; they had become political entities at the local level—the only organizations at that level that could counter the guerrillas' local cadre, the Fuerzas Irregulares Locales (FIL). At present, it is not clear whether these defense units have become a counterpoise to the FIL or remain simply a military extension of the armed forces. However, the CRN prefers that they take on more than just military functions.74

In a situation when the civil society and the functioning of political institutions on municipal and local levels had broken down in the conflict zones, the civil patrols became important forces that dominated the life in the villages. The patrols' operational procedures varied in different areas depending on the local conditions and on the character of different commanders. The important community leaders were forced to head the civil patrols. Consequently the village security depended on the leadership's reluctance or enthusiasm in embracing the army directives. Civil patrol leaders could be financially rewarded by the army, for instance, receive property expropriated from displaced people in return for their willing cooperation. The position could also be used for eliminating enemies, promoting one's own religious tradition and for persecuting religious adversaries. All possible avenues to spread discord among the Mayas in Guatemala were explored by the civil patrols. Religion was one of them, but it should not be forgotten that religion could not compete in importance with the issue of land.

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73 See for example Americas Watch 1986.

The first civil patrol in the Ixil region was established between December 1981 and January 1982 at the La Perla plantation in Chajul. The plans had already existed for a time, but were postponed because of the risks involved in arming the men. The risk that the men would flee to the guerrillas with their weapons was overwhelming. That is why it was not by chance that the organization of civil patrols started at La Perla. The population on the plantations was more easy to control. In 1982, the troops from La Perla together with the civil patrols instigated numerous massacres in villages in Chajul and Nebaj. The members of the La Perla civil patrol received fertile land belonging to the destroyed and abandoned villages as a reward for their participation. That the army gave civil patrols land belonging to displaced people is a fact that has been repeated on many occasions in Guatemala, and which was a source for divisions and conflicts on the local levels. After the establishment of PAC at La Perla, civil patrols were organized in the three municipal centers in the Ixil region. Cotzal was the first one, and then followed Chajul and Nebaj.

The beginning of the civil patrols in Cotzal occurred as follows. Soon after an EGP attack against the military garrison in Cotzal, on January 19, 1982, a new military commander who called himself Captain Alfredo arrived in Cotzal. According to Stoll, this captain addressed all religious leaders at a gathering. The ultimatum was that if the leaders did not convince their followers to support the army, all would be killed. Captain Alfredo did not promise that submission would save their lives, but advised them to pray and “ask God for mercy and peace.” He finished by saying, “I’m not going to tell you that you’re in the clear, no way. Only if you have faith in God. That’s all. Just remember two things. Maybe death, maybe life.”

In a loyalty ceremony in the plaza a few days later, the people of Cotzal promised Captain Alfredo to bring in the guerrillas as “a sign that Cotzal is supporting Guatemala and also supporting its army.” According to Stoll, even if he summoned Catholics as well as evangelicals, “what he wanted from them was at least vaguely evangelical in tone: a confession of personal responsibility for la subversion—’put your hand on your heart’—followed by conversion to the army’s side—correct your members.”

In Cotzal, Pastor Nicolas Toma of the Full Gospel Church of God, had an important role in the formation of the PAC. Nicolas Toma had earlier been a PID candidate for mayor in the election of 1980 and later he would be killed by the guerrillas. The first commander of the PAC came from the same church as Nicolas Toma. The army chose another church member to become

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76 In Chajul the villages of Iлом, Tzotzil, Juá, Chel, Amajchel, Santa Clara, Xecoyen, Cabá, Covadona and Estrella Polar were destroyed. In Nebaj the villages of Pombaltze, Santa Marta, Sajsibán, Ixtupil, Bajchocolá and Xeucalbitz were destroyed. IGE 1989:39.
77 PAC at La Perla got land close to the destroyed villages of Ixtupil, Visich, Juá, and Sajsibán. IGE 1989:39.
79 Ibid.:93–95.
mayor of the municipality.\(^8^0\) This church had been involved with the Summer Institute of Linguistics through Paul Townsend for a long time.

In Chajul the Catholic charismatic movement held a central place in the establishment of PAC. Two important leaders in the movement, Domingo Rivera and his brother-in-law Tomas Asicona were instrumental. When Ríos Montt came to power, Domingo Rivera became chief of the civil patrol and later mayor of the municipality. Tomas Asicona was appointed to the state council of Ríos Montt. About this time, he also became responsible for the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Chajul.

Domingo Rivera was later killed by the army. There exist two versions of his death. According to the army, Domingo Rivera had not participated in an armed confrontation in which soldiers and civil patrollers died, because he was drunk. This was a sign that he had conspired with the guerrillas, maintained the army. The version told by his friends was that he suffered remorse about how he had acted against the population in Chajul and wanted to make amends. The army had a plan to take land from Chajul and give it to some Ladinos. Rivera counteracted this plan and consequently the army said that he was a guerrilla collaborator.\(^8^1\)

In Nebaj, the PAC from the start was organized from a Ladinos base. This group still existed in Nebaj, but had almost disappeared in the other two Ixil municipalities during the war. To begin with the army organized the civil patrol with a few persons who were forced to kill people considered to be “subversives.” The result was panic, and a lot of people fled the town. PAC then organized those remaining in the town.\(^8^2\)

Thus, the army chose religious leaders who would tow the ideological line of the army. These leaders had no choice but to cooperate with the army if they wanted to stay in the area. But there was also an element of personal gain. They could extend their influence and improve their economic standard. The triangle relation between the civil patrols, the Church of God and Catholic Charismatics in Cotzal and Chajul, and the Summer Institute of Linguistics is noteworthy. However, this was normal, considering the kind of work the Summer Institute of Linguistics was involved in at this time.

### The Relation Between Religious and Political Change

#### Everybody Wants to be an “Innocent Indian”

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the number of evangelicals in the Ixil area grew from about 3 percent to approximately 20 percent of the population within the two years between 1979 to 1981. One year later, in 1982, when Ríos Montt was in power, about 95 percent of the population in Nebaj said that

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\(^8^0\) D. Stoll 1990:196–197; D. Stoll 1992:95.

\(^8^1\) Catholic priest F, interview June 22, 1992.

they were evangelicals. In the refugee camp Las Violetas, near the town of Nebaj, everybody was evangelical during the time of the Ríos Montt government. These numbers might be over-exaggerated but indicate a strong evangelical growth. In contrast to Nebaj and Cotzal, evangelicalism had a limited influence in Chajul. But here the Catholic charismatic movement instead was influential.

It is obvious that the large number of evangelicals had to do with the war. Even though the army had promoted evangelicalism during the Lucas García government it was not until the Ríos Montt regime when a clear identification emerged between the army and evangelicalism. During Lucas García's time, the evangelicals had been more reluctant to support the army, and some of them had sympathized with or supported EGP.

With Ríos Montt, the evangelicals were given a rationale to be on the army's side, because its highest authority was an evangelical president. Most factors supported a conversion to evangelicalism; evangelicals had power, without competition from the Catholic Church, to distribute the much needed goods, like food and medicine. From the time of the Ríos Montt government, the evangelicals also gained a more privileged position in relation to the traditional religion. Religious traditionalists had been persecuted like the rest of the population during the Lucas García government, although not the same way as the catechists. The system implemented with Ríos Montt, when people's free movement in the area was severely limited, was a major blow to the traditional religion. The limited freedom of movement meant that people had no access to the sacred places in the mountains, where traditional rituals used to take place. An advantage of evangelicalism in this situation was that unlike the Ixil religion and Catholicism, it did not need a special sacred place for its religious rituals. An evangelical congregation could meet anywhere, in a private house, if need be. Of course, Catholics and traditionalists could meet in any house, but still their religious rituals and traditions were more related to the sacred spaces of church buildings or the places in the mountains. It must be remembered that the privileged position of the evangelicals concerned life in the army-controlled areas. In massacres, evangelicals were treated like the rest of the population, that is, they were killed.

According to one of the former Catholic charismatic leaders in Chajul, the problem for the Ixils before Ríos Montt had been the army, while the guerrillas had struggled to change the situation in Guatemala. But with Ríos Montt, the change came and the guerrillas were not longer justified. "With arms we cannot change much," he said. According to an evangelical pastor in Chajul, the EGP had promised the Ixils land and an overall improved situation. But

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84 Ibid.:177.  
85 T. Asicona, interview March 25, 1991. At the time of the interview he was pastor in the Pentecostal church Jesus Heals and Saves that had joined the Verbo Church.
the promises had not been realized. Instead the situation became worse with the army repression. 86

I met many persons in the Ixil area who had surprisingly positive opinions about Ríos Montt. This is valid both for Ixils and Ladinos, Catholics and evangelicals, women and men. When Ríos Montt came to power, a great change for the better occurred, according to them. The new government appointed a new military commander to Nebaj and he had more respect for the Ixils, I have been told. This was the earlier mentioned Major Tito Arias. Now the people could leave their houses with a torch after sunset (but not with a lamp), to conduct business, without risking accusations of being guerrillas. The army also brought games and lotteries that the inhabitants could use free of charge. The amnesty law of Ríos Montt was positively viewed by many Ixils.

Part of the background to the positive views of Ríos Montt was that the Ixil towns during his time in power experienced the same decrease in violence as the capital and other cities in Guatemala. The inhabitants in the towns did not necessarily know what happened on the countryside. Another fact was that a large part of the scorched earth campaign in the Ixil area already had taken place before Ríos Montt came to power. The army's time plan for the Ixil region was running some months ahead compared to Ixčán to the north, where the scorched earth campaign had barely began before the Ríos Montt government. Consequently, some of the displaced people in the Ixil region had only experienced the massacres of the Lucas García government, not the ones by the Ríos Montt government.

In addition, the defeat of Ríos Montt in the election fraud in 1974 had been an important turning point for increased resistance in Guatemala. Now, when Ríos Montt had got the position he had rightfully won, the change would come and there was no need for continued armed struggle, according to some views.

Positive statements about Ríos Montt frequently seem like irony (but they are not), when people talk about him as a savior. Because the Ixils were of the opinion that the Lucas García government had decided to exterminate them, Ríos Montt was a savior, because he stopped these plans. According to some Catholic Ixils: “Ríos Montt came and saved us a little bit.”87 The salvation was thus relative. People were killed during Ríos Montt's time, but the Ixils in army-controlled areas did not believe there was a threat of genocide. He was like the God of Noah, who killed the sinners with the flood, but saved the righteous ones. According to a Catholic priest, the evangelicals among the Ixils viewed the army as a beast that had demonstrated satanic power and must be stopped. Obedience and prayer would calm the beast.88 According to this view, prayers to God would apparently make God stop the beast. In this context, Ríos Montt could be seen as an answer to prayer.

87 Catholic catechists C, interview April 24, 1994.
The theme that EGP betrayed the Ixil people I heard from both Catholics and evangelicals. People expressed bitterness and disappointment over the fact that EGP did not win the war. They expected a revolution and instead they became even poorer and targets for increased repression. As explained by an inhabitant in Nebaj, people took a stand against the EGP because of fear and the belief that EGP could not win, not because they were unsympathetic to the guerrillas' political demands. 89

Even if all Ixils in army-controlled areas were forced to submit to the army, it was the evangelical language that best could express this subordination. This does not necessarily imply that submission to authorities was something inherent in the evangelical language. Rather it had to do with the conversion from one religious tradition to another that came to express a conversion on the political level as submission to the army. This may be how most peoples through the history have been forced to express their submission to conquering countries or empires: by conversion to their gods or religion. The Ixils had done it before, at the time of the Spanish conquest when they had to submit to Catholicism, and perhaps also when they were conquered by the Quiché kingdom. Thus, evangelicalism is not unique.

Different religious traditions require different degrees of profundity in conversion, however. The radical Augustinian conversion, required of evangelicals, demands a total change of direction in life. Without God, the human being is the total captive of evil and sin. To turn to God means to make a 180° degree-change of direction in life, to be born again and live by the grace of God. That this kind of conversion has been interpreted in various ways through the history of Christianity is obvious. The opinions as to the most grievous sins vary with times, societies and communities as does the meaning of living by the grace of God. In Guatemala the evangelical interpretation of this conversion is marked by the imported view of the North American missionaries. The indigenous culture and Communism, generously defined, and frequently also Catholicism, belong to the evils that must be discarded in the conversion. It was this kind of evangelicalism that accommodated the intentions of the army in the Ixil region.

Evangelicalism as a Survival Strategy

Based on the presentation above, Ixils' disillusionment with the EGP can be summarized as follows: Why did the EGP say that they would win the war when they did not? Had we known that they would not win we had never given them our support. Apparently the Ixils wanted to be on the winning side, which is understandable. To convert to an evangelical church became a survival strategy for the Ixils, seen from several different aspects. In the words of David Stoll, the army “turned politically conformist fundamentalism into a

'dustpan,' into which its repression pushed remnants of the consciousness-raising movements and other Ixil survivors.\textsuperscript{90}

According to Stoll, the cost of revolutionary war was too high for the Ixil population and this was the most important argument behind conversion to evangelicalism. Consequently, the causes for evangelical growth need not to be sought in Washington or the North American religious right.\textsuperscript{91} Stoll also emphasized that the political violence was only one catalyst for evangelical growth. In many parts of Guatemala, the growth of evangelical churches did not coincide with the war. Thus, the underlying causes for the increase in evangelicalism must be looked for elsewhere, according to him.\textsuperscript{92}

Certainly there were other factors behind evangelical growth than political violence. During the period covered in this chapter, however, evangelicalism as a survival strategy in the war was clearly the most outstanding factor. I agree with Stoll on this point. However, Stoll does not discuss the details in the army's counterinsurgency strategy, nor the consequences of the impact of FUND API. Evangelicalism as a survival strategy corresponded with the army strategy, which cannot be isolated from Washington or from the U.S. religious right. Evangelicalism was a survival strategy, because it was made to be one. The army made it the only fully legitimate religious expression for the Ixils.

According to Timothy Steigenga, referring to the general situation in Guatemala, the Guatemalan state used "Protestantism" as a method to expand its social control, precisely because it was a survival strategy for large sectors of the population and as such could be an effective tool.\textsuperscript{93} This fits well with the situation in Ixil. Consequently, evangelicalism as a survival strategy, in my view, should not be seen in contradistinction to the forces coming in from above, like the army and FUNDAPI.

Support for the thesis of evangelicalism as a survival strategy for the Ixils may also be found in the cultural and psychological dimensions of survival. Evangelicalism may be interpreted as an offer of physical aid as well as a spiritual solution to the situation that gave people a way to cope with their memories in the context of war and military control. The solution was to forget, to be silent, and to create an emotional outlet for this psychological suppression in the Pentecostal worship. The evangelical churches did not become channels for reports about human rights abuses and they did not offer any platform to discuss the situation.

**Evangelicalism and the Return of the Catholic Church**

During the time of Ríos Montt, a new Catholic bishop was appointed to El Quiché. This bishop did not believe what priests and catechists said about the problems in the diocese. The first tour in El Quiche was made in an army

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\textsuperscript{90} D. Stoll 1990:202.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.:203.

\textsuperscript{92} D. Stoll 1993:192–193.

\textsuperscript{93} T. Steigenga 1994:158ff.
It was still not possible for the Catholic Church to work in the Ixil region, however. In theory, the church was invited to return, but in practice its safety could not be guaranteed. Catholic priests visited the area occasionally, but none took up residency. The Catholics were still persecuted and the evangelicals favored.

During the Mejía Victores government, the situation changed a little bit. Now the official Catholic Church could return and continue its work, but this could only occur with extreme caution. The priests, who earlier had worked in the area, could not return. Instead new priests arrived. It was impossible for them to continue any work to encourage community development and theological reflection on the situation, however, and the catechists did not dare to do anything that might irritate the army.

During the Mejía Victores government, the involvement of the Catholic Church in the aid projects in the Ixil area increased, while the role of FUNDAPI decreased. Even if the Catholic representatives distanced themselves from the army and reported human rights abuses it is likely that its material aid to the people was the catalyst for drawing attention to the Catholic Church just as FUNDAPI had with the evangelical churches. In contrast to the evangelicals, the Catholics in the Ixil region did not mix material aid with evangelization efforts. But the counterinsurgency context made the Catholic Church a participant in the army's strategy as a distributor of food and other goods to model villages and refugee camps. The power of the Catholic Church derived from its role as an agent for distributing material aid in a situation where it was impossible to work with grass-roots organizing and genuine community development.

According to Stoll, 78 percent of the inhabitants in Las Violetas were Catholics at the end of 1984 when evangelical aid had been replaced by Catholic aid. As mentioned earlier, all the inhabitants had been evangelicals during the Ríos Montt government. The situation can be interpreted as a natural return to Catholicism, as the influence of FUNDAPI and other evangelical organizations decreased. However, it can also be interpreted as the Ixils turning from one church to another depending on the circumstances, and on which church for the moment best could serve their interests, or both combined.

The situation in the Ixil region posed a problem for the Catholic Church as well as for other development and service agencies that did not want to participate in the army's project. It was impossible to bring in humanitarian assistance without becoming a part of the counterinsurgency project. At the same time the Ixils were in desperate need of aid, not least the displaced, who recently had arrived to army-controlled areas. Some agencies decided that they had to work in the area for humanitarian reasons, while others preferred not to involve themselves in the Ixil region.

95 D. Stoll 1993:178.
Around 1983–1984, 23 percent of the population in Chajul, 30 percent in Cotzal, and 37 percent in Nebaj said that they were evangelical. In Nebaj and Cotzal the return of the Catholic Church had caused a decrease in evangelical influence, even if it continued to be very strong. Now the evangelicals had more competition. But in Chajul the arrival of a new Catholic priest in 1984 sparked evangelical growth. The reason was a conflict between the newly-arrived priest and the Catholic charismatic movement led by Tomas Ascona. The result was a splintering of the movement with a faction creating the Pentecostal church Jesus Heals and Saves. This was only the final step to complete a conversion process that already had taken place years ago, however.

Already from the beginning, the new church had relations to the Verbo Church. A Verbo elder reported an event in 1985, when over 200 persons, including elders and deacons, gathered in Chajul to become baptized in water. According to the Verbo elder, everything had started ten months earlier, when Tomas Ascona had introduced himself to the Verbo Church in the capital. “Today, the new church ‘Jesus Sana y Salva (Jesus Heals and Saves),’ is the shining light of Jesus in this remote and war-stricken Indian land.”

FUNDAPI continued to work in the Ixil area after Ríos Montt, even if the work was more limited than before. In 1985, the Verbo magazine Front Line Report asked for help to FUNDAPI by telling about the hardships of the Ixil refugees who tried to escape from “the communist guerrillas” who held people in “prisoner’s camps” in the mountains:

Now, once again, there is a flow of refugees from the mountains. This has created more needs at the refugee camps, and FUNDAPI is helping to meet some of them. We have supplied thousands of sheets of tin roofing, food, clothes, latrines, tools, medicines, installed potable water systems, and built an airstrip. But the most important need FUNDAPI’s workers have met is giving these people the love of Jesus.

The Role of Evangelicalism in the Turn of the War

During the Ríos Montt regime, developments turned in favor of the army and against the guerrillas in all parts of Guatemala. At the end of the Mejía Victores government, the army controlled most of the El Quiche region, including the Ixil area. EGP did not recognize the defeat, but continued its struggle. Many among the displaced people in the Ixil area still expected a revolutionary change. Battles and incidents close to army-controlled areas seem to indicate that EGP still enjoyed widespread underground support among the population within the model villages.

97 A. De la Guardia [1985].
But the fact was that EGP had lost a major part of its support among the population. This had happened in a military contest in which EGP fell short. EGP apparently had underestimated both the brutality and the sophistication of the army’s counterinsurgency capabilities. The guerrilla movement did not have the military resources to protect its people and the villages against the army. This says something about the nature of the revolutionary war. The guerrilla movement was one of the catalysts for the Mayan resistance, but not an underlying cause in the deeper sense. The civil resistance grew faster than the armed branch of the revolutionary organization. Consequently there was no protection for the civilian population who had no other choice than to submit to the army.

According to “Operación Ixil”: “It is calculated that about 1,200 persons have been recruited by the enemy in the region, even if the rebel leaders and the so-called political cadres of EGP do not exceed 100.” The total number of guerrilla soldiers in the country was estimated to about 6,000 in 1982. See for example J. Dunkerley 1990:483. This can be compared to about 200,000 people who the army considered to be willing to participate if they had weapons (see Chapter 3.) A large part of this revolutionary war was brought about by civilian resistance and unarmed guerrilla collaborators, who confronted the overwhelming strength of the Guatemalan army.

Evangelicalism played an important role in the reconstruction of the broken society and gave legitimacy to the army, implying de-legitimization of the resistance. Evangelicalism, however, was not a principal cause behind the defection of the population from EGP to the army. The people acted out of pragmatic considerations to survive. They understood the balance of power and made their choice in order to survive.

See for example J. Dunkerley 1990:483.
Ixil Area and Northern Uspantán and Cunen
1975

Military Occupation and Strategic Cordon
Around the Ixil Area
1980
CHAPTER 8

Introduction
The counterinsurgency strategy in the Ixil region from the time of Ríos Montt had great similarities with the strategy brought out in Vietnam during the first years of the 1960s. The centerpieces were a strategic hamlet program, in Guatemala called model villages, and a civil defense militia; the PACs. Evangelicalism played an important role in the reconstruction of the broken society and gave legitimacy to the army, implying de-legitimization of the resistance.

Ríos Montt and the Reagan administration combined efforts to convince evangelicals in the United States to financially support the civic action aspect of the Guatemalan counterinsurgency war. The effort largely failed, but was effective enough to serve the ideological purposes of counterinsurgency at the local level in the Ixil area. Principal actors were leaders from the Verbo Church/Gospel Outreach and missionaries from Wycliffe/Summer Institute of Linguistics. As seen in the previous chapter, the Ixils were forced to surrender and were offered evangelicalism as an expression of submission to the army. Evangelicalism was not a principal cause behind the defection of the Ixil population from EGP to the army. The people acted out of pragmatic considerations to survive. They understood the balance of power and made their choice in order to survive.

The term of Ríos Montt demonstrated that it was not possible to alienate the Catholics if public consent with the present order would be generated. It was not until Ríos Montt had been replaced by a Catholic, General Mejía Victores, that the Reagan administration could obtain consensus between Democrats and Republicans in Congress concerning military support for Guatemala. Mejía Victores promised democratic elections, and with similar developments in other Central American countries, it was possible to achieve the bipartisan consensus expressed in the Kissinger report presented in the beginning of 1984.

The Christian Democrat government of Vinicio Cerezo (1986–1990) meant both continuity and change in Guatemala. Before the army left power, a string of new laws was enacted. The intention was obviously to circumscribe
the freedom of the civil government forcing it to act within a legal framework established by the army. Particularly during the first two years of Cerezo’s term, there were diametrically opposed perceptions about the character of the new Guatemalan regime. Was it a democratic transition or a continuation of the counterinsurgency state?

In 1987, Ken Anderson and Jean-Marie Simon used the concept permanent counterinsurgency for analyzing the situation in Guatemala. They emphasized the continuity between the earlier military regimes and the new government, and that the popular demands were still met with harsh repression. This explained why the guerrillas persisted. Behind this analysis was also a political effort to block international support for Guatemala. Now when Guatemala was “democratic” many states, including Western Europe, considered bilateral support for the country. Such support would not promote democracy in the country, according to the authors.

Henry Frundt criticized the above analysis, maintaining that it was a variety of the “corporatist view,” inferring that the army, as in other countries, leaves power to civilians, basically because of economic reasons. They neglect popular demands and the interests of democracy. Instead, Frundt argued in favor of a class analysis taking socio-economic conditions into account, including the popular struggle for democracy.

Susanne Jonas puts “democratization” into quotation marks in an article about Guatemala from 1988. According to her, the strategy of the United States was to roll-back Communism. This was incompatible with democracy except as political propaganda. The wave of elections in Central America during the latter half of the 1980s was in many ways a part of a long-range counterinsurgency planning and not an alternative form of rule. The kind of democratization wanted by the United States was part of a policy to garner support for overthrowing the Sandinistas. At the same time, Jonas pointed out the popular pressure for democratization and that this could lead to results.

Carlos Figueroa Ibarra emphasizes U.S. efforts to isolate Nicaragua as an important factor behind democratization in all of Central America. He also mentions other international factors that favored a democratic process. One was the crisis of military regimes in South America after the Falkland-Malvinas War. Another was the perestroika in the Soviet Union and its consequences. Generally, authoritarian regimes had no future in the world. The developed countries intended to dismantle the welfare state, based on a strategy to place the market at the center stage in the dynamics of economy. This international climate influenced Central America. The prestige of political democratization and economic liberalism became interconnected with the Central American crisis and resulted in political adjustments. This interna-

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1 See for example Inforpress Centroamericana January 23, 1986:9-10.
tional influence also meant a reductionistic view on democracy as something that has only to do with the political sphere, according to Figueroa Ibarra.5

Gabriel Aguilera Peralta refers to the two distinct models of democracy: the liberal democratic Western model focusing on the political arena and the socio-economic model emphasizing economic justice. According to him, these represent two sides of the same coin. Political democracy is a prerequisite for economic democracy. There could be no democratization in Central America without an end to the wars, however, and this would not occur until the United States' intervention ceased.6

Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan emphasize that free elections are not a sufficient condition for democracy. Guatemala in the 1980s is an example of "electoralist nontransitions."7 This means that the democratically-elected government is not de jure sovereign, because the former ruling army, although it has renounced, maintains extensive prerogatives.8 According to Linz and Stepan, a democratic transition is complete when:

sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government de facto has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies de jure.9

Linz and Stepan emphasize the important role of a strong civil society in bringing about all stages in a democratization process. The conflicts within civil society are necessary to articulate differences between democrats, which is important for the development of norms and procedures of democratic conflict regulation.10 They also emphasize the role of the economic society in a consolidated democracy, which implies norms, regulations, policies, and institutions related to a mixed economy. According to the authors, neither a command economy nor a pure market economy can coexist with a consolidated democracy. One of the reasons given in the latter case, is that economic policies must be targets for free public contest in a democracy. A democracy could not survive if it "never produced policies that generated government-mandated public goods in the areas of education, health, and transportation, some safety-net for its citizens hurt by major market swings, and some alleviation of gross inequality..."11 To conclude, several analysts agreed that the civil Christian Democrat government in Guatemala did not signify a democratic transition, although it could be seen as a first step on the road to democratization.

5 C. Figueroa Ibarra 1993:40–43.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.:2.
This chapter starts with the general political context of Guatemala during the term of President Cerezo. The next section focuses on the renewed efforts to create a Central American peace process, the contradictions between Guatemalan and U.S. policy, and the role of religion. In this situation Ríos Montt reemerged in the public spotlight as a presidential candidate and the Verbo Church retained a higher profile.

The chapter continues examining the relationship between the Guatemalan evangelical churches and Overseas Crusades in this new situation characterized by a democratic opening, increased popular organizing, but also by extreme right mobilization represented by Ríos Montt. The chapter concludes with the election campaign and the presidential election of 1990.

Counterinsurgency and Democratization

The following description is a synopsis of information given in several books, rounded out with my own experiences. In the beginning of Cerezo's term, the Guatemalan army increased its numbers by 8,200 persons, creating a total of 50,000 soldiers. At the "end of the year offensive" in 1987 against the guerrillas and the displaced in the mountains, the Maya population in northern El Quiché was heavily affected. In large parts of the country, the male population was still forced to participate in the civil patrols (PAC), in spite of the 1985 constitution establishing voluntary participation. Actually, more people were killed in Guatemala in 1987 than in 1985. The situation echoed 1966 when the civil President Montenegro was installed for legitimizing an increased effort against the guerrillas. Now when Guatemala had a representative democracy, the country could get increased support in counterinsurgency efforts.

From 1988, the continuation of the counterinsurgency state was even more obvious when a coup attempt by army officials further limited the freedom of action of the civil government. An additional coup attempt in 1989 had the same effect. The democratic process was in accordance with the counterinsurgency strategy of the army, which never intended a real democratization.

On the other hand, with perceptive hindsight after several years, clearly the Cerezo government was a small beginning of a more genuine democratization. The limited public space that was opened up was effectively used by forces within civil society to press for democratization and structural changes. Among these forces the Catholic Church played a tremendously important role and increasingly also evangelical churches. Among important popular organizations was the peasant organization, CUC, that had been forced underground in the early 1980s. It now reemerged and received legitimacy from

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13 Concerning the number of soldiers, see Informpress Centroamericana November 19, 1987:8.

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the Catholic hierarchy. Catholic groups with values close to liberation theolo-
gy started to regroup.

The human rights group, Grupo Apoyo Mutuo, established during the
Mejía Victores regime, emerged in high profile while denouncing both new
and older human rights abuses. Two other popular organizations playing a
highly significant role were the CERJ, which protested against participation
in the civil patrols, and the CONAVIGUA established by Mayan widows for
protesting against human rights abuses. Both these organizations were
founded in El Quiche in 1988. In addition, labor unions and student organi-
zations renewed their efforts. Especially noteworthy is the rise of women in
this struggle, both Mayas and Ladinas. The popular organizations did not
create a coalition, but their interests converged. People held dual allegiances
and sometimes the activities were coordinated.

Since the escalation of the conflict in 1980, the gap between rich and poor
continued to widen. This tendency endured throughout the 1980s. The
number of people living in extreme poverty constantly increased. Worst hit
were the Mayas and the women. The same tendency of feminization of pov-
erty that has been seen in other parts of the world was obvious also in Guate-
mala. The most victimized were the Maya women. In addition, because of the
war large numbers of displaced people had moved into the capital, where
shantytowns, unemployment, poverty, and criminal violence increased.

The revitalization of popular demand provoked increased confrontations
with the economic power elite and the army. The same scenario as the early
1980s was in evidence. There continued to be an unequal distribution of
goods, and the nagging question about land rights and ownership was still
acute. An additional issue, which now was even more pressing compared
with the beginning of the 1980s, was the tremendous number of human
rights abuses. The army wanted some kind of superficial democratization,
but the confrontations evoked an increasing splintering within this institu-
tion. The split was visible when the Esquipulas meetings took place in 1986
and 1987, initiated by President Cerezo to promote a Central American
peace process and encompass negotiations with the guerrilla movements.
One faction of the army resisted this process, which would spark a more
profound democratization including growing popular power and pressures
for structural changes.

This was the background to the coup attempts from factions within the
army in 1988 and 1989. Another group within the army, first and foremost
Defense Minister General Hector Gramajo, supported Cerezo, and could
fend-off the coup attempts. The result was, however, a turn to the right forc-
ing the President to keep a low profile in the peace process. The situation thus
moved toward increased polarization between the government and popular
organizations. In this situation the guerrilla movements extended their opera-
tions. Not only the army but also the private sector was divided concerning
the future of the country. The organizations representing interests of the eco-
nomic elite were not committed to democratization, but to secure their economic interests.

The economic elite viewed democratic development, including free market capitalism, to be in accordance with the international economic system. Democracy would improve international relations. Both international interests, the policy of the United States, and Guatemalan business interests pointed to moderate right-wing politics, including neo-liberalism and modernization, but not reformism. On the other hand, the business community increasingly found itself confronting popular forces demanding structural change. The neo-liberal policies of non-intervention desired by the economic elite would thus be difficult to maintain within a democracy. The result was that parts of the economic elite moved between the moderate right and the extreme right. Because of the contradictions there was not a clear and unified consensus as to what would best serve the economic interests.

Guatemala versus the United States in the Central American Peace Process

Esquipulas and the Growing Influence of the Catholic Church

The growing influence of the Catholic Church in Guatemala during the second half of the 1980s can be related to its strong involvement in the struggle for achieving peace, democratization, and economic justice. These strivings gave it legitimacy in different social stratas within Guatemalan society. From another perspective, the growth was also a continuation of a process that, with some setbacks, had been going on since the 1950s. It had to do with the institutional strengthening of the church. This process would continue in the 1990s.

The Catholic Church played a central role in the dawning peace efforts. President Vinicio Cerezo invited the Central American Presidents to a summit meeting in the Guatemalan town Esquipulas on May 24 and 25, 1986. The purpose was to continue the discussions on a solution to the Central American conflicts. The United States was still looking for a military solution. The Esquipulas initiative reflected an indigenous Central American attempt to find a political solution, and it received support from Contadora and from the European Community.14

Esquipulas was well chosen as a location for the peace discussions. Since the time of Spanish Empire, it has been a shrine welcoming pilgrims from all of Central America to pay homage to the black Christ located in the basilica. It thus had a strong symbolic value for Catholics. In the 1950s, the black Christ had been used in propaganda against the Arbenz government before the coup.

Now the Catholic Church instead demonstrated its support for a development that contradicted U.S. policy.

The result of the meeting was the Declaration of Esquipulas, which institutionalized periodical meetings between the Central American Presidents. This was the start of the so-called “Esquipulas process.” The most important results were the move toward peace in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala together with a process of integration, among other things expressed in the establishment of the Central American Parliament, PARLACEN.15

In August 1987, the Presidents met again, this time in Guatemala City. In spite of opposition from the United States, they signed “The Peace Treaty of Esquipulas II. Procedure for the establishment of a stable and permanent peace in Central America.”16 The document included the exhortation to end armed conflicts in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala by political methods including dialogue and treaties. The document took a stand against a military solution with ensuing violence and instead wanted to promote an authentic democratic and pluralist process with broad participation. This included promoting social justice, respect for human rights, sovereignty, territorial integrity of the states, and “the right of all nations to freely decide economic, political, and social models without any kind of external interference.”17

According to Susanne Jonas, the peace accords reflected a growing tendency in the Central American countries to act in their own interest, without regard to the interests of the United States. It was “a long range structural shift in Central American (and Latin American) relations with the United States—a redefinition of the terms of U.S. hegemony and an assertion of relative autonomy.”18

In the preface to Esquipulas II, the Presidents state that they have been encouraged by support from rulers and people in many countries in the world and also by international organizations. They especially mention “the European Economic Community and His Holiness John Paul II.”19 The document states that a National Commission of Reconciliation be created in every Central American country. The Commission should include one cabinet member, one bishop, one member from the political opposition, and one citizen held in high regard in the community but not a member of the ruling party.20 Thus, the role of the Catholic Church in the peace process was institutionalized.

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16 Ibid.:24. The Spanish title is “Acuerdo de Paz de Esquipulas II. Procedimiento para establecer la paz firme y duradera en Centro America.”
17 Ibid. Author’s translation from Spanish.
In Guatemala Msgr. Rodulfo Quezada Torufio became the leader of the Commission of National Reconciliation and was instrumental in promoting a national dialogue between all sectors in society. The leaders of the Catholic Church also attacked the injustice of the country’s economic system with arguments stemming from the social teachings of the Church. Archbishop Msgr. Penados de Barrios declared support for the priests who struggled for land reform. A great source of conflict during Vinicio Cerezo’s term of office was the work of Father Andrés Giron. Giron, a Catholic priest, participated in a peasant movement that reclaimed land along the southern coast. He was supported by the archbishop, who had said that the church would support all initiatives intended to promote the welfare of the population. At the same time, the church should be a prophetic voice, denouncing everything that was against the common good.  

In the beginning of 1988, the Bishop Conference published a widely noticed pastoral letter proposing land reform. The letter consists of three parts; the land problem, theological reflection, and pastoral conclusions. It is based on the social teachings of the Catholic Church and frequently quotes the Pope and the social encyclicals. According to the bishops, the land question is the center of the Guatemalan problem. This implies that structures in the country must be changed if violent confrontations are to be avoided.

The bishops quote Populorum Progressio stating that the right to property “is not absolute and unconditional. No one may appropriate surplus goods solely for their own private use when others lack the bare necessities of life.” Also Pope John Paul II’s statement from Puebla 1979 was quoted, stating that “there is a social mortgage on all private property.” The proposed measures for Guatemala in this pastoral letter includes legislation for equitable land distribution, which should begin with insufficiently cultivated estates.

The faculties of Economy and Agronomy at the National University San Carlos expressed themselves in favor of the pastoral letter. While President Vinico Cerezo reacted positively to the proposal, interest organizations for large landowners reacted negatively. Some considered the pastoral letter to give direct support for the governmental agricultural policy. The government assured that there would be no confiscations, but that possibilities to give uncultivated areas to landless peasants would be examined.

Another pastoral letter about non-Catholic religious groups in Guatemala, written by the archbishop in 1989, could certainly provoke any Protestant. In the spirit of Vatican II stressing Christian unity, the pastoral admonition was

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21 See for example Inforpress Centroamericana, September 18, 1986:3-4.
24 Ibid. Quotation from from Puebla 1979:1224.
26 Inforpress Centroamericana, March 24, 1988:13–14; April 7, 1988:1 ; and April 14, 1988.

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that non-Catholics be treated with respect and mercy. However, the archbishop viewed the spread of Protestantism more like a political arm of the United States than motivated by religious fervor. According to the letter, the Protestant growth in Guatemala is similar to the European reformation in the sixteenth century having the same negative consequences.27

Nevertheless, the pastoral letter is interesting seen in the geopolitical context of the time. It places the Catholic Church as the main defender of Guatemalan interests against North American imperialism. Especially on the countryside, Catholicism is said to be the only force establishing integration between social and economic groups and "races." Catholicism has the capacity to unify all Guatemalans and at the same time preserve ethnic distinctions. Protestantism on the other hand destroys unity of the family, cultural and national identity, and sense for community.28

Reactions from the United States

The Reagan administration tried to undermine the Esquipulas process, because of its implication that all the Central American governments would solve the crisis together. Still, the main U.S. goal in Central America was to oust the Nicaraguan Sandinistas from power. Esquipulas counteracted U.S. policy aimed at mobilizing the other countries to isolate Nicaragua, and with this purpose reactivate the Central American military alliance CONDECA. This, in turn, meant supporting the Nicaraguan guerrillas, the Contras. The U.S. government gave lip-service to the Esquipulas process, but defined the process in its own terms. Shortly after the first Esquipulas meeting President Reagan said that:

The United States will support any negotiated settlement or Contadora treaty that will bring real democracy to Nicaragua. What we will not support is a paper agreement that sells out the Nicaraguan people's right to be free. That kind of agreement would be unworthy of us as a people. And it would be a false bargain. For internal freedom in Nicaragua and the security of Central America are indivisible. A free and democratic Nicaragua will pose no threat to its neighbors or to the United States. A communist Nicaragua, allied with the Soviet Union is a permanent threat to us all.29

In the same speech, Reagan emphasized support for the Nicaraguan "Democratic Resistance." The United States had helped the Salvadorian Army become more professional and more respectful of human rights. The United States could help the Nicaraguan resistance reach the same goals through the same kind of aid.30

28 Ibid.
29 R. Reagan, June 24, 1986:3. A similar message was delivered by G. Shultz, June 13, 1986.
30 Ibid.
When Esquipulas II had been signed, Secretary of State George Shultz attributed the remarkable progress to the peace efforts of President Reagan in Central America. However, the main obstacle to the United States and its neighbors when they began to work together for democracy in Central America was Nicaragua. Shultz maintained that the opportunity for peace had been shaped by three developments. First, that the improved military performance of the Contras made them a serious challenge to the Sandinistas. Second, that the Wright-Reagan peace plan from August 5, 1987, removed U.S. security objectives in Central America from partisan dispute between Republicans and Democrats in the U.S. Congress. On the third place came the Esquipulas II of August 7, 1987. Thus, Shultz emphasized the role of the United States and the Contras more than the efforts by the Central American Presidents, Comadura, and other international supporters.

The relation between U.S. policy and the Catholic Church was contradictory on the Central American level. In Nicaragua, Cardinal Obando y Bravo was an important ally and some Catholic forces in the United States were involved in support to the Contras (see Chapter 6). In Guatemala, however, the Catholic Church strongly supported the Esquipulas process and clearly placed itself as a defender of Guatemalan popular interests against U.S. intervention. In this situation renewed efforts to link up Guatemalan evangelicals with U.S. policy were visible.

The Contras Network in Guatemala

Around 1986–1987, three organizations that supported the Contras in Nicaragua established themselves in Guatemala. One of these organizations was the International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem, ICEJ, established in Guatemala in June 1986, one month after the Esquipulas meeting. It was located at the church Christian Fraternity and Rev. Jorge Lopez became one of the international directors of the embassy. ICEJ had been established in 1980, with the help of Gerald Derstine, leader of Gospel Crusade. Derstine became closely involved with Oliver North and brought in both the Gospel Crusade and the ICEJ in support for the Contras.

ICEJ in Guatemala was initiated by Gerald Derstine. He went to the Christian Fraternity and invited Jorge Lopez to visit Israel and to be a representative for ICEJ in Guatemala. The Christian Fraternity was one of the largest neo-Pentecostal churches in Guatemala having wealthy members. A successful mobilization of pressure on the Guatemalan government would be a considerable help together with other efforts. Whether Jorge Lopez lived up to these

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32 All of them came to Honduras around 1983–1984, at the height of U.S. organization efforts in support of the Contras. Their establishment in Guatemala at the time of the Esquipulas meetings indicates that the intention was to counteract the peace process and support the U.S. pressure on Guatemala to line up behind the policy against Nicaragua.
expectations is uncertain. What is obvious is that Israel received a major support group, however.36

Another effort was the establishment of the relief organization Friends of the Americas, FOA, in Guatemala. It was founded by Louisiana State Representative Louis "Woody" Jenkins in 1984. It was not an evangelical organization, but its Guatemalan board included well-known evangelicals. It was established in early 1986 and included prominent members in Guatemalan society. Among them were Jorge Serrano Elias and Gustavo Espina. The latter was an evangelical businessman who later would become the vice president in the Serrano government. Other members were Serrano's father-in-law Arturo Bianchi, a Catholic and a relative to Francisco Bianchi in the Verbo Church, and Alvaro Contreras Veles, one of the owners of the daily Prensa Libre. The board also included Harris Whitbeck and Marco Tulio Cajas.37

In the United States, FOA was widely discussed as one of the organizations that supported the Contras in Nicaragua. Alberto Piedra, U.S. ambassador in Guatemala 1984–1987 worked closely with the organization.38 In the directory from the Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center in Albuquerque 1988, FOA in Guatemala is one of the organizations mentioned that distributed USAID relief, including food aid, and that received free military ocean freight through the Denton amendment. Guatemala FOA had two programs: a mobile medical clinic and "Shoeboxes for Liberty." The organization distributed so-called liberty boxes with gifts for families and children. All boxes included a U.S. flag.39

In 1987, CARP (Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles) was established in Guatemala. This religious service organization is a branch of

33 The International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem was established in 1980 when the Parliament of Israel had declared Jerusalem as the indivisible capital of the state Israel. The event provoked international protests and the thirteen foreign embassies located in Jerusalem left the city. In this situation the Christian Embassy was established to give support to Israel. The embassy is said to represent a "nation" of Christians who share the Jewish view on the significance of the restoration of Israel. See for example leaflet from the organization: Embajada Cristiana Internacional Jerusalem (ICEJ) [date unknown]. That the purpose of this organization was to propagate for the politics of the state Israel internationally and counteract support for PLO is well known. A leaflet from 1985 argued in favor of U.S. military aid to Israel, which was said to promote peace in the Middle East. The Palestinian question is said to be the result of a conflict created by the Arab states. The Palestinians already have a homeland, Jordan, which is a Palestinian state, according to the leaflet. L.J. Davis 1985. This leaflet announces a book by the same author and is not published by the Christian Embassy. It was spread from the office in Guatemala, however.

34 See for example the documentary film by Bill Moyers on the role of the churches in Central America. B. Moyers 1987. The role of Israel has been discussed in relation to the Iran-Contras scandal. It has been said that Israel helped in the arms smuggling from Iran and that the Christian Embassy was an intermediary. As far as I know, the issue has not been certified, however.


36 The important role of Israel in Guatemala has largely been left outside this study. The issue is complicated and needs its own study.


38 Ibid.

CAUSA (Confederación para la Asociación y Unidad de las Sociedades de América) which in turn, is a branch of the Unification Church of Reverend Sun Myung Moon.\(^{40}\)

CAUSA was one of the organizations in Oliver North’s Contras network. The U.S. chapter was led by Phillip Sanchez, who earlier had been the U.S. ambassador to Honduras. Its establishment in Honduras in early 1983 coincided with “Gran Pino,” the largest military training exercises in Central America since 1965. It was held during the first two weeks of February and included participation from the U.S. Army, U.S. Marines and the U.S. Air Force.\(^{41}\) During the same time, February 6–9, CAUSA held its first seminar in Honduras. The organization immediately solidified contacts with the Honduran government, high military officers, and the business community. Already some weeks earlier another Moon branch, APROH, had established a legal status in Honduras. Honduran army officers and businesspersons participated in this organization.\(^{42}\) In June 1983, CAUSA and another Moon branch, the World Media Conference, held a seminar for foreign journalists in Central America with the purpose of counteracting the international critique of the Central American regimes.\(^{43}\)

The involvement of the Moon network in Honduras, not least in relation to the war against Nicaragua, has been widely discussed in mass media both in Latin America and the United States. These discussions have also involved the relation between Moon and the CIA, because of indications that the CIA used Moon as a front organization.\(^{44}\) Rev. Moon also gained some public influence in Washington from the time when he started the daily *Washington Times* in May 1982. Roger W. Fontaine, one of the members of the Committee of Santa Fe, became chief diplomatic correspondent for the newspaper.\(^{45}\)

All these organizations were thus established in Honduras with the purpose of supporting the Contras during the escalated U.S. aggression against Nicaragua in 1983–84. Subsequently, these organizations moved into Guatemala around 1986 and 1987. The timing coincides with the Esquipulas meetings, when the United States was pressuring Guatemala to support its policy.

Further indications are the attendance of two important board members in FOA, Serrano Elías and Contreras Veles, at an AULA conference in Colombia only a month after the first Esquipulas meeting. AULA (Asociación Pro Unidad Latinoamericana) is another organization in the Moon network, led by

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\(^{40}\) Ibid:28. According to this directory, CAUSA was associated with FUNDAPI. What kind of relationship is not told, however. It may be that Harris Whitbeck was involved in both.

\(^{41}\) See for example *Inforpress Centroamericana*, February 3, 1983:1–2. The purpose of the exercise was to prepare for a military intervention in Nicaragua, or to create a psychological climate of fear for an intervention.


\(^{43}\) Ibid.

\(^{44}\) See for example P. Rodríguez 1988.

\(^{45}\) The Committee of Santa Fe 1988:43; *Inforpress Centroamericana*, June 23, 1983:3–4. The Unification Church also owns another newspaper with the name *News World*. 
Rev. Moon's closest cooperator, South Korean Colonel Bo Hi Pak. Phillip Sanchez was a frequent participant also in AULA.46

Participation in the AULA conferences does not necessarily say anything about religious and political sympathies. It says more about what kind of people the Moon leaders are interested in recruiting. Many Latin American top politicians, diplomats, and academics have participated. People like Serrano Elías and Contreras Veles probably participated because they were invited and saw a chance to make new contacts and promote their own agendas.

Strong support of the argument is, however, that exactly these persons were invited from Guatemala: Serrano Elías as a former presidential candidate and probably also a candidate in the next election, and Contreras Veles as owner of the largest newspaper in Guatemala. A third participant from Guatemala was Angel Roncero Marcos, dean of the theological faculty of the Fransisco Marroquin University.47

A year later, in 1987, Serrano Elías founded a new political party: Movimiento Acción Solidaria (MAS). This party immediately became a member of the International Democrat Union (UDI) in which the Republicans in the United States had a prominent role. There are thus reasons to believe that the United States wanted to link up prominent Guatemalans to influence Guatemalan policy in support of U.S. interests. Among them were evangelical leaders who might be able to mobilize evangelicals in a situation when the Catholic Church clearly had taken a stand against U.S. policy.

It was soon clear, however, that Serrano Elías would not tow this line. Instead he became a member of the National Reconciliation Commission led by Msgr. Quezada Torufio. According to Harold Caballeros, Pastor of El Shaddai in which Serrano Elías became a member during this time, Serrano Elías actively propagated in favor of the peace process among the evangelicals.48

The Reemergence of Ríos Montt

Ríos Montt and the Extreme Right

From 1987, the U.S. military involvement in Guatemala increased only to escalate even more in 1988 and 1989. The United States directly participated in the counterinsurgency war. In 1989, U.S. military personnel participated in counterinsurgency operations in combat zones. Green Berets trained Guatemalan army paratroopers and participated in civic action projects among other activities. During 1989–1990, the U.S. forces became involved with

46 P. Rodríguez 1988. He is a Spanish journalist who made himself a member in the Unification Church for investigation purposes. In the book lists are published on participants on different conferences.
47 Ibid.
anti-drug operations carried out by the CIA and the DEA (the Drug Enforce­
ment Administration).  

The United States increased its military involvement in Guatemala and
supported the government. Guatemala, meanwhile, aspired for a neutral for­
ign policy expressed in the Esquipulas process, which was a policy of non­
alignment with the U.S. against Nicaragua. Because the regional and internal
solutions of the conflicts were intertwined in the Esquipulas process, the U.S.
pressure on Guatemala to take a stand against Nicaragua coincided with the
Guatemalan extreme right’s interests to sabotage negotiations with the unified
guerrilla front, URNG. The result of the U.S. pressure and the military esca­
lation was that the extreme right in Guatemala was encouraged, although the
United States officially supported the Cerezo government. In May 1988, the
first coup attempt was made. This coincided with the increased conflict, cen­
tered around economic policies, between the economic elite and popular or­
organizations.

When Secretary of State George Shultz visited Guatemala in July 1988, he
praised the Guatemalan efforts to restore democracy and struggle against eco­
nomic decline. He promised that the United States would protect democratic
friends from attacks and subversion. Ten years ago, Costa Rica had been Cen­
tral America’s only democracy, but now Nicaragua was the only dictatorship
in the region, he said.  

The visit exerted increased pressure on Guatemala and the result was a shaky situation with several coup rumors after his visit. Cerezo
was pressured to keep a low profile in the peace process for the rest of his term,
and the government’s freedom to act in domestic politics was even more cir­
cumscribed.

In this situation, General Ríos Montt reemerged on the political scene as a
proposed presidential candidate for the extreme right, in the coming elections
scheduled for 1990. The chances for the two right-wing parties PID (Partido
Institucional Democratico) and FUN (Frente de Unidad Nacional) to win in
a democratic competition were slim. PID had together with PR (Partido Rev­
olucionario) been behind the Lucas Garcia government between 1978 to
1982, the one that Ríos Montt had ousted from power. FUN belonged to the
group of parties that brought up Angel Aníbal Guevara, proclaimed the win­
er of the undemocratic presidential election of 1982.  

Both parties were considered to be corrupt. They took the only possible step that would give them a chance to win the elections—by making Ríos Montt with his strong
anti-corruption profile their presidential candidate.

Ríos Montt became their candidate in 1988. He resigned from his duties in
the Verbo Church to dedicate himself to the political campaign. 

49 See for example S. Jonas 1991. She refers to U.S. newspapers like Washington Post and Los
Angeles Times, Pacific News Service, and WOLA newsletter.
51 ELECCIONES `90, October 18, 1990.
changes had been made within PID. The new leader, Oscar Rivas García, claimed that he had no relations with the feared Donaldo Alvarez Ruíz and the other two most powerful leaders of PID before the coup d'état in 1982. Gabriel Girón Ortiz, who earlier had been legal counsel of the National Police, remained as head of FUN, however.53

In addition to these two parties, a new party was formed by more direct followers to Ríos Montt’s ideology. FRG (Frente Republicano Guatemalteco), like PID and FUN, had no religious profile. Both Catholics and Protestants were members. The three parties formed Plataforma No-Venta, which launched Ríos Montt as a presidential candidate and Harris Whitbeck as the vice-presidential candidate.54 The name Plataforma No-Venta has a double meaning. It means “Platform Ninety,” but also “Platform Not For Sale.”

Ríos Montt for president meant that the extreme right could not unite around one candidate. As an attempt at unification, PID and FUN had discussions with MLN (Movimiento Liberación Nacional) about a common candidate. This was an effort to unify the extreme right. However, it was not possible for MLN to gather support behind Ríos Montt. Some people inside the party were in favor of him, but important groups were against him. They accused him of being fanatical and questioned his capacity to govern the country. In addition, they did not want to back someone who could be disqualified from the race. The legal questions surrounding Ríos Montt’s candidacy stemmed from the 1985 constitution which prohibited perpetrators of a coup d’etat from participating in elections. In September 1988, Juan Carlos Simmons, one of the leaders of MLN, said that MLN had no interest in an “irreversible” candidate.55

Developments in the Verbo Church

When Cerezo’s term of office began, the Verbo Church was still very small with only about 1,500 members in 1986.56 However, expansion followed from about this time as a result of evangelization efforts, but also due to affiliations of other churches to the Verbo Church. In August 1988, Comunidad de Renovación Cristiana in the capital became affiliated to Verbo. This was the charismatic group under the leadership of Arturo Fernandez, who

55 Inforpress Centroamericana, September 15, 1988:12. Other parties also occasionally supported Plataforma No-Venta and Ríos Montt. PDCN was in the platform for some months until the leaders said that this would not be possible because of the constitution. PNR also discussed to support Ríos Montt, but instead launched Fernando Leal and Kurt Meyer. ELECCIONES '90, October 18. In the beginning also FDP supported Ríos Montt. Inforpress Centroamericana, January 5, 1989:11–13.
earlier had left the Episcopal Church. This group had been in contact with Verbo over a period of time, and in 1987 they started a ministerial relation, including exchanging of preachers.57

Verbo also expanded outside the capital. In September 1987, the church Jesus Heals and Saves in Chajul in the Ixil area became a member of Verbo. Another example is a group from Cobán, which joined Verbo. This had happened when a Christian youth leader in Cobán came to the Verbo Church in 1987. This leader had been looking for a church that could adopt them.58

Verbo leader Carlos Ramírez commented the work in Cobán according to the following:

> Tom and the rest of the team earnestly desire your prayers as they battle satanic forces for the souls of men, women and children in this ancient Mayan Indian Center. The evil one has maintained a stronghold over the people of Cobán for centuries through the polytheistic folk religions still practiced here.59

On the international level, the Verbo Church got a contribution when a church in Monterey, Mexico, joined in 1989. At this time, Verbo also sent a missionary team to El Salvador.60 At the end of 1989, Verbo in Guatemala had approximately 5,000 members, 180 home churches and more than 1,000 pupils in its school.61

Until 1988, the Guatemalan Verbo Church was a base for the expansion of the church on the whole continent. In March that year, however, a meeting was held in which all governing elders from Verbo churches in Latin America and the United States participated. They decided that the regional church office should be moved from Guatemala City to Miami. The principal leader of the church, Carlos Ramírez, consequently moved from Guatemala together with some other elders.62

The move corresponded to developments of strategic thoughts in the Verbo Church. A small Verbo Church was already established in Miami, a location with many Latin Americans within and outside the city. The congregation was seen as a pool of potential missionaries who would eventually return to their own countries. The Verbo Church intended to evangelize these members, equip them, and send them home to their countries.63

Two articles in the Verbo magazine, *Frontline Report*, from the end of 1986 and the beginning of 1987, demonstrate the thoughts of Ríos Montt at the beginning of the Esquipulas process. At that time, Ríos Montt was director of the Verbo training school, which prepared the church to respond to the chal-

58 *Frontline Report* [1987].
59 C. Ramírez, April 1987.
61 P. Sántizo Morales, October 25, 1990.
63 R. Gilmore and S. Gilmore, March and April 1989. This couple were among the U.S. missionaries who followed Carlos Ramírez from Guatemala to Miami.
lenge of the Great Commission. Ríos Montt was thus responsible for the training for missions.

Ríos Montt begins by criticizing the U.S. use of the term “America.” The United States has taken this name for exclusive use for its nation. For the inhabitants of the rest of the continent, however, America starts in Alaska and ends in Argentina. Ríos Montt continues to talk about America as a body, in analogy with St. Paul’s description of the Body of Christ as a human body. All American countries have functions in this body. The United States is the head, because its constitution is based on the word of God. This leadership position brings with it certain responsibilities. A hand in a body cannot be accused of inefficient behavior, and in the same way the backwardness of the Latin American countries is the result of a lack of efficient leadership of the head. Central America is like a hemorrhoid, which the United States tries to cure by sending economic assistance. 64

Central America does not need all this misdirected help, according to Ríos Montt. It does not need to follow the kind of power learned in Washington, London or Moscow, and even less to be faithful marionettes. Latin America does not need more of the humanistic philosophies, political ideologies, and exported religions. (By religions he means human efforts to reach God that are not biblical.) What Latin America needs is to be free from all these plagues, and the true savior is Jesus Christ. 65

The United States has not fulfilled the leadership role given to it because of its foundation in the word of God, maintains Ríos Montt. The United States is preoccupied by its own security and did not care about Cuba or Nicaragua during the time of the dictatorships of Batista and Somoza. It was not until the United States was challenged by Fidel Castro and Daniel Ortega that it was preoccupied. The United States is not trustworthy. Jesus Christ is the true liberator. Only he can establish the true peace, which is born in the heart and not conceived by military force. The solution to the problems in Latin America is to pray. By faith the territory of the enemy in the spiritual domain can be conquered. The power of a nation should not be built on economic or military power, but on the stability of the family and the spiritual capacity to confess and do the will of God. 66

Thus, Ríos Montt presupposed an assumption that the United States, with divine legitimization, was the head of the Americas. At the same time he criticized the United States for failing its responsibilities in Latin America. The articles did not give support for any actions to promote peace, however. The solution of the problems was to pray.

In 1987, the Verbo Church had a large evangelization campaign called “Operation Whole Armour,” which accompanied the escalating U.S. military involvement in Guatemala. The purpose of the campaign was to distribute

64 E. Ríos Montt [1986].
65 Ibid.
66 E. Ríos Montt [1987].
70,000 New Testaments to soldiers, civil patrols, and police officers. It was headed by Ríos Montt and another Verbo elder, U.S. missionary Ronny Gilmore.67

At the time of escalating confrontations in 1988, when Ríos Montt was proposed as presidential candidate, I listened to a sermon by a U.S. pastor in the main Verbo Church in Guatemala City (Verbo Reforma) which clearly outlined a political ideology:

The Bible tells about a restoration of the world. Capitalism, socialism and communism have failed. We must have something new. The restoration must start with the individual. It must start with the personal conversion. The Bible talks about three institutions that are especially important. They are the family, the church and the state. They have different areas of responsibility. The heads of these institutions can work for conversion of other people.

The Bible says that the man should be the head of the family. The relationship between man and woman is like the relationship between Christ and the church. Like Christ is the head of the church, the man is the head of the woman.68 It is the responsibility of the family to take care of the widows. This is what the Bible says. If a widow, for instance, has brothers it is their responsibility to care for her. If a widow is young and has children she should look for somebody who could lead the family. She needs a head.

The church should direct the humans in faith through apostles, pastors and teachers.69 Somebody thinks that it is the responsibility of the state to take care of the poor. But this is wrong. How could the state be able to take care of the poor? The state has no production that can give it profit. People who think like that obviously maintain that the state should collect taxes and provide for the poor. That means that the state should take money from them who work and give to them who do not work. But the Bible says that they who do not work should neither eat. Thus, it is not biblical that the state collects taxes to provide for people. It is not the responsibility of the state to provide for the poor. Then, whose responsibility is it? It is your responsibility! It is the family's and the individual's responsibility to give to the poor.

The state has two areas of responsibility. The first is the national security, which implies that the state should guarantee the national security and defend it against other powers. The other responsibility is to guarantee justice. Justice means that the humans follow the rules that they together have decided. This concerns, for instance, laws concerning business. The state should guarantee that they who break the laws be punished.

The United States is a country that is founded by God's laws about how a Christian society should be shaped. Compare the United States and Brazil! Both countries have large petroleum reserves and rich soil. But why then is the United States much more rich than Brazil? The reason is that the United States was founded as a Christian nation. The United States was founded by refugees who were hiding from the persecution in Europe. They were Christians and they created their country in accordance with the commands of God. Thus, it is not the soil that determines if a country will be rich or not. It is God! We live in a society with big problems, but it is marvelous to see what God does with every one of us.68

67 See for example S. Diamond 1989:168. She interprets the campaign as part of psychological warfare to give relief to soldiers who were burdened by guilt because of the killing of people.
68 Translation from author's notes taken at the service, September 11, 1988.
The sermon demonstrates the same organic view on social entities as Ríos Montt's articles about America. They are seen as bodies and it is consequently natural that a body has a head. The analogy from St. Paul in the New Testament concerning Christ and church, man and woman is a basic relation of superiority and subordination, which is extended to other areas of society. The sermon echoes the themes of the political confrontations of the time concerning economic policies. It propagates for a minimal state taking care only of defense and law, not involving itself in the economic sphere. In a time when the economic elite recently had been provoked by the pastoral letter proposing a land reform, the pastor said that soil is not important. The only solution to the problems is to follow the commands of God. These commands imply that the state should not address the poverty in the country. If so, God will bless Guatemala with prosperity and the situation will be resolved.

The rise of Ríos Montt as a presidential candidate can be seen in this context. The extreme right had lost legitimacy, but here was a political ideology that fit with their interests. It must be noted that this extreme neo-liberal view on economics not only contradicted the Catholic social teachings. The divine legitimization of these views can also be interpreted as a difficulty to find a profane justification. Most profane rationales may break down in front of an ideology that maintains that the state should not be involved in any way in the economic arena or in social welfare. Probably a divine command is needed if people should believe that this would be the best way to help the poor.

An Awakening among Guatemalan Evangelicals

The Establishment of a New Church Conference

During the time of President Cerezo, it became clear that the Guatemalan evangelicals were a highly diversified group with different theological views and opinions about the political situation in the country. The most visible expression of a social and political awakening was the establishment of the Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala (CIEDEG) in April 1987. This organization developed contacts with the Latin American Church Council (CLAI) and with the World Council of Churches. It was an alternative to the conservative Alianza Evangélica.

CIEDEG was the result of a reorganization of the evangelical development organization CONCAD. The purpose was to improve the work of the evangelical churches concerning both development and theology. To CIEDEG such an improvement was meant to bring about an increased theological reflection concerning the work of the churches and to separate humanitarian aid and development work from evangelization. 69

CIEDEG intended to respond to the situation in Guatemala marked by

poverty and oppression. The churches were thought to have a responsibility to identify with the people in their struggle for a more just society. CIEDEG’s task was to help congregations create a theological framework for addressing the social needs and construct a Christian community of believers that embraced the whole human being, spiritually and physically. Because of the political situation and the opposition from many church leaders, CIEDEG started out to work cautiously to change the mentality within the evangelical churches. The organization understood its work as being a part of an undermining of the base of the traditional churches to manipulate the believers.70

Behind CIEDEG were evangelical agencies that had participated in the work of CONCAD together with evangelical congregations. In the beginning, about 470 local congregations were members. It is noteworthy that almost all of them were Maya congregations, such as Hermandad de Presbiterios Mayas (the Maya presbyteries within the Presbyterian Church, 100 percent Mayas); the National Methodist Church (98 percent Mayas); the western territory of the Full Gospel Church of God (100 percent Mayas); and, the southern district of the Nazarene Church (60 percent Mayas). The only Ladino-dominated church that participated was the Evangelical Mennonite Church of Guatemala (25 percent Mayas).71 The churches with a long history in Guatemala participated, not the new arrivals. However, separate congregations and individuals from recently established churches also participated.

People involved with CIEDEG were harshly critical of the evangelical churches’ traditional operational procedures. According to the General Secretary Vitalino Similox Saleazar (a Presbyterian pastor belonging to the Maya group Caqchikel), there had never been any evangelization in Guatemala in the biblical sense, but only an Anglo-Saxon evangelization that in reality was an ideology dressed in Christian cloths. The Protestant missions denounced laziness, alcohol, witchcraft, paganism, and so on, but not the exploitation, the bad salaries, and the abuse of wealth. The church had expressed an ideology in favor of the economic power elite and had also been an instrument for division between Protestants and Catholics, Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals among the Mayas, maintained Similox.72

CIEDEG addressed issues reflecting disputes among the Guatemalan evangelicals, such as the conflict between Guatemalans and U.S. missionaries, and the contradiction between conservative and progressive tendencies within the churches. Also, perhaps even more important, was the conflict between Mayas and Ladinos. Evangelical Mayas within CIEDEG did not struggle only for social justice but for the right to their culture, intimating an integration of the Maya religion with Christianity. On all these issues there were widely differing opinions within CIEDEG, although the common view was that the evangelical churches in Guatemala must turn in another direction.

70 Ibid.
72 V. Similox Saleazar, June 1988. See also V. Similox Saleazar 1997.
Confrontations with Overseas Crusades

In parallel with the small but growing social and political awakening among the evangelicals, the conflicts concerning the work of the Overseas Crusades' church growth program became aggravated. The main conflict between conservative and progressive evangelicals during the late 1980s came to a head in the Amanecer committee. The Overseas Crusades tried to influence the outcome in favor of the conservatives.\(^{73}\)

According to the director of the Guatemalan office of Overseas Crusades, Amanecer was not the property of this organization. Instead, it was something that God had put into the heart of church leaders: “The Church had the vision, but SEPAL [Overseas Crusades in Latin America, authors remark] had to do a lot of work to make sure it happened.”\(^{74}\) That Overseas Crusades had to work a lot was dear from an evaluation of the Discipling a Whole Nation Project in 1987. This document stated that four of the local Amanecer congresses held in Guatemala were only for selected indigenous groups. In one of these Indian congresses, the committee suggested that:

the workshop on goal setting be deleted. They said that their people were not accustomed to setting goals, so it would be a waste of time. In spite of their warning, after careful explanation of the process and importance of goal setting, the pastors from that group set one of the highest goals made in all the regional congresses.\(^{75}\)

During 1988 and 1989, the Mennonite pastor Gilberto Flores, who also worked with CIEDEG, was the president of the Amanecer committee. According to him, it was clear at the evaluation of Amanecer in 1987 that it had failed. A change of direction was needed. It was not good to talk about church growth in statistical terms. What was needed was a holistic evangelization. However, Overseas Crusades did not accept this and a conflict erupted. According to Overseas Crusades, Amanecer had fallen into the hands of the theology of liberation and Gilberto Flores was defamed. As was seen in the earlier chapters in this study, even some conservative church leaders were critical against Overseas Crusades. Amanecer kept to a more independent line in spite of Overseas Crusades’ attempt to control it. The result was that Overseas Crusades during this time distanced itself from Amanecer.\(^{76}\)

The crux of the conflict was whether the evangelical churches should invest their efforts in a contribution for peace and social and political change or if they should use their resources for quantitative church growth. This issue was even more urgent when other sectors in civil society mobilized for demanding peace, justice, and democracy.

Jim Montgomery’s *DAWN Report* did not describe the different opinions

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\(^{74}\) T. Halls 1987:3.

\(^{75}\) R.A. Wingerd 1987:10.

about church growth in Guatemala or in other countries in the world. Ac­
cording to this magazine, the U.S. missionary efforts in the Discipling of a
Nation were a desired contribution to the Guatemalan evangelical churches.
At the end of 1989, the magazine reported that in Central America “The
traditional religion—Roman Catholicism—had been so far from the people
that they had lost all hope even in their own religion.”77 The evangelical
churches had reached their goal to double the number of congregations in
Guatemala by 1990 the same report told. At the Amanecer congress in 1984
there were 7,000 evangelical congregations in Guatemala. In 1989, there were
14,000.78 However, the goal that 50 percent of the population be evangelical
by 1990 was far from being attained.

In Chapter 5 the work of Overseas Crusades in Guatemala was compared
with the work of AIFLD. Both agencies worked for establishing umbrella
organizations to unify the evangelical churches and the labor unions, respec­
tively, for keeping them under U.S. ideological control. Also the relative set­
back of Overseas Crusades during the latter half of the 1980s can be com­
pared with developments in the labor unions.

The umbrella organization CUSG, which had been established by AIFLD
during the Ríos Montt government in 1983, faced competition from la Coor­
dinadora General de Trabajadores de Guatemala (CGTG), which was estab­
lished under the influence of the Christian Democracy on an international
level. Together with another labor union umbrella, Unión Sindical de Traba­
jadores de Guatemala (UNSITRAGUA) based on the older, established labor
unions, CGTG challenged CUSG which experienced a severe setback.79 The
same tendencies were thus visible within different sectors of the society. Soon
the evangelicals should be the target for renewed mobilization efforts from the
extreme right, however.

The Election Campaign
Ríos Montt as Presidential Candidate
Ríos Montt and Plataforma No-Venta received additional support from an
evangelical group which established the party PREG (Partido Reformador
Guatemalteco). It was led by the journalist Abigail Morataya. Its origin was in
the Organización Cívica Guatemalteca, the organization established by
Marco Tulio Cajas for obtaining evangelical support for Serrano Elías in the
election of 1985.80 This unlikely coalition between evangelicals and corrupt
right wing parties was not totally without problems, however. At one occasion

77 B. Salcedo 1989:10.
78 Ibid.
Abigail Morataya proclaimed himself as coordinator of the campaign of Ríos Montt, because he meant that the campaign should be in the hands of politicians who were not vicious and not Catholics. This created a conflict with the other leaders of Plataforma No-Venta. However, it never progressed to such proportions as to take away support from the platform. Finally, however, PREG could not participate because it missed the electoral registration deadline.

Marco Tulio Cajas went to Mexico after the election of 1985, but returned to Guatemala in 1990. Serrano Elías, who again was a presidential candidate, wanted Cajas to repeat his 1985 support for the candidacy. But Cajas refused endorsement because he no longer believed in Serrano Elías. According to Cajas, everybody said that Ríos Montt was the most promising candidate, and because of this he decided to support him, though not through conventional party politics.

In the election of 1985, there was only one evangelical candidate for the presidency. In 1990 there were three: Jorge Serrano Elías, Efraín Ríos Montt, and Fernando Leal. In addition, evangelicals were considered for prominent positions also within other parties. According to Cajas, neither the discourse nor the strategy of either Serrano Elías or Ríos Montt directly appealed to the evangelicals, however. Nevertheless a third stream appeared, the so-called theory of “the government of God,” which was a political position based on the Bible. According to Cajas, this was a local expression of reconstructionism, and in his view the only position known in Guatemala that could answer the questions posed by political theory. He had thus gone a step further from the election of 1985 when he had been influenced by Francis Schaeffer.

Ríos Montt did not express himself as a reconstructionist in the election campaign. He had to appease the different factions supporting him and certainly he did not want to alienate Catholic supporters. Political scientist Amy Lynn Sherman gives some interesting notes concerning the political views of Ríos Montt and his closest advisors, even if she made her interviews one and a half year after the elections, in the summer of 1992. Sherman wanted to defend Ríos Montt against what she considered to be stereotypes about him in media and in the academic community. She assured that Ríos Montt and his advisors had demonstrated their commitment to democracy in the interviews. They were just concerned about the influence of secular humanism in schools and media, but had no intentions toward theocracy or to impose Christianity on anyone. They believed that the laws of the Old Testament offer principles of a just society, but these principles can be detected also outside Christianity, in political philosophy. According to Sherman, Ríos Montt’s “philosophy of government, it seemed to me, rests on a sort of sphere

82 ELECCIONES '90, October 18, 1990.
sovereignty’ theory akin to that of the Dutch theologian and statesman, Abraham Kuyper.\textsuperscript{85}

The combination of Old Testament principles and the sphere theory by Abraham Kuyper gives a clear indication of reconstructionist thought. Kuyper was a Dutch foreign minister at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was his idea about sovereign spheres that was taken up by Cornelius Van Til and later by Rousas Rushdoony and thus became a foundation for reconstruc-

The reconstructionist influence in the Verbo Church came from Paul Jehle. As was explained in Chapter 6, the Verbo Church started to use Jehle’s Principle Approach already in 1985. In 1990, Jehle held a seminar in the Verbo Church and his teachings were gathered in a memorandum.

The point of departure of this document is that the human being has God-given rights and obligations. The argument is built up from the two first chapters in Genesis. God gave humans the right to life, the right to freely express it, and to take dominion over the earth. The three rights are consequently life, freedom and property. To maintain these rights the human must fulfill obligations called “principles.” If the responsibilities are not fulfilled, the rights will decrease until the point when they can no longer be main-

According to Jehle, individual freedom is the solution to most problems. If the individual prospers, the society will automatically prosper. The teachings of socialism and theology of liberation are against reality, because they maintain that it is the other way around, that the individual will improve if society is improved. An important concept to Jehle is “sovereignty,” which comes from God. When God has been installed in the heart of a human, who consequently is dependent on him, this person expresses the sovereignty of God.\textsuperscript{87}

In the Latin American nations, the civil governments reflect the amount of church influence. This is why one of the principal strategies used by Communists, when taking a nation, is to infiltrate the churches. The Communists try to annex the minds of the persons so that they will reflect the kind of government they execute. To counter this, the task for Christians is to implant correct principles in the people so that these can be reflected in the government. A good government is obtained when the sovereignty of God is secured, which means that a majority of the people and the leaders put God in the throne, according to Jehle.\textsuperscript{88}

An important area of sovereignty in the thought of Jehle concerns econ-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{85} A.L. Sherman 1994:226–228.
  \item \textsuperscript{86} P. Jehle [1990]. This document has no page numbers.
  \item \textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
omy. The government should not control the money of a nation. He gives the U.S. economy as an example. The U.S. government thinks that it should promote equality in the nation. This is socialism and it is incorrect, because it says that no individual has the right to strive for superiority over another individual. The state should not decide prices, laws for minimum wages, prices for electricity, and so forth. It is unfair that some pay a lot of taxes and others no tax at all. This is a violation of sovereignty. It is wrong to collect taxes based on possessions and wealth. All taxation of property is a symbol of tyranny.\(^89\)

Another important principle is the self-government of the individual. Social security is an example of a violation of this principle. God has never ordered that the government should involve itself in questions concerning health. In the Bible, there are two forms of tax, according to Jehle: taxes collected from persons, implying that everybody gives the same amount, and the tithe that is given to the church. Caesar should not demand more than God and consequently it is wrong with more than ten percent tax. Value-added tax is in accordance with the Bible, but not more than ten percent.\(^90\)

Another area of concern for Jehle is foreign relations. The idea of an international court is a violation of the individual sovereignty of every country, because it allows corporate authority above nations. Problems arising among nations should be negotiated with the involved parties may be with the help of other nations. An international court is not needed. A nation should solve its own problems. Other nations should not try to solve them.\(^91\)

Another principle is the freedom to sow and to harvest the fruit. Things that are incorrect must be cut-off at the roots. If it is an ideological battle, the hoe must be used at the roots. There is no way to reform a country without first cutting the roots that make harm. In the area of economy, the principle to sow and harvest means that the government should allow success and failure and not manipulate the seed and the fruit. An example of manipulation of the fruit is when governments take from those who have and give to those who have not. A manipulation of the seed is for example when peasants work on plots with the help of money borrowed from the government. Agriculture in accordance with the Bible must be in the hands of families and their heirs. The civil government should not own land.\(^92\)

Jehle is not explicit on spheres in this document. At least four sovereign spheres are implicit in the text, however: civil government, economy, church, and family. The government should not intervene in the other three spheres.

The text by Jehle gives divine justification for extreme neo-liberal economic policies and also for removing the whole economic debate outside the arena of politics and effectively stifling discussion. This was a justification for the sec-

\(^{89}\) Ibid.
\(^{90}\) Ibid.
\(^{91}\) Ibid.
\(^{92}\) Ibid.
tors in society that wanted to preserve status quo. The rationale is an interpretation of the Bible, which justifies non-intervention of the state in the economy, coupled with prosperity theology. An individual who has God in the heart bears fruit and prospers, and so will a country. It is the same kind of ideology that was preached in the Verbo Church in 1988.

To some degree Ríos Montt’s presidential campaign may have been helped by the evangelization campaign called “Proyecto Luz para las Naciones” (Project Light for the Nations) held by CBN and Pat Robertson in Central America in 1990. This was the largest evangelization campaign that ever had been held in Central America. It started in March, the same month as Ríos Montt officially was proclaimed the presidential candidate of FRG.\(^{93}\) Not very convincingly, CBN claimed that the harvest in El Salvador and Guatemala was 2.5 million souls.\(^ {94}\) The purpose of the campaign in Central America was to attain a million evangelical converts by campaigns in radio, television and newspapers. The movie Jesus was shown on 2,600 occasions and 200 metric tons of relief aid were distributed in connection with the campaign, which also included training of 6,000 advisors.\(^ {95}\)

The peak of the campaign was just before the beginning of the traditional Easter celebration in April. During three days Central America was bombarded by leaflets, advertisements in radio and television, and television programs on all channels. The campaign included both Bible studies, films, and family advisory services. In Nicaragua, the campaign started the day after the electoral victory of Violeta Chamorro. Both the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches in Nicaragua heavily criticized the campaign. Also the former director of the CBN’s Club 700 in Nicaragua criticized the campaign, saying that it had a political purpose. In El Salvador and Guatemala, only the Catholic Church denounced the campaign.\(^ {96}\)

The Guatemalan CBN director told during an interview that CBN had to pay the television channels for sending a 60-minute evangelization program simultaneously. The logic was that anybody who wanted to look at television at this occasion would be forced to see the same CBN program on all channels. The program was followed-up by door-to-door activities. The campaign focused on alcoholism, delinquency, family disintegration, personal insecurity, infidelity in marriage, and maltreatment of children.\(^ {97}\)

Did CBN have thoughts about the evangelization campaign as a support for Ríos Montt in the presidential elections? I asked an employee of CBN in the United States about the importance of the evangelization campaign to Ríos Montt as a presidential candidate. His answer was shortly as follows:

\(^{93}\) Prensa Libre, March 26, 1990:2. Here it was reported that Ríos Montt was proclaimed as “precandidato presidencial” for FRG.

\(^{94}\) CBN 1990.

\(^ {95}\) G. Girón Valdés, May 6, 1990.

\(^ {96}\) Inforpress Centroamericana, April 5, 1990:10–11.

\(^{97}\) J. de Leon, interview February 18, 1994.
One must consider the difference in the situation between the West and Latin America to understand what a tremendous influence the evangelicals can have to change the situation in Guatemala. An evangelization campaign has enormous importance to Ríos Montt. Guatemala is deeply divided. Some years ago, Catholic priests encouraged people to throw stones at pastors. Weapons are not enough to solve the problems of Guatemala. Spiritual warfare is necessary to conquer the minds of the people if the war is to be won. A very important task is to get terrorists to convert.98

Thus, there was an awareness inside CBN about the political importance of the evangelization campaign. Ríos Montt and the campaign was put into a context of spiritual warfare that explicitly relates to the winning of hearts and minds within counterinsurgency strategy.

In May 1990, Ríos Montt had 19 percent of the votes in the opinion polls, and the only real threat was Jorge Carpio Nicolle, running for UCN (Unión del Centro Nacional), with 21 percent.99 How could Ríos Montt have such a strong showing in spite of massacres and human rights violations during his time in government? It has been said that Ríos Montt received much support from Mayas and from women. The reason for Maya support would be their conservatism. Support from women could be because a strong government could maintain law and order. Law and order could reduce fear of violent crimes such as rape. In addition, the message of Ríos Montt against corruption, alcohol, and infidelity would attract the women.

When David Stoll wrote about the Guatemalan elections in Nacla at the beginning of 1991, he maintained that Ríos Montt was disliked by the political establishment, but attracted ordinary people. Ríos Montt appealed to the longing for an “old-fashioned caudillo, the man on horseback who saves the nation.”100 The authoritarianism of Ríos Montt attracted many Guatemalans who wanted a strongman to control the people, according to Stoll.101

In my view, it is unlikely that the people in general wanted to be controlled by a strongman. Other factors favored the popularity of Ríos Montt. He did not emerge as a result of popular efforts, but because he was backed by sectors within the extreme right. The support for him was due to lesser popularity of the other candidates, and that the political system in Guatemala did not allow for genuine popular participation.

To vote in the elections in Guatemala, the citizen must first be registered in

99 The numbers come from the fourth opinion poll made by CLE. CID (Consultoría Interdisciplinaria de Desarrollo), which is a partner to Gallup, had higher numbers: 26 percent for Carpio Nicolle and 23 percent for Ríos Montt. Inforpress Centroamericana, June 7, 1990:12; Panorama Centroamericano. Reporte Politico, June 1990:4.
101 Ibid. In a following issue of Nacla Report on the Americas, Henry J. Frundt wrote a short, critical response on the article by Stoll, who according to Frundt “unfortunately buys into the old corporatist version of politics. Its claim is that, to assure stability, Latin societies often prefer that the military assume control.” Frundt also criticized Stoll for not taking “into account the strong commitment among Guatemalans for the peace process.” H.J. Frundt, May 1991:2.
the electoral register on the initiative of the individual citizen. In the 1990 elections, 27 percent of the population did not register. This was the same percentage as in the three earlier elections. Young adults represented the largest group who did not register. Almost half of the population between 18 and 30 years remained unregistered. Literate men between 31 and 50 years were over-represented among the registered. Apparently one fourth of the population was not interested in the elections at all.102

There is no support in the statistics available to me that Mayas and women supported Ríos Montt more than other groups in the country. In July 1990, Ríos Montt had taken the lead in the opinion polls. He had 18 percent both among women and men generally, but only 13 percent among Mayas.103 There was a large difference between the capital and the highlands. Ríos Montt had 26 percent in the central region and 17 percent the highlands. But the most remarkable difference was between ages. The young people supported Ríos Montt. Among those between 18 and 29 years, 44 percent would vote for Ríos Montt, and among those between 30 and 49 years, 30 percent would vote for him. But only 14 percent of the population older than 50 years voted for Ríos Montt. In addition, it can be mentioned that 39 percent of the voters were undecided, and another 10 percent considered abstention.104

To conclude, almost half of the citizens in the younger age group did not register to vote, while almost half planned to vote for Ríos Montt. A possible explanation could be that they thought that he could solve their acute economic problems. The Guatemalans wanted peace and an end to military repression, but the daily struggle for physical survival was even more pressing for most people. The so-called democratization had not solved any of these problems. The question of economic survival was most pressing for the large majority of extremely poor people, but also for large parts of the working and the middle classes. It is likely that younger people were more worried about the future than older ones. They had their lives ahead of them and needed to provide for children.

As an evangelical, Ríos Montt probably was seen as a representative of a capitalist development related to the United States and Protestantism. The evangelization campaign of Pat Robertson's CBN was perhaps not a decisive factor in the support for Ríos Montt, but symptomatic as part of a U.S. bombardment of culture, relief aid, and economic assistance. The movie Jesus, which was repeatedly shown in Central America during 1990, demonstrates

102 The over representation of literate men was visible in all areas of the country. Literate and illiterate women made up 40 percent (I do not understand why the two groups were not distinguished), literate men 40 percent, and illiterate men 20 percent. People between 18 and 30 years made up 34 percent of the enlisted and people between 31 and 50 years made up 44 percent. The numbers are based on information from Registro de Ciudadanos, August 1990, reported in Panorama Centroamericano 1990:29–30.
103 Crónica, August 3, 1990, based on Câmara de La Libre Empresa.
104 Ibid.
well-situated evangelical North Americans who are happy because they have received Jesus in their hearts.\textsuperscript{105}

It is not likely that this pressure could be withstood without a strong ideological commitment. Because of developments in Guatemala with increased economic crisis and repression of opposition, such a commitment was less frequent among younger people than among older ones. The younger people had never been part of the growing resistance of the 1960s and 1970s. The easiest road to follow for many younger people seemed to be that of subordination to the forces of modernization and globalization, to a large extent connected to the United States.

That people supported Ríos Montt because he was an evangelical is the only hypothesis that can explain why his supporters later could turn to such a different person as Serrano Elías. Still is must be remembered that a large majority supported neither Ríos Montt, nor Serrano Elías.

\section*{Ríos Montt Prohibited from Becoming President}

The question of the legality of Ríos Montt’s candidacy created a major crisis and a political conflict. This became a major issue when it appeared he had a chance of winning the contest. The legal problem with his candidature was that the constitution from 1985 prohibited a person brought to power in a coup d'etat from participating in elections. This prohibition was also extended to close relatives of coup perpetrators. But lawyers with relations to the parties supporting Ríos Montt maintained a different opinion. According to them, the constitution could not be applied retroactively, except in penal law. His supporters also maintained that international conventions superseded the constitution. According to the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, all citizens who have come of age have the right to vote and hold office.\textsuperscript{106} Ríos Montt and his followers had never on other occasions been positive to supranational human rights organizations and conventions. But now it fit their purposes, applying to the human rights conventions.

In September 1989, the Guatemalan Congress asked the Constitutional Court to solve the case about Ríos Montt, and to answer the question if he could run for presidency. This was a start of a legal process that lasted until October 19, 1990. At this date the Constitutional Court confirmed a decision by the Supreme Court, that Ríos Montt would not be allowed to participate in the elections.\textsuperscript{107}

According to the Supreme Court, the international conventions of human

\textsuperscript{105} This argument is inspired by Michael Löwy. See Chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{106} Inforpress Centroamericana, September 21, 1989:6.

\textsuperscript{107} The decision also applied to the vice president candidate Harris Whitbeck, as well as to the candidates for deputies in the Congress and in the Central American Parliament. The parties behind Ríos Montt could only participate on municipal level. Panorama Centroamericano, October, 1990:3–5; Inforpress Centroamericana October 18, 1990:2; and Inforpress Centroamericana, October 25, 1990:15.
rights were not in conflict with the Guatemalan constitution in this case. The court referred to the Inter-American Convention which stated that the rights of every person are limited by the rights of the others, by the safety of everybody, and by the just demands of the common good in a democratic society. However, it was not possible to keep the candidacy of Ríos Montt as a solely legal matter. The issue concerned the whole democratization process and implied a form of destabilization. The question became a political conflict between the supporters of Ríos Montt and his adversaries, a development that his followers apparently wanted. His candidacy was opposed by UCN, MLN and DCG, which were the parties threatened by his candidacy. Plataforma No-Venta tried to get the rejection to look like a corrupt legal maneuver. Their position was that Ríos Montt had been a victim of a corrupt judicial system and a corrupt regime. They made him a symbol of anti-corruption, victimized by a corrupt system. This implied a delegitimization of the small beginning to build up a democratic state.

The process was followed by threats. Ríos Montt maintained that the people had the right to choose a president. When the decision barring him from candidacy was handed down, he encouraged people to vote for him anyway, or to boycott the elections. According to Ríos Montt, it was a violation of the human rights to not let him participate in the elections. He said that he would complain to the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights to have Guatemala condemned.

Some months later Verbo elder Carlos Velásquez argued in favor of Ríos Montt from the perspective of God-given inalienable rights. These rights are above civil law. Therefore it is not possible to legislate against the right for people to choose the president they want. The humans have an inalienable right to choose Hitler and also the same right not to choose him. Not even with 100 percent of the votes can the inalienable God-given rights, life, liberty, and property, be legislated against. He also criticized that priests and pastors were not allowed to be President and vice President. States limiting the
people's right to choice, can never be compatible with democracy and human rights. Thus, the people's right to choose cannot be limited except when it concerns the reconstructionist interpretation of the God-given rights. The people have no right to decide about the economic policy of the country, but have the right to vote for a dictator, according to the Verbo leader.

The Rise of Serrano Elías and Catholic Protests

When it was clear that Ríos Montt was prohibited from participating in the elections, the support for him was given to Serrano Elías, who did not run for PDCN this time, but for his own party MAS (Movimiento Acción Solidaria), which had been founded in 1987. In the Guatemalan context, this was a moderate right-wing party. Now, when Ríos Montt was out of the game it was clear that the elections would be a contest within the so-called “modernizing right.” The left had no chance, neither the Christian Democrats, nor the extreme right.

In contradiction to earlier elections in Guatemala, the interests of the private sector were obvious in their favoring of the modernizing right parties. People from this sector shared leadership of these parties. The neo-liberal tendency in these parties also reflected the connections with the capitalist interests. To MLN, this election meant the largest crisis since the establishment of the party. It was clear that big business had moved from the extreme right to the more moderate modernizing right. The opposition had won the elections in Nicaragua in February 1990. Thereby the U.S. pressures on Guatemala concerning the Nicaragua issue had disappeared.

An additional fact that reflected the tendency toward the moderate right was that extreme right fractions were included in UCN. Among them was Manuel Ayau, who defected from being a presidential candidate of MLN to instead become vice presidential candidate of UCN. Manuel Ayau was the rector and founder of the University Francisco Marroquin, which was based on the so-called Austrian school of economics and had an orthodox neo-liberal tendency. The result was a turn to the right of UCN. What UCN leader Jorge Carpio Nicolle could gain from this was support from the private sector.

The turn to the moderate right of the private sector must also be seen in the light of international relations. The global market, the United States, and international credit-giving organizations favored the tendency expressed in the modernizing right, supporting peace negotiations, democratization and neo-liberalism. The difference between the extreme right and the moderate

111 See for example Inforpress Centroamericana, November 8, 1990:2–3; and November 22, 1990:15.
112 See for example Inforpress Centroamericana, November 15, 1990:1–4.
right was not so much in economic policies as in the stand concerning negotiations and democratization.

The three main parties reflecting the modernizing right tendency were MAS led by Jorge Serrano Elías, UCN led by Jorge Carpio Nicolle, and PAN (Partido Autentico Nacional) led by Alvaru Arzú Irigoyen. While MAS was defined ideologically as conservative right, PAN and UCN were defined as liberal right. There were no major ideological differences among them. However, Carpio together with his vice presidential candidate Ayau, had the most hard-line neo-liberal direction, in favor of privatization and a laissez-faire role for the state in the economic system. Arzú and Serrano were also in favor of the free market, but argued for some state involvement in the economic area, for instance, to give credit for small and middle-size entrepreneurs.

In April 1990, Serrano published a book presenting his view on the relation between religion and politics. He describes himself as representing a balanced middle stand between theology of liberation and a passive expectation of the wait for return of Christ without attempting to change the world. Both these positions are unbalanced and have provoked actions which in turn have created barriers for Christians’ involvement in politics, according to Serrano. However, both positions have something to offer. Evangelicals must open themselves to the social reality, but with the Bible as a point of departure. The vision is to improve the structures of society in accordance with Christianity and without interference in human rights, which have divine origins. God wants the humans to govern the world in accordance with his will. If the Christians do not involve themselves, this means that the world will be left for the non-Christians. Then God’s creation will not be influenced by Christian values, maintains Serrano. He puts much effort into convincing evangelicals about political involvement. This reflects that the main problem he confronted was still the same as in 1985: that the evangelicals did not want religion and politics to be mixed. Nothing in the book reflects a stand against secularism or humanism. It looks more like an evangelical variation of Christian Democracy.

According to Virginia Garrard-Burnett, the election of Serrano Elías “could only be seen as proof of popular demand to further strengthen the political role of religion—or at least of religious identity—in Guatemalan society.” I do not agree. Religion was brought into the elections because of Ríos Montt in the first place, not because of popular demand. Serrano Elías had learned from his mistakes in 1985 and now kept a low profile on religion in the election campaign. What distinguished him from the other candidates was that he had a clear ideological program and was articulate. He appeared to be

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113 Panorama Centroamericano. Reporte Politico, November 1990:34.
superior in debates with the other presidential candidates. Serrano was also a member in the National Reconciliation Commission led by Msgr. Quezada Torúñ. He was seen as the alternative to bring peace to the country. In addition came the symbolism of an evangelical connected to economic progress.

Actually, the most open use of religion in the election campaign, except from Ríos Montt, came from Serrano Elías' main adversary, the UCN of Carpio Nicolle. In the first round of the elections Carpio Nicolle received over 27 percent of the votes and Serrano Elías, 24 percent. Almost half of the 73 percent of the registered voters stayed home. That meant that both candidates received an unimpressive ten percent each if the whole population of voting age is considered. Consequently the second round was a battle between these two candidates, one evangelical and one Catholic.

In this situation, UCN tried to use the situation for getting Catholics to vote for Carpio Nicolle. According to conservative Catholics, the triumph of Serrano in the first round was due to evangelicals and former supporters of Ríos Montt. A group within the party, Comité Cívico Alerta, distributed leaflets before the second round in which they tried to make the election a question about Protestantism or Catholicism. They encouraged Catholic believers to not "betray your God and your fatherland" by voting for Carpio to avoid a religious war in the future.

According to Comité Cívico Alerta, Serrano Elias and MAS participated in a North American plan to make Guatemala and Latin America Protestant. Serrano had replaced Ríos Montt with the purpose of completing an international conspiracy against the Catholic Church. What most had provoked this Catholic reaction was that Serrano was considered to be a collaborator with the strategies of U.S. evangelical missionary agencies. When Catholics read texts from Overseas Crusades and Jim Montgomery about church planting and discipling a nation, they thought that they could find the explanation for the evangelical growth. The expansion was the result of the work of Overseas Crusades and other missionary agencies.

A main problem these Catholics had with Serrano Elías was that he had participated in a missionary conference in Los Angeles in 1988. In a book published in Guatemala after this conference, it was stated that "it is obvious that there exists a marked interest to propagate the ideas of Christian conservative groups from the United States in Latin America without the physical presence of North American preachers but—without doubt—under the con-

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118 Comité Cívico ALERTA, December 4, 1990.
119 Comité Cívico ALERTA, December 1, 1990.
120 The Latin American Bishop Conference CELAM published and distributed a text written by Jim Montgomery to alert the Catholic bishops concerning evangelical mission strategies. The document was confidential, however, and not aimed for public use among Catholics in order to not provoke religious violence. CELAM [late 1980s].
Los Angeles 88 was organized by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the Alberto Motessi Evangelistic Association in cooperation with a large number of other evangelical organizations. The author of the book noted among other things the use of anti-Communist language and war analogies.

That these issues became highlighted in the election campaign may be explained first by the genuine fear from Catholics concerning U.S. cultural influences that accompanied economic and political influences. The second reason was political manipulation. UCN was far from being a defender of Guatemalan interests against the United States. It was slightly more neo-liberal and to the right compared to MAS. To the Guatemalan business sector and the government of the United States it would not make a major difference which presidential candidate won.

The Catholic hierarchy took a stand against the use of Catholicism in the campaign of Carpio Nicolle and maintained that religion not should be a part of the election campaigns. The accusations that Serrano Elías was a non-Catholic does not seem to have had much influence on the voters, though. In the second round, Serrano won with 68 percent of the votes, while Carpio got 32 percent. An important factor behind the victory of Serrano was that the powerful business community switched from supporting Carpio to him. Another obvious reason why Serrano won was that his party was small and weak, while UCN was strong. The other parties supported Serrano, because he would be forced to trade favors once in power. The result was thus a broad coalition government in which different parties were represented. If Carpio had won, UCN would have been strong enough to rule on its own. For the voters in general, Serrano probably meant hope for peace.

Serrano won the evangelical votes, but needed Catholic votes to be victorious. An evangelical theologian explained in an interview that a reason why Serrano now got the evangelical votes, which he did not manage to get in the previous elections, was that in 1985, he had organized his election campaigns in the churches. People disliked this behavior. This time he did not and that was why he got support from the evangelicals.

Was it important for the evangelicals to have an evangelical president? People I asked had different opinions about this. One evangelical theologian answered that it was important, because the previous government had a reputation of being corrupt. The people, and not only the evangelicals, tried to find a moral option. The only moral they knew was the one represented by Ríos Montt. When he could not run, people turned to another evangelical. This

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122 Ibid.
126 D. Suazo, interview February 18, 1991.
was because evangelicals have good reputations and are considered to be honest people. The attraction of the evangelical ethic is the only factor that can explain why people could turn from Ríos Montt to such a different political person as Serrano Elías.

It is interesting to note that all social sectors of society are active and responsible in a democratic process, the election campaign. People want to influence the future of their own country, and they know that external forces are proposing certain directions of change for the future. The results of the election campaign show, after all, that people make their own analyses of the situation, argue in a public debate and choose whether or not to vote. The logic of the people is there, but it should not be forgotten that the majority were excluded from the political process, which was dominated by Ladino men.

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Continued Counterinsurgency against the Ixils

The situation in Ixil clearly demonstrated the contradictions in the democratic opening in Guatemala during the term of Vinicio Cerezo. Here there was no room for revitalization of popular organizing. The counterinsurgency and construction of model villages continued, as did the army control and the forced participation in the civil patrols.

According to General Hector Gramajo (minister of defense from 1987), the guerrillas were the greatest threat against the consolidation of a democratic system in Guatemala. According to him, there were 3,000 guerrilla soldiers in Guatemala in 1986. With the establishment of the civil government the Guatemalan army replaced the older strategy of "Beans and Rifles" with what was called "Estrategia Integral" (Holistic Strategy). The most important pillar of this strategy was the Thesis of National Stability that replaced the older Doctrine of National Security. This thesis was outlined already during the time of Ríos Montt, but it was not fully implemented until 1986. The Thesis of National Stability was an integrated strategy encompassing all government activities to promote security and welfare in the political, psycho-social, economic, and military arenas. The policy still implied that the army should have a continued strong role concerning internal affairs of the country and development was subordinated to security defined by the army.

The displaced Ixil population outside army-controlled areas had a respite since 1984 from the army strategy of massacres and scorched earth campaigns after the army had taken control of large parts of the Ixil region. The displaced started to organize community life and cultivate the land in the areas where they lived. However, in 1987 the army launched the so-called "End-of-the-Year" offensive directed against the guerrilla and the displaced population with the purpose of getting the population to settle within army-controlled

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2 Ibid.:257–258. See also H.A. Gramajo Morales 1989. The Thesis of National Stability was, according to Gramajo, a concept for the period of democratic transition. When this period was completed a new Doctrine of Security should be applied.
areas. The offensive lasted from September 1987 to April 1988. In it 4,500 soldiers participated. It was directed at the areas of refuge in all three Ixil municipalities and the result was that villages and crops, reconstructed by the displaced, again were destroyed by the army. Some people were killed and others captured. The army raids included both bombings and leaflets dropped from airplanes with political-ideological propaganda. Construction of infrastructure, model villages and army posts continued into these new areas that were put under army control. The army attacks resulted in new displacements of Ixils, who did not want to surrender to the army. According to the Guatemalan Church in Exile, the “End-of-the-Year” offensive caused displacement of more than 7,000 people in the Ixil area.

In the report by AVANSCO about returned refugees, three reasons why Ixils returned to their old areas now controlled by the army are mentioned. First, a number of Ixils was captured by the army. Second, the “End-of-the-Year” offensive managed to destroy their subsistence network. People were forced to flee again and the harvests were destroyed by the army. To some people the insecurity of life in the mountains became greater than the uncertainties of surrender to the army. A third reason was the search for family members. The army and the civil patrols tried to capture women and children and use them as bait to get the men to surrender. According to AVANSCO, between 8,000 and 10,000 persons surrendered to army-controlled areas for these reasons in 1987 and 1988.

Still, many people preferred to stay in the mountains. AVANSCO does not exclude the possibility that the guerrillas might have exerted pressure on the population to remain, but emphasizes that the motives were more complex. One reason was the memory of the massacres and the fear of the army. Another reason was that some Ixils found fertile soil in northern Chajul, much more fertile than the land in their home villages.

Large numbers of the refugees from the mountains were taken to the camp Xemamatze in Nebaj, where they had to stay three months before they settled in model villages. Xemamatze functioned as a filtering point for deciding which persons were ideologically “pure” and thus could be allowed to settle in the model villages. During the three-month stay in the camp, the people received ideological re-education, learned to read and write, and recuperated their health. The help they got when they settled in model villages was minimal. During my visits to Xemamatze in 1988 and 1991, not much was visible of the magnificent development plans. In 1991, 90 percent of the 6,000 refugees who had passed through Xemamatze had not received proper housing.

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5 AVANSCO 1992:131–133.
6 Ibid.:134.
7 Ibid.:135–136.
They received no help from evangelical churches and only marginal support from the Catholic Church.\(^8\)

What was obvious when I visited the Ixil area in 1988 was the lack of development projects in the model villages in Nebaj. There was a semblance of infrastructure, schools, health service, and food-for-work, but the efforts made by churches and other non-governmental organizations were concentrated on emergency aid, not on long-term development. The implementation of these plans obviously fell short.\(^9\) The severe problem was the army control and the priority of the security objectives. Money and efforts invested went principally to construction of infrastructure such as roads and electricity, not to, for instance, agricultural development. From 1989, the United Nations Development Program established a major presence in the Ixil area. Results of this work were not visible during the 1980s, however. In the late 1980s, large numbers of non-governmental organizations moved into the Ixil area and seemed to be a hindrance instead of a promotion of development, because of lack of coordination and grass-roots participation.

The projected population estimation of the three Ixil municipals together for 1989 was on 101,779 individuals. However, only 70,072 lived in government-controlled area in 1989. More than 31,000 persons, almost a third of the population, were missing. Among them possibly 12,000 were refugees, still hiding from the army in the northern part of the Ixil region, and some, not more than 5,000 Ixils, were displaced at other locations. Consequently, at least 15,000 individuals were missing, and possibly killed in massacres or by starvation while hiding from the army.\(^10\) Even if both women and children had been killed in army massacres, a disproportionate number of adult men were missing, leaving behind widows and children. In 1989, there were 2,642 widows and 4,186 orphans in the army-controlled zone of the Ixil area.\(^11\)

In 1990, the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPRs) appeared in public. Those communities consisted of the displaced people who remained in the area of Amajchel, Caba, and Xeputul in Chajul and other groups of displaced people in the Ixcán jungle. They demanded the withdrawal of the army from their region so that they could live in peace.\(^12\) According to the CPRs of La Sierra (Chajul), the army had attacked them both in 1989 and 1990. The attacks were launched both by land and by air-force bombings. In

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\(^9\) This is confirmed by B. Manz 1988:106-109; and AVANSCO 1992:146-153.

\(^10\) D. Stoll 1993:228-233. Stoll discusses numbers given by National Census, Government Health Center, U.N. estimate, and National Statistic Institute and concludes that this is the best estimation, given the lack of better data.


\(^12\) Infopress Centroamericana, October 18, 1990b:7-9; Official Documents of the Communities of Population in Resistance of the Sierra [1990]; and Las Comunidades de Poblacion en Resistencia [1990].
March 1990, while burning 48 houses, the army also had burnt two Catholic chapels, a Protestant chapel, and three schools.\textsuperscript{13}

At the end of January 1991, the first delegation from CPRs of the Sierra appeared in the Guatemalan capital in an attempt to get support for their cause. When asked why they did not want to live in the model villages, they answered that a change occurred when people left the mountains, surrendered to the army and moved to the model villages. They had been transformed to "bad people" who helped the army and the civil patrols to hunt their former neighbors in the mountains.\textsuperscript{14} Obviously the CPRs did not want to experience the change to the army's perspective to which they would have to submit if they surrendered.

The public appearance of the CPRs resulted in increased support for their right to be treated as civil population both on national and international level, and above all from the churches. In Guatemala, both the Catholic hierarchy and CIEDEG expressed their support. Above all, the Guatemalan Church in Exile and the Catholic parish priest in Chajul tried to help them, the latter exposed to constant threats by the army. Visits by international delegations and international pressure forced the Guatemalan army to stop the attacks on the CPRs, even if incidents continued until the middle of the 1990s.

The Ixil people were divided on two sides of an armed front. Still, in 1992, people did not know for sure if relatives were dead or alive on the other side. These two sides were molded by their different experiences of the war. The CPRs position was a result of their resistance and their closeness to the guerrilla movement EGP. The stance of the people in the army-controlled areas was formed through their experience of the Guatemalan army.

Religion and the Limits of Democracy on Local Level

One hinder to democracy on the municipal level in the development poles during the term of Vinicio Cerezo was the Inter-institutional Coordinators. These coordinators integrated the military and government agencies in the counterinsurgency efforts. They formed a parallel structure to democratically elected representatives and continued the army's developmentalism, despite the fact that the civil government had placed them under civil authority. In 1987, the Inter-institutional Coordinators were replaced by Development Councils coordinated under the Minister of Development, René de León Schlotter. However, the function of these councils continued in the same vein as the coordinators. They were organized on national, regional (a new level), provincial, municipal, and local levels. Their function was to control and organize the population, but coordination and decision-making were carried

\textsuperscript{13} Official Documents of the Communities of Population in Resistance of the Sierra [1990]:15.

\textsuperscript{14} Encounter with delegation of CPRs of the Sierra, Instituto Santiago Indígena, Guatemala City February 2, 1991. Author's diary.
out at higher levels. Grass-roots participation in decision-making concerning development planning was excluded.\textsuperscript{15}

The critique was harsh from the political opposition parties of all different colors, mainly because the Development Councils were considered to promote the party in government and counteract the right to free association. The system permitted the Christian Democratic party (DCG) to channel popular organizing to benefit its own cadres and to manipulate elections to its own advantage. It reduced the people's input into development plans to proposal-making without decision-making authority. The establishment of Development Councils included the training of a large number of different kinds of social promoters, which critics considered to be an instrument for extending the influence of the Christian Democrats. In addition, the system with Development Councils went hand in hand with the counterinsurgency project of the army intended to control the population, maintained critics.\textsuperscript{16}

According to the Guatemalan Church in Exile, the social promoters became an alternative leadership in support of the government and the army on the local level, which counteracted traditional leadership and popular organizing.\textsuperscript{17} Actually, three of the mayors in Nebaj in the 1980s were bilingual promoters. The first one was appointed by Rios Montt in 1982. The second and the third mayors were Christian Democrats and were elected for the periods 1986–1988 and 1988–1990, respectively. The mayor elected in late 1990 was a Ladino health inspector, who also was running for the DCG.\textsuperscript{18}

The situation may be seen as a continuation of the 1970s Christian Democrat policy of building up a popular base for the party in the Mayan highlands. The difference was that in the 1970s the party was persecuted, while in the latter half of 1980s, the party was in power. Now the Christian Democrat party represented cooperation with the army and continuation of the counterinsurgency project.\textsuperscript{19} Seen from the perspective of the local popular Christian Democrat base among the Ixil population, this must have been an extremely confusing situation. Since the 1970s, Christian Democracy had attracted Ixils who hoped for political, social and economic change. To co-opt the party to be a participant in counterinsurgency was probably as effective as

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} According to the analysis of the Guatemalan Church in Exile: “It is not difficult to conclude that the Christian Democrats and the army have developed a symbiotic relationship. The government party reinforces the army by enriching this counterinsurgency instrument and packaging it with populist language. At the same time, the Christian Democrats use the counterinsurgency instrument as a very powerful tool for broadening their party’s social base.” IGE 1989:55.
\textsuperscript{18} D. Stoll 1993:213–214. The municipal elections in late 1985 and 1990 coincided with elections for President and Parliament, while the elections in 1988 only were for municipal appointments.
\textsuperscript{19} Christian Democrat openness for cooperation with the army was not a new phenomenon in Guatemala, though, as visible for instance in the choice of Rios Montt as presidential candidate for the election of 1974.
the use of the evangelical churches in counteracting opposition and popular organizing.

According to Gen. Gramajo's army perspective, the purpose of the evangelical churches in the conflict zones had been to fill the void left by the absence of Catholic priests and catechists. The army had noted that evangelical pastors could fill this void and help people who were in need of moral guidance. Protestantism brought political stability to the Mayan villages. This situation was only temporary, however. The real task of the army was to reestablish the Maya hierarchy and its traditional Catholicism. The army had taken advantage of Protestantism with the intention of destroying the hegemony of the young Catholic catechists. Just as the priests, the catechists challenged the cofradías and aligned themselves with the guerrillas, according to Gen. Gramajo. When this task was fulfilled, both the Maya hierarchy and Catholic catechists were allowed to return, but only after divesting themselves of Marxist rhetoric.20

The return of traditional leadership in political life was not visible in the Ixil area and barely in other parts of Guatemala during the Cerezo government, however. But Gen. Gramajo's statement reflected the plan to normalize the religious situation and put an end to discrimination against catechists and traditionalists. Instead they should be controlled and neutralized. Catholics in the Ixil area continued to dwell in a less-privileged position than evangelicals, however. In Cotzal, the Catholic Church could not repossess its real estate until 1989.

The dominant force in political life in the Ixil area was the Christian Democrat party, mainly dominated by younger men, both evangelicals and Catholics. It is worth noting that political organizing did not necessarily follow religious boundaries. Because the Ixil society is not a secularized society, religious influence means political influence. Consequently, prominent evangelicals, including pastors, became dominant in the political life and in the Christian Democrat party. There was no visible ethnic division between Ixils and Ladinos in party politics. Because of the war, most Ladinos had fled from the area and left vacancies for Ixils, who took over tasks that earlier had belonged to Ladinos, for example, labor contracting for the plantations. David Stoll called this situation ethnic détente. I agree, even though class contradictions within the Ixil population continued to grow. Local Ladino power decreased but the Guatemalan central government (also an expression of Ladino power) strengthened its influence and control of the Ixil area.

In 1985, the DCG won elections in all three Ixil municipalities. Here as in other parts of the country, a vote for DCG expressed hopes for democratization and peace. Serrano Elías' PDCN on the other hand was not at all successful. El Quiché was not a stronghold for PDCN.21 The elections reflected the fact that the DCG was the party with the best organized popular base in El Quiché.

21 See for example ASIES 1986 for election statistics on provincial levels.
In Nebaj, the Christian Democrat mayor between 1986 and 1988 was a founder of one of the largest evangelical churches, Monte Basán. The church separated because of divisions within the Methodist Church and the Central American Church in 1981.\textsuperscript{22} The mayor did not live up to the high moral standard expected of evangelicals, though. He was soon accused of both corruption and drunkenness.\textsuperscript{23} In March 1988, a major effort was made by a group of Ixils to demand the resignation of this mayor. The vice mayor and several prominent Christian Democrats broke with DCG. Together with some social promoters, teachers, and civil patrol leaders, they established the civic committee Cotón, named after the traditional red jackets of the Ixil men. The purpose was to organize an independent campaign for the election of 1988. Two Ladinos headed the list of candidates.\textsuperscript{24} At this time discontent with the Christian Democrats was widespread in Guatemala.

The DCG won the elections again, however, because the opposition was divided. The DCG warned the voters that without a DCG victory, aid from the central government to the Ixil area would disappear. The party especially used the widows in Nebaj in election propaganda. The 1,550 widows in Nebaj lived in a precarious situation and were dependent on hand-outs for their subsistence.\textsuperscript{25} Thus, they were easy to manipulate and use for political ends.

The Cotón civic committee later became a base for the organizing of support for Ríos Montt in the election of 1990. Many of the members joined the parties FRG and PREG that supported Ríos Montt. While the Catholics were attracted to Ríos Montt’s own party FRG, the evangelicals joined PREG, the evangelical party that also supported the candidacy of Ríos Montt. The supporters of Ríos Montt won the elections in Cotzal in 1990 and came close to winning also in the other Ixil municipals, but were defeated by the Christian Democrats.\textsuperscript{26}

The background to the victory of Ríos Montt’s party FRG in Cotzal is very noteworthy, however. In Cotzal all candidates for mayor were evangelicals, including the Christian Democrat candidate. A Catholic catechist found this situation unacceptable and decided to run himself. He became a FRG candidate, because it was the only party that did still not have a candidate for mayor. The Catholics in Cotzal were divided on the issue, but apparently he won with both Catholic and evangelical votes.

In the army-controlled Ixil area during the latter part of the 1980s, there was no possibility for the revitalization of popular organizing that took place in some other parts of the country. Organizations like CONAVIGUA and CERJ that were growing in southern El Quiché could not exist in Ixil, be-

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.:215.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.:217.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.:218.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.:219–220.
cause the people were afraid of army retaliations. There were few possibilities to express discontent and people generally were still too afraid to take any risks. Support for Ríos Montt was one of the few safe possibilities to express discontent with the party in government.

Renewed Evangelical Efforts

The northern part of the municipality of Chajul in the Ixil region was the army’s most important remaining strategic area during Vinicio Cerezo’s term of office. While the “End-of-the-Year” offensive of 1987 had been more effective in taking control in Nebaj and Cotzal, both the guerrillas and many displaced remained in Chajul. The army attacks into this area continued at least until 1991 or 1992.

In 1987, the Church Jesus Heals and Saves in Chajul became affiliated with the Verbo Church and accompanied by Verbo elders from the Guatemalan capital. The church established new congregations in model villages constructed for captured and displaced people in northern Chajul. The new affiliation coincided with the campaign directed by Ríos Montt and Ronny Gilmore to distribute the New Testament to soldiers and civil patrols. It was also Ronny Gilmore, who together with another Verbo elder, Antonio de la Guardia, seemed to be most responsible for contacts with the church in Chajul. Ronny Gilmore had from the beginning not entered Guatemala as a Gospel Outreach (Verbo) missionary, but was sent by Florida-based Globe Evangelism led by Ken Sumrall. He was among the Verbo leaders who left Guatemala for establishing the new center in Miami.27

The affiliation with the Verbo Church created a split within Jesus Heals and Saves. A large part of the members preferred to remain independent and left for creating a new church: New Hope (Nueva Esperanza). Later this church would join another neo-Pentecostal church, Elim. To be affiliated with a church in the capital was apparently too attractive to withstand because of the benefits it would bring.

The La Perla plantation in Chajul had been of strategic value for the army since the beginning of the war. The army had also protected the coffee harvest from attacks from the guerrillas. During the Cerezo government, this plantation became especially strategically significant, however, because of its closeness to the area around Amajchel, where the army tried to target both the guerrilla and the civil population. The army garrison at La Perla was an important base both to reach the Amajchel area and Ixcán. At this time La Perla also became an important base for U.S. evangelical missionary activities, invited by the owners, Enrique and Ricardo Arenas Barrera. They were the sons

of Luis Arenas (killed by the guerrillas in 1975) who now had turned to evangelicalism. Since the time of Ríos Montt, the owners of La Perla had tried social experiments on the plantation. The experiments had been in accordance with the counterinsurgency campaign and led to an increase in coffee production in spite of the war. In 1983, they founded a solidarity union, which was a new-old form of employers-led labor-organizing.

The solidarity movement has its background in the Catholic social teachings from the beginning of the century. It came to Central America after World War II and became a conservative alternative to other Catholic labor unions related to the Christian Democracy. The solidarity movement seeks solidarity between labor and capital for promoting class harmony. It is not a labor movement in the real sense of the word, because it represents both the employers and the workers. A solidarity association is established by saving 5 to 8 percent of the salaries of the workers. The employer matches the amount. Thus, a financial organ for saving and lending is established. The money is invested in the company or related companies. According to critics of the solidarity movement, it takes away the workers' pressures for improved economic conditions, because they lose their right to join collective negotiations. The association does not have any influence on internal affairs of the company.\(^2^8\)

In spite of the Catholic principles behind the solidarity movement, the La Perla plantation became an important base and target for evangelical missionary activities from Facts of Faith. The organization opened a health clinic at the plantation. Facts of Faith received food donations from Larry Jones' Ministries and from the Don Stewart Association among others.\(^2^9\) It is noteworthy that Captain Muñoz Piloña, one of the principal perpetrators of the coup in 1982, who now had resigned from the army, started to work for Larry Jones' relief arm Feed the Children.\(^3^0\)

In 1988, Living Water Teaching took over the evangelical operations at La Perla. This neo-Pentecostal ministry had come to Guatemala in 1979 and had its center in Quetzaltenango in contrast to most other churches that had their centers in the capital. Representatives of Living Water Teaching moved around the highlands in their airplanes, conducting evangelistic campaigns and informing their service programs. At the beginning of 1991, Living Water Teaching in Guatemala had three airplanes, which were donated by Kenneth Copeland, Lester Sumrall, and Oral Roberts, respectively, all of them leaders of U.S. evangelical ministries.\(^3^1\)

\(^2^8\) The Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center 1988:61,62; Inforpress Centroamericana, April 21, 1988:10–11; and Inforpress Centroamericana, June 30, 1988:12–13. In 1976 the leaders of the Coca-Cola plant in Guatemala (Embotelladora Guatemalteca, SA) had tried to create a solidarity union in conflict with the workers who tried to organize a labor union. The attempt failed and it was not until the establishment of an association at La Perla as the solidarity movement got any success in Guatemala.

\(^2^9\) IGE 1989:130.

\(^3^0\) This was told by Muñoz Piloña himself in interview with Prensa Libre. E. Klüssman and G. Berganza, March 22, 1987:5–7.
The owners of the La Perla plantation were not the only landlords in the Ixil area who were “born again.” Also one of the three brothers who own the San Fransisco plantation in Cotzal, Fernando Brol, became evangelical, while one brother remained Catholic and the third one is said to be religiously indifferent. Fernando Brol had apparently turned to evangelicalism because of the influence of his spouse and they alternately went to the Prince of Peace Church and Elım in the capital. In my interview with Fernando Brol it was clear that he was an Epicurean and did not follow the strict life style of evangelicals. However, to remain in the Catholic Church was impossible for him because of the damages caused by the Catholic priests, who in his view tried to recruit the people to the guerrilla movement. According to Brol, people in the Ixil area joined evangelical churches because they did not like the relation between the Catholic Church and the guerrillas. In his opinion, the evangelicals fear God and do not want to fight. They perform well in all kinds of situations. They are orderly, work better and are more trustworthy. 32

Fernando Brol financed the reconstruction of an Assemblies of God temple at the plantation.33 The temple could very well compete with the plantation’s Catholic church in size. In 1990, approximately 40 percent of the 2,500 permanent inhabitants on the plantation were evangelicals. Fernando Brol also helped evangelical churches around the area financially. All evangelical churches in the town of Nebaj got some kind of modest financial support from him, for instance, musical instruments.

During the 1980s, most Ixil evangelical churches were initiated by Ixils after contact with churches based in Guatemala City. Once, when asking how the churches in Nebaj had been established I got the following answer:

First the group is organized. It can be for example a group of relatives. Then they read leaflets from different churches to see what doctrine they think is best fitting. One can read, for example, the leaflet from Assemblies of God and find that it does not fit, and then read the leaflet from Prince of Peace and find that this is the more appropriate doctrine. New churches have been organized among others by people who left the Full Gospel Church of God. The reason was that its church building was not big enough to hold all the faithful.34

The evangelical churches in the Ixil area are fragile in comparison with the Catholic Church and easily split. People easily move from one church to another. One reason for division is the authoritarian leadership, which sows

31 See for example IGE 1989:129–130; Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center 1988:48; and A. Soliz, interview April 4, 1991. Alvaro Soliz is a pastor who worked at the Living Water Teaching headquarters in Quetzaltenango. See S. Brouwer, P. Gifford, and S.D. Rose 1996:68–73, for a more comprehensive description of Living Water Teaching in Guatemala. According to this book, most missionaries of Living Water Teaching are former military officers, which has facilitated relations with the Guatemalan army.
33 Ibid. According to D. Stoll 1993:235, the temple was built for Church of God, however, while some Ixils think that it was built for Monte Basan.
34 Evangelical church member E, interview April 23, 1994. Author's translation from Spanish.
the seeds for dissidents to establish new churches. Another reason is that smaller congregations more easily can fill the purpose of being a support network for the members. The evangelical churches came to play the role of being new communities that replaced the older village communities destroyed by the war. At this point they sometimes came into conflict with those non-evangelicals who wanted to overcome the division of the Ixil population through integrated community development. While Catholic representatives viewed themselves as responsible for the welfare of the whole community, evangelical pastors basically cared for their own church members.

It is noteworthy that different religious allegiances did not cause division among the CPRs, nor among the Guatemalan refugees in the United Nations' refugee camps in Mexico. The people were drawn together by their common experience of war. Also the CPRs were affected by the religious changes that had taken place in the Ixil area. According to a Catholic priest who visited them during the latter half of the 1980s, a large part of the Catholic population was charismatic. Like the evangelicals they had a dualistic world view with a total dichotomy between the spiritual and material dimensions. The difference from the population in the government-controlled zones was however, that the charismatics among the CPRs were politically radical. This priest should have been accompanied by an evangelical pastor when he went to visit the CRPs. Due to a change in plans, the pastor did not arrive. While the evangelicals were disappointed, they readily participated in the Catholic meetings in the absence of a pastor.35

Thus, the Ixil charismatic religion arose not only from the need for physical survival which meant submitting to the army, but attracted people who had lived through war and its aftermath regardless of allegiances. It also shows that charismatic religion was not necessarily intrinsically politically conservative, but became so due to the pressure of the army. In addition, the willingness of the evangelicals to participate in Catholic meetings demonstrates that resentment to Catholicism not was very profound in the absence of pastors.

Challenges from the Catholic Church

David Stoll writes that one of the unexpected surprises in his field work, was the revival of the Catholic Church in the Ixil region at the end of the 1980s. In 1987, the Catholic Church seemed to be weak and divided. In Chajul, the only substantial Catholic group was the charismatics, while in Cotzal the Catholic Church seemed to have almost totally disappeared as an institution. By 1989, the situation had totally changed. New priests and sisters had arrived and the Catholics “were visibly coalescing” around them, according to Stoll.36

When I visited the Ixil area at the beginning of 1991, I was surprised by the low number of evangelicals in Chajul and Cotzal, given what I had heard about evangelical growth in the area. The information I received was that about 15 percent of the population in Chajul and 18 percent in Cotzal was Protestant. This was well below the national average at the time of 25–35 percent. However, on the San Fransisco plantation in Cotzal, 39 percent of the population was Protestant which was a larger percentage than in Cotzal generally. The figures given for Nebaj in 1992 varied between 33–50 percent evangelicals. A recurring problem in Guatemala when estimating religious allegiance is that the numbers can be questioned, and general impressions of people in the area seemed to indicate that there were more evangelicals in Chajul and Cotzal than the above numbers. This may be because they had relatively more influence than their numbers indicate, however.

If the figures for Cotzal and Chajul mean that people left evangelical churches and went back to the Catholic Church or if the number of evangelicals never had been very much higher is difficult to know. There are, however, two important facts to note concerning the revitalization of the Catholic Church, which may explain its growing influence. First, the Catholic Church was still persecuted in the Ixil area during the second half of the 1980s, but the army did not promote conversion to evangelicalism as before. Displaced people, captured by the army, did not feel a pressure to convert. It is likely that the Catholic Church got back many of its most faithful followers among the 8,000 to 10,000 displaced who returned from the mountains during 1987 and 1988.

Second, in Cotzal and Chajul, two European parish priests were placed, a West German in Cotzal (1989) and an Italian (1987) in Chajul. Those priests had access to foreign resources and could work both with development projects and reconstruction of the severely damaged real estate of the church. They happened to come from countries that were concerned about Guatemala, with financially strong Catholic communities, and influential Christian Democrat parties. It is likely that these priests could strengthen the role of the Catholic Church.

In 1989, the United Nations Development Program started to work in the Ixil area under the program name PRODERE, financed by Italy. While PRODERE was shaken by corruption scandals, accusations of paternalism and lack of results, at least one of the projects it helped to finance was generally considered to be successful. This was a large cooperative in Chajul, principally working with coffee production and export. Both Catholics and evangelicals

37 The number in Chajul comes from the pastor in Jesus Heals and Saves, T. Asicona, interview March 25, 1991. He counted with 3,000 Protestants and at this time the population of Chajul consisted of approximately 20,000. However, A.L. Sherman 1994:441, counted 25–35 percent evangelicals in Chajul only a year later in 1992. These numbers she got from evangelical pastors, including Tomas Asicona. The numbers for Cotzal are made up by catechists in Cotzal. F. Wübbolt February 17, 1990.
participated, including members in the Verbo Church. Because of the common development concerns it reinforced, the project promoted improved relations between Catholics and evangelicals. The association was formally independent from the Catholic Church, but the priest clearly was very involved.

It is worth noting that in both Cotzal and Chajul, Catholic Action could recapture its role in the towns in the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. In Nebaj the situation was different, however. While the Catholic Church was strong in the villages, it did not retake the same role in town. The Catholic priest placed in Nebaj was a K'iche, corresponding to the strategy of placing Mayan Catholic priests in Mayan areas when possible. He did not have the same access to foreign development resources as the priests in Chajul and Cotzal and did not seem to be at the center of development projects the same way as the other priests. In Nebaj, the most "urbanized" town, there were also more competition from non-governmental organizations and secular enterprises.

Even if there is a nucleus of faithful Catholics and evangelicals who would never change their church allegiance, there is reason to believe that the majority of Ixils may change church allegiances depending on an evaluation of the best alternative for the moment. This is not to say that they do not care about religion, just that the churches are not the center of their religious life, commanding a strong allegiance. Instead, the traditional Ixil religion and culture, influenced by a dose of non-orthodox Catholicism, may be the true focus of belief and allegiance.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{38} This view is strongly supported by Catholic priest D, interview April 12, 1994 and April 13, 1994.
Ixil Area:
Displacement and Capture of the Civilian Population During the "End-of-the-Year" Offensive
Sept. 1987–March 1988

Development and Peace Plan for the Ixil Triangle
1988–1989
–Newly situated model villages

[Map showing displacement and capture of the civilian population during the offensive, and a peace plan map with newly situated model villages.]
Development and Peace Plan for the Ixll Triangle 1988-1989:
- Access Road Network

Peace and Development Plan for the Ixll Triangle 1988-1989
CHAPTER 10
Concluding Remarks

This study has focused on Political Evangelicalism and its relationship to the Guatemalan counterinsurgency war within a broad context of the Guatemalan situation and its relation to the United States (1976–1990). The problem has centered on the following questions: How did Political Evangelicalism appear in Guatemala and how did it develop? How did agents of Political Evangelicalism act? What kind of language was employed to legitimize armed and structural violence? What was the relationship between Political Evangelicalism and counterinsurgency?

The year 1976 marked the severe earthquake that was a catalyst both for an upsurge of popular demands and evangelical growth. This evangelical growth was not principally a result of missionary efforts from North American churches as could have been expected. Instead most of the new congregations were the result of evangelization efforts from churches already established in the country, or of splinter groups from these churches. From the United States came mainly parachurch agencies, religious broadcasters, and the charismatic movement. Their purpose was not to build new churches, but to support or influence the already existing ones. One of the few exceptions was the Verbo Church established by California-based Gospel Outreach. The result of all these new movements in combination with the growing Guatemalan crisis was that the churches to an increasingly degree formed themselves along political lines.

The growing socio-economic crisis during the 1970s led to increased popular demands for structural changes. The army responded with repression leading to a political crisis and then to a revolutionary crisis by 1980. The Roman Catholic Church was severely divided, with the cardinal supporting the rulers and large parts of the church, including bishops, supporting social change. The army's repression to a large extent was aimed at the Catholic Church, and with the 1980 escalation, army officials approached the evangelicals in an attempt to obtain legitimacy.

These events coincided with a mobilization for a Republican election victory in the United States, in which the New Religious Political Right played a prominent role. In Guatemala, the escalation of the crisis in 1980 can be
related to Nicaragua, because of the hopes the Nicaraguan revolution enkindled among broad sectors in the population and the corresponding fear that provoked a harsh response from the army. In this situation, Political Evangelicalism expressed in organizations like Pat Robertson’s Christian Broadcasting Network and Overseas Crusades entered Guatemala.

After coming to power, the Reagan administration tried to convince Congress to revoke the ban on arms sales and military aid to Guatemala that President Carter had implemented in 1977 because of the human rights abuses. In the wake of these efforts, General Efraín Ríos Montt became president in an attempt from the Guatemalan army to bolster the political system. With the coup in 1982 that brought Ríos Montt to power, the Verbo Church became directly involved in political events. This was more by chance than by design. The army’s choice of Ríos Montt corresponded to a counterinsurgency logic. He would have been chosen whatever his religious affiliation. At the same time, Ríos Montt’s church membership reflected that evangelicalism had entered also the upper sectors of Guatemalan society. During the Ríos Montt regime, evangelicalism was used in the United States for acquiring financial support for Ríos Montt, on the Guatemalan national level for generating public consent, and in the counterinsurgency war on the local level for winning the loyalty of the population.

Ríos Montt was ousted in 1983 and both he and the Verbo Church for a time kept a low profile. His term had demonstrated that it was not possible to alienate the Catholics if public consent with the present order would be generated. It was not until Ríos Montt had been replaced by a Catholic, General Mejía Victores, that the Reagan administration could obtain consensus between Democrats and Republicans in Congress concerning military support to Guatemala. Mejía Victores promised democratic elections, and with similar developments in other Central American countries, it was possible to achieve the bipartisan consensus expressed in the 1984 Kissinger report. The principal objective of the Reagan administration in Central America was to oust the Nicaraguan Sandinista government, by supporting the armed Contras opposition and isolating Nicaragua politically.

The shrine of the Black Christ in Esquipulas provided the Catholic overtones to the Central American peace process, based in the Esquipulas accords from 1986 and 1987. The influence of the Guatemalan Catholic Church increased and it played a prominent role in the peace process. The Catholic Church was now characterized by increased unity behind a new archbishop. President Vinico Cerezo of the civil Christian Democrat government, installed in Guatemala at the beginning of 1986, invited to the Esquipulas summit meetings as a continuation of earlier peace efforts. The new government meant a democratic opening but also continued counterinsurgency.

The Guatemalan government tried to carry on a neutral foreign policy that had began already during the time of Ríos Montt. The United States tried to pressure Guatemala to line up against Nicaragua. As a result of the growing
disturbances, partly caused by the United States' under-the-table pressures on
the Guatemalan government, the extreme right was encouraged. In 1988,
Ríos Montt appeared as a presidential candidate, launched by the parties he
once had ousted from power.

In February 1990, the United States' pressure on Guatemala disappeared
because of the election victory of Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua. Now, when
the Sandinistas had lost power, the U.S. Central America policy changed to
unconditional support for the Esquipulas process. It became clear that the
Guatemalan economic elite, which had been divided between the moderate
and the extreme right, to a large extent would support the moderate right. Pat
Robertson and the Christian Broadcasting Network continued to support
Ríos Montt, but his candidacy was finally ruled to be illegal. Instead the more
moderate evangelical Serrano Elías won the elections.

The Frontier Mission Movement in the United States was not a part of the
New Religious Political Right, even if individuals may have been. But it can
be counted within Political Evangelicalism because of its view of evangelical-
ism as a base for the creation of a good society. To this movement, the promo-
tion of quantitative church growth around the world had the highest priority.
The U.S. Center for World Mission, which had a leading role, called itself a
mission's Pentagon. Mission was seen within a framework of war. Missionaries
and missionary organizations were "fighting units" participating in battles
around the world. From one of the organizations in the Frontier Mission
Movement, Overseas Crusades (now OC International), the concept of the
discipling of a whole nation-state developed, implying that quantitative
church growth was seen within geopolitical entities. Overseas Crusades
viewed the discipling of a whole nation in terms of conquest of territory. The
Great Commission was seen within this framework. The view of Overseas
Crusades was that when a large percent of the population was evangelical the
destiny of the country would be influenced.

Overseas Crusades entered Guatemala in 1980 with the purpose of making
the country 50 percent evangelical by 1990. This would happen through
helping the Guatemalan evangelical churches in church planting efforts. Dur-
ding the Ríos Montt government, Overseas Crusades involved itself in the
Protestant centennial, which turned out to be a show case in favor of Ríos
Montt. Luis Palau, the former president of Overseas Crusades, echoed the
message given by Ríos Montt that a change of the nation must start with the
individual. Luis Palau also helped in Ríos Montt fund raising efforts in the
United States. According to Overseas Crusades, factors like the earthquake
and Ríos Montt were behind evangelical growth and could thus be seen in a
positive light. Quantitative church growth became a superior value under
which other values were subordinated. Consequently, the Ríos Montt govern-
ment could be seen in a positive light, because it promoted evangelicalism, in
spite of the human rights abuses.
The major impact of Overseas Crusades was not as a catalyst for Guatemalan evangelical church growth, however. Instead it was to keep ideological control of the churches in a critical situation when deciding their position in the present political and social context. The emphasis on quantitative growth was related to a theology that separated the spiritual dimension from the worldly dimension. The churches should be preoccupied with their own growth and not involve themselves in politics or social concerns. The work of Overseas Crusades was thus a way to keep ideological control of the Guatemalan evangelical churches. It has parallels in other areas, such as the U.S.-inspired labor union umbrella to keep control of the Guatemalan labor unions.

Overseas Crusades did not promote any active political involvement among Guatemalan evangelicals. Its role was rather to form a passive evangelical mass that political actors could mobilize for their purposes. Its programs were begun despite considerable resistance from the Guatemalan evangelical churches. In the situation of renewed popular demands during the Cerezo government (1986–1990) it became clear, however, that many evangelical churches not would tow the organizational line of Overseas Crusades.

Contrary to a popular Guatemalan view, there never existed a homogenous policy from the United States, from the Guatemalan army, nor the elite to promote evangelicalism at the cost of Catholicism. The strategy of making half of Guatemala evangelical was a goal from Overseas Crusades. However, this mission movement and the U.S. policy coincided in the short-term goals concerning ideological control of Guatemalans. The mission movement was instrumental for U.S. policy as well as for the Guatemalan army. The promotion of evangelical movements was basically a complement, not a compensation for similar attempts to promote conservative Catholic movements. The limits with a one-sided promotion of conservative evangelicalism (seen from counterinsurgency perspective) became obvious during the government of Ríos Montt.

Before 1980, there was no visible expression of Political Evangelicalism in Guatemala, as far as the author has detected. The Verbo Church was established in 1976, but was characterized by premillenialism and the wait for the return of Christ. Its strong anti-Communism was in accordance with U.S. interests and the wealthy sectors of the Guatemalan society. It legitimized the established political order by reinforcing subordination to authority, but did not promote active political involvement among its members. Nor did other evangelical churches and organizations.

The start for Political Evangelicalism was when organizations like Overseas Crusades entered Guatemala in 1980. At the same time an indigenous rapprochement took place between groups within the military and the extreme right and some evangelical leaders. When Ríos Montt became president, some evangelicals discovered that they were many and that they had a potential for political influence. This was obvious during the Protestant centennial, which
became a showcase for the regime. Ríos Montt and U.S. dominion theology encouraged a new positioning of the spiritual-physical relationship. The spiritual and physical dimensions should be united and the Christian Gospel should influence politics. The Verbo Church became involved in politics because of Ríos Montt and during his time in power the church legitimized his regime. The Verbo leaders legitimized direct violence, the war and Ríos Montt. His enemies were demonized and identified with Satanic forces. The Verbo Church implicitly supported massacres of Mayas, because the demons that must be killed were embodied in the Mayas. To be rid of the demons was also to be rid of the Mayas. The Christians were considered to be involved in spiritual warfare. This corresponded to the ideological warfare aspect of counterinsurgency. The Verbo leaders also echoed the public message by Ríos Montt, that social change does not happen through structural change, but through individuals.

It was not until the ousting of Ríos Montt that a clear evangelical political agenda was outlined. The goal was to compete within the new framework of democratic elections. At the time of the Guatemalan presidential election of 1985, new influences of U.S. dominion theology became apparent in Guatemala. The Verbo Church took up the reconstructionist teaching by U.S. theologian Paul Jehle, promoting governing of the state and society by Old Testament laws. The church worked to spread this teaching in Latin America through school pupils. This corresponded to the reconstructionist idea to change society by influencing the future generation.

At the same time, a milder form of dominion theology promoted by Francis Schaeffer was involved in the election campaign of the evangelical presidential candidate, Jorge Serrano Elías. This politician had a neo-liberal New Right profile in his political program. In the Guatemalan context his views corresponded to the moderate right. As were most other candidates, he was in favor of continued counterinsurgency. He built his campaign to a large extent on mobilizing evangelicals, but not on convincing them about New Right politics. Instead they were mobilized on the notion that evangelical influences on politics would improve the situation in the country. The message given to evangelicals in the campaign of Serrano Elías in 1985 was that Christianity must influence the state and that the evangelicals must take their responsibility to bring this about. Only they are capable to discern the true fundament of authority of the state—the law of God. Many evangelicals did not vote for Serrano, however. They did not like his open manipulation of religion. Instead the Christian Democrat candidate Vinicio Cerezo won the election. He was the candidate who had promised peace negotiations and he invoked hopes for a changed situation.

In the election campaign of 1990, Serrano Elías did not try to especially mobilize the evangelicals the same way as in 1985. He obtained evangelical support, now without blatant use of religion, but only when the candidacy of Ríos Montt was ruled illegal. For the first time reconstructionist thoughts
were involved in an election—to mobilize for Ríos Montt. An explicit reconstructionist ideology was not used by Ríos Montt in the larger public campaign, but was directed toward the evangelicals. The message was that the state should be governed by the laws of God as laid down in the Old Testament.

The reconstructionist thoughts, developed by Paul Jehle, demonstrated a very pragmatic view of the Bible and closely followed the most burning political issues in the country. A principal issue was to remove economic questions from the political agenda, with the rationale that this was the will of God. The view on economics corresponded with opinions of the Guatemalan economic elite in a situation when it confronted increased popular demands for changes.

The use of Political Evangelicalism in the election campaigns was pragmatic. It sought the most effective way to mobilize evangelicals for political platforms that basically were not founded on evangelicalism. This means that the political platforms were not formed as a result of popular demands for increased religious influence in politics. They were formed from secular agendas, while alliances were made with evangelical leaders for mobilizing an evangelical mass.

The counterinsurgency strategy in the Ixil region (and in other conflict zones) from the time of Ríos Montt had great similarities with the strategy applied in Vietnam during the first years of the 1960s. The centerpieces were a strategic hamlet program, in Guatemala called model villages, and a civil defense militia called Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PACs). There were also two principal differences in comparison with Vietnam. First, in Vietnam the strategic hamlet program came before the large military escalation of the war. In Guatemala it was a phase following the total destruction of Mayan villages. Second, the use of religion was new in Guatemala.

Starting in 1980, the army promoted evangelical growth in the Ixil area at the same time as the Catholic Church was forced from the region. Evangelicalism played an important role in the reconstruction of the broken society and gave legitimacy to the army, implying de-legitimization of the resistance. Ríos Montt and the Reagan administration combined efforts to convince evangelicals in the United States to financially support the civic action aspect of the Guatemalan counterinsurgency war. The effort largely failed, but was effective enough to serve the ideological purposes of counterinsurgency at the local level in the Ixil area. Principal actors in the Ixil area were leaders from the Verbo Church/Gospel Outreach and missionaries from Wycliffe Bible Translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics. Cooperators in the United States included Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network and transnational evangelist Luis Palau. The Ixils were forced to surrender to the army and were offered evangelicalism as an expression of submission to the army.

Evangelicalism was not a principal cause behind the defection of the Ixils
from the guerrilla movement, EGP, to the army. They were forced to change side because of the logic of military competition. The people acted out of pragmatic considerations to survive. They understood the balance of power and made their choice in order to survive.

The support for evangelicalism was a short-term strategy from the Guatemalan army to eliminate Ixil movements struggling for structural changes, including Catholic Action. When the Catholic Church was allowed to return it could rapidly step into its former role. The fluctuations of evangelicalism and Catholicism in the Ixil area may be due to the fact that the Ixil identity is more important to most Ixils than Catholic or evangelical allegiances.

It must be emphasized that dating the appearance of Political Evangelicalism in Guatemala to the year 1980 does not imply that evangelicals did not play a political role before that time. A new development started in 1980, however, at the height of conflicts about the future destiny of the country. Political Evangelicalism had an explicit purpose of promoting Christian or evangelical values within state and society.

Religion generally increased its political influence in Guatemala during the 1980s. This can partly be related to a popular demand for a moral and ethical body politic. This does not mean a popular resistance against secularism or humanism, however. Efforts to mobilize the evangelicals for antisecularist politics were made from above. The driving force from above was to preserve the status quo concerning the Guatemalan socio-economic structures and to restore religion as a protection of this order. Evangelicalism became a viable alternative when the Catholic Church no longer was reliable.

Political Evangelicalism in Guatemala could grow because it was promoted by a counterinsurgency war. Certain elements in the theology fit extraordinarily well with the counterinsurgency strategy. Proponents for Political Evangelicalism also demonstrated a pragmatism concerning their views, which to a surprisingly degree could change depending on political circumstances, even among fundamentalists. However, the goals of Political Evangelicalism were not identical with the goals of the agents of counterinsurgency. The extreme right inside this movement became a force that many groupings within Guatemala considered to be a threat against democracy and a secular state.
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Abbreviations

AIFLD  American Institute for Free Labor Development
AULA  Asociación Pro Unidad Latinoamericana
CBN  Christian Broadcasting Network
CAN  Central Auténtico Nacional
CARP  Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles
CBDF  Carroll Behrhorst Development Foundation
CDM  Coalition for a Democratic Majority's Foreign Policy Taskforce
CAUSA  Confederación para la Asociación y Unidad de las Sociedades de América
CERJ  Consejo de Comunidades Étnicas “Runujel Junam”
CGTG  Coordinadora General de Trabajadores de Guatemala
CIA  Central Intelligence Agency
CIEDEG  Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala
CLAI  Consejo Latinoamericana de Iglesias
CNUS  Comité Nacional de Unidad Sindical
COCIEG  Comisión Coordinadora de la Iglesia Evangélica de Guatemala
CONAVIGUA  Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala
CONDECA  Confederación de los Ejércitos Centroamericanas
CONELA  Conferencia Evangélica Latinoamericana
COSDEGUA  Conferencia de Sacerdotes Diocesanos en Guatemala
CPD  Committee of the Present Danger
CPRs  Comunidades de las Poblaciones en Resistencia
CRN  Comité de Reconstrucción Nacional
CUC  Comité de Unidad Campesina
CUSG  Confederación Unidad Sindical Guatemalteca
DAWN  Discipling A Whole Nation
DCG  Democracia Cristiana de Guatemala (the Christian Democrat Party)
EGP  Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres
FOA  Friends of the Americas
FRG  Frente Republicano Guatemalteco

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FSLN Frente Sandinista Liberación Nacional
FTN Franja Transversal del Norte
FUN Frente de Unidad Nacional
FUNDAPI Fundación para Ayuda a los Pueblos Indígenas
GAM Grupo Apoyo Mutuo
ICEJ International Christian Embassy of Jerusalem
IGE Iglesia Guatemalteco en el Exilio (Guatemalan Church in Exile)
IINDEF Instituto de Evangelización al Fondo (Evangelism in Depth)
INTA Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria
LAM Latin American Mission
MAS Movimiento Acción Solidaria
MDN Movimiento Democratico Nacional
MLN Movimiento Liberación Nacional
MSC Misioneros del Sagrado Corazón (Missionaries of the Sacred Heart)
NRPR the New Religious Political Right
OAS Organization of American States
OCG Organización Civica de Guatemala
ORIT Regional Organization of Latin American Workers
ORPA Organización del Pueblo en Armas
PACs Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil
PAAC Plan de Asistencia para Asuntos Civiles (Assistance Plan for Civil Affairs)
PAN Partido Autentico Nacional
PDCN Partido Democratico Cooperación Nacional
PGT Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo
PID Partido Institucional Democratico
PR Partido Revolucionario
PREM Partido Reformador Guatemalteco
SEPAL Servicio Evangelizador Para América Latina (Overseas Crusades’ Latin American branch)
SIL Summer Institute of Linguistics
UCN Unión del Centro Nacional
UDI International Democrat Union
UNSITRAGUA Unión Sindical de Trabajadores de Guatemala
URNG Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca
USAID U.S. Agency for International Development
USIA U.S. Information Agency
WCC World Council of Churches
WFP World Food Program (of the United Nations)
WOLA Washington Office on Latin America
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At the end of 1996, the Guatemalan peace accords, signed by the government and the united guerrilla front URNG, ended 36 years of civil war. Religious forces were inextricably involved in the war, both in support of the status quo and in promotion of reformist and revolutionary changes. In Guatemala the religious scene traditionally was dominated by Catholicism and Maya religion. But during the 1970s and 1980s, the Protestant growth was more dramatic than in any other Latin American country. This study concerns a movement within Protestant evangelicalism, which the author calls Political Evangelicalism, and its relationship to the counterinsurgency war which the Guatemalan military waged against guerrillas, political opposition, and the Mayan majority.