State Violence in Guatemala, 1960-1996:
A Quantitative Reflection

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For the victims of state violence in Guatemala, the dead and the survivors

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Preface

The following report uses quantitative analysis of data collected by the International Center for Human Rights Investigations (CIIDH) to present a history of the deliberate and sustained violence committed by state forces during Guatemala's recently concluded armed conflict.

Both the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the CIIDH thank the interviewers, interview recruiters, data analysts and data entry staff who did the difficult work necessary to build this database. Over the last four years, the CIIDH research team in Guatemala collected, processed and analyzed over 19,000 case reports of human rights violations from various sources. In addition to those still at the CIIDH, the authors and the CIIDH wish to recognize the contribution of Paul Yamauchi who helped bring the project together and did much of the early data collection.

For this report, Patrick Ball designed the statistical analysis and extracted the data. Paul Kobrak researched and wrote the accompanying text. Herbert Spirer conducted the analysis and generated the graphs. The authors are solely responsible for the accuracy and analysis in this report.

Maria Consuelo Sánchez assisted with the documentary research. Matt Zimmerman designed the book, and Gretchen Richter assisted with the layout.

Louise Spirer and Deborah Billings provided detailed comments on early drafts, George Lovell and Ricardo Miranda each made useful suggestions.

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The data used in the analyses in this report
are available on the Internet at

http://hrdata.aaas.org/ciidh

Part I

Introduction

A single person killed is a tragedy, but a million people killed are a statistic.

~Josef Stalin

During Guatemala's 36-year armed conflict, the State killed hundreds of thousands of citizens and displaced a million more. The enormity of the numbers involved creates the danger that the terror in Guatemala, as in Stalin's Russia, will be remembered as statistics and not as human lives cut short. But inverting Stalin's quote, statistics can also establish the patterns of what is both a tragedy and a crime, in this case a deliberate and drawn-out policy of extra-judicial murder by the Guatemalan government.

The following report uses statistics, together with historical analysis, to tell the story of state violence in Guatemala. Numbers and graphs help establish who the victims were, how they were killed, when they were killed, and who killed them.

The report has three goals. First, to publish findings from the CIIDH database project, begun in 1994. Second, to recognize the efforts of the many human rights groups to make the Guatemalan public and the international community aware of the atrocities as they happened. And third, to establish the State's responsibility for the overwhelming majority of Guatemala's recent political violence.

The report verifies that extra-judicial killing occurred during every presidential regime since 1960, when Guatemala's modern period of insurgency and counterinsurgency began. In the late 1970s, state repression increased dramatically under General Fernando Romeo Lucas García. It reached even higher levels after a 1982 coup, when the destruction of entire rural villages became common practice during the rule of General José Efraín Ríos Montt. Just as the violence turned massive and indiscriminate, an analysis of the database finds that press coverage of political violence in Guatemala almost completely ceased, allowing the State to commit its terror in silence.

Over time, the State expanded the scope of its victims, from selective killings of militants in the armed insurgency in the 1960s, to an ever-widening attack on members of the political opposition the following decade. By the early 1980s, most of the dead were Maya villagers living in western Guatemala, killed in large groups that often included high percentages of women and small children, all victims of a government plan to stop the insurgency by terrorizing the civilian population.

The report finds that as the killings moved from the city to rural areas, the size the the groups in which people were killed and disappeared became larger, and as a consequence of the massivity, fewer individual victims were identified. However, those who committed the killing were more likely to be identified in the rural attacks. The urban pattern was characterized by clandestine death squads that committed selective murder in Guatemala City, allowing the government to deny its responsibility for the death squads' actions. But in the country's isolated Indian communities, uniformed soldiers openly committed mass extra-judicial killings. The army was frequently accompanied by civil patrollers, villagers obligated to serve the army, to help carry out rural massacres.

Another characteristic of state violence in Guatemala was how long it lasted. Even after security forces "pacified'' most of the country in the early 1980s, they carried out extra-judicial political killings through 1996, when the conflict officially come to a close. Many of the victims in later years were activists trying to reestablish a political opposition movement in the wake of mass terror, and included a number of people, both in the city and the countryside, working for the defense of human rights in militarized Guatemala.

Human Rights Defense in Guatemala

For over thirty years, Guatemalan organizations challenged state violence through legal procedures and human rights reporting. As this report documents, the government's response has often been to turn its repressive force on these activists.

In 1966 at the University of San Carlos, the University Student Association (AEU) presented writs of *habeas corpus* seeking release of detained members of the political opposition. The government never produced the prisoners, but it did attack the AEU leadership, which suffered a series of killings over the next few years. In the early 1970s, the AEU formed the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared. After years of providing a lone voice in criticizing the practices of the government of Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio, the group was forced to disband after non-uniformed men walked into its office on March 10, 1974, and murdered its director, Edmundo Guerra Theilheimer. In the late 1970s the level of violence increased anew and activists formed the National Human Rights Commission. This group also ceased operations due to government threats against its leadership and the forced disappearance of its founder, Irma Flaquer (Cáceres 1980: 201; Americas Watch 1989a: 44).

When state terror peaked in the early 1980s, no effective human rights groups functioned within Guatemala. Then, after the height of the violence, popular organizations slowly reestablished the country's human rights movement. As this report makes clear, they too faced repression for their efforts to hold the State accountable.

The CIIDH Project

For the last twenty years, much of the civilian, unarmed opposition in Guatemala has identified itself as the "popular movement." Especially since the peak of state terror, it has made human rights defense one of its principal concerns. In the 1990s, the popular movement includes organizations that survived the repression of early decades, such as the AEU and the Peasant Unity Committee (CUC). It also includes human rights groups formed in exile during the worst of the repression, such as the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission (CDHG). In recent years various new popular movement groups formed in Guatemala to represent the victims of state violence, from the Mutual Support Group (GAM) and the National Widows' Coordinating Committee (CONAVIGUA), to the Council of Ethnic Communities "Runujel Junám" (CERJ) and the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPRs).

In October 1993, some of the above organizations joined with other human rights groups to form the National Human Rights Coordinating Committee (CONADEHGUA). In 1996, the member groups agreed to pool their information on rights violations in Guatemala. Given the CIIDH's experience and technical skills, the structuring, analysis, and publication of the data was entrusted to it. The work was undertaken using the concepts and definitions CONADEHGUA established for all the work destined for the UN-organized Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH).

The CIIDH database consists of cases culled from direct testimonies and documentary and press sources. CIIDH members collected over 10,000 cases in a review of Guatemalan newspapers in the national archives for each date during the entire 36-year period of armed conflict. Another 4,000 cases came from documentary sources, including the archives of the CDHG and GAM and the publications of the Justice and Peace Committee and the Guatemalan Church in Exile. The heart of the database consists of over 5,000 testimonies, some from the archives of participating organizations, but most of which were collected directly by the CIIDH team.

The first interview phase took place in 1994 and 1995, among survivors of state violence living in the Communities of Population

in Resistance in northern Quiché, internal exiles who had never accepted army rule. As the military's control of the rest of the country slowly abated, the CIIDH formed regional teams to take testimonies throughout the country: on the southern coast, in the Petén jungle, in the Verapaces, and in the country's western highlands (in El Quiché, Sololá, Quetzaltenango, San Marcos, and Chimaltenango). Trained by the CIIDH in interview techniques, team members used a standardized and semi-structured interview protocol. The teams worked full-time for two years, throughout 1995 and 1996. Two-thirds of the interviews were conducted in witnesses' own Maya languages.[1]

The CIIDH collected the interview forms, press reports, and documentary data in its Guatemala City office. In the first years, this was the only project of its kind in Guatemala, and so to protect the security of the staff and the interview participants, the project was developed without public fanfare. For the same reasons, beginning in 1994 all of the information stored in electronic form was encrypted using PGP software. CIIDH analysts checked the data for accuracy and repetitions before they calculated statistics.

Previous CIIDH reports have used the database to analyze three regions of rural Guatemala during the height of state violence (1996), the government practice of forced disappearance (1998), and popular organizing and state repression in the University of San Carlos (1999).

The Data

The CIIDH database follows human rights database design standards. A "case" is defined as the information given by a single source (a press report, or an interview) concerning violations that happened at a particular time and place. "Violations" are instances of violence, including killings, disappearances, torture, kidnapping, and injury. "Victims" are people who suffer violations. A human rights "case" may be very simple (with one victim who suffered one violation) or it may be very complex (with many victims each of whom suffered many different violations). In almost all of the statistics in this report, the unit being counted is the violation.[2]

[1] Most of the people working in the regional teams, both interviewers and those who recruited interview subjects (*jaladores*), belonged to the various popular movement organizations, including AEU, GAM, CERJ, CUC, CONAVIGUA, CONIC (Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina), CCDA (Comité Campesino del Altiplano), CPR-Sierra (Comunidades de Población en Resistencia de la Sierra), UCP (Unión Campesina del Petén), UCOSOP (Unión Campesina del Sur Occidente), and UNICAN (Unión Campesina del Norte).

[2] For discussions of large scale human rights database design and information management, see Ball et al. 1994 and Ball 1996.

The same violations often appear in different sources. A different mass killing might be mentioned by various witnesses and in a human rights denunciation, all of which may give differing information about the names and number of victims or about the violations committed on those victims. Additional layers of case analysis built into the database's computer program helped find repeated mentions of the same victim or the same violation in order to avoid counting them more than once. As in all large-scale human rights data projects, some repeated data remain. In this database, they are unlikely to exceed two to three percent for any given count.[3]

The majority of cases in the database concern killings and disappearances. This in part reflects the nature of state terror in Guatemala. For much of the armed conflict, security forces favored physically eliminating their victims to keeping them illegally detained or torturing them before releasing them. Data for killings and disappearances are also the most trustworthy. Documentary sources, interview teams and those who gave testimonies are most consistent in defining what constitutes a killing or a disappearance, in contrast to torture or injury. Thus most statistics and figures in this report analyze killings and disappearances, added together, as violations of the right to life.[4]

Frequently the data for a particular victim or violation is incomplete. Many of the victims of mass killings are not identified by name in the database or information about their age or sex is missing. Even when survivors came together to provide collective testimony about an army massacre or mass disappearance, they often had difficulty remembering all the victims. Many of Guatemala's rural cemeteries, like the one pictured on the cover, contain the remains of people identified only as "XX," (*equis equis*), with the "X" standing like a mathematical variable for some name that no one can connect to the corpse lying in the grave.

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[3] No data that appeared in the source material were discarded at any point in the process. The CIIDH database records decisions made by the analysts and maintains a complete audit trail from the most complex statistics to the data in the original sources.

[4] Even though victims of forced disappearance are not known to be dead, this report treats them as similar to victims of outright killing. Now that the conflict has ended, survivors hold out little hope that loved ones that remain disappeared survived the government terror (CIIDH 1998). Note that the CIIDH coded these two categories exclusively. If a victim was coded as disappeared in one case and in a subsequent case is known to have been murdered, only the killing counts in the statistics.

In this report, we have tried to use the best data for each purpose. In most of the analysis, data on both named and unnamed victims are used together in order to consider the maximum number of victims. When examining certain characteristics of victims, such as age, sex, or ethnicity, only the named victims are included in the analysis so that the unnamed victims, almost all of whom lack individual data, do not inflate the rate of missing information.

The CIIDH database does not present a complete picture of government violence in Guatemala. We alert the reader that the data might be more complete for later regimes, for which contemporary survivors may have a better recollection, and during which human rights groups were more developed and provided a better documentary history. With few exceptions, numbers from the database follow the patterns of state violence established in the historical record and related in the narrative section of this report.

State Versus Rebel Violence

This is a report about state violence. The sources consulted for this project refer almost exclusively to violations committed by the army, the police, or other uniformed state agents. Perpetrators also include paramilitary forces controlled by the state (from village civil patrollers on one hand to highly-trained quasi-official "death squads" on the other).

Few sources in the database mention violations by the guerrilla opposition (less than one percent of the 37,255 documented killings and disappearances are attributed to the armed opposition). For most of the analysis we filter out violations not attributed to state forces, though we include cases of unidentified perpetrator in which the context suggests state responsibility. While recognizing that the rebel forces also committed violence against non-combatants, given our data and analysis, we reject any attempt to equate occasional rights violations by the insurgency with the State's use of sustained and deliberate extra-judicial terror.

Part II

A Narrative of State Violence

Chapter 1
State Violence in Guatemala, 1960-1996

Figure 1.1 presents, over time, 34,363 killings and disappearances in Guatemala, committed by the State and part of a deliberate government policy of extra-judicial killing.[5] This graph highlights how the level of state terror peaked in 1982, a year when the Guatemalan army murdered tens of thousands of civilians in the country's western highlands and decimated hundreds of Indian communities.

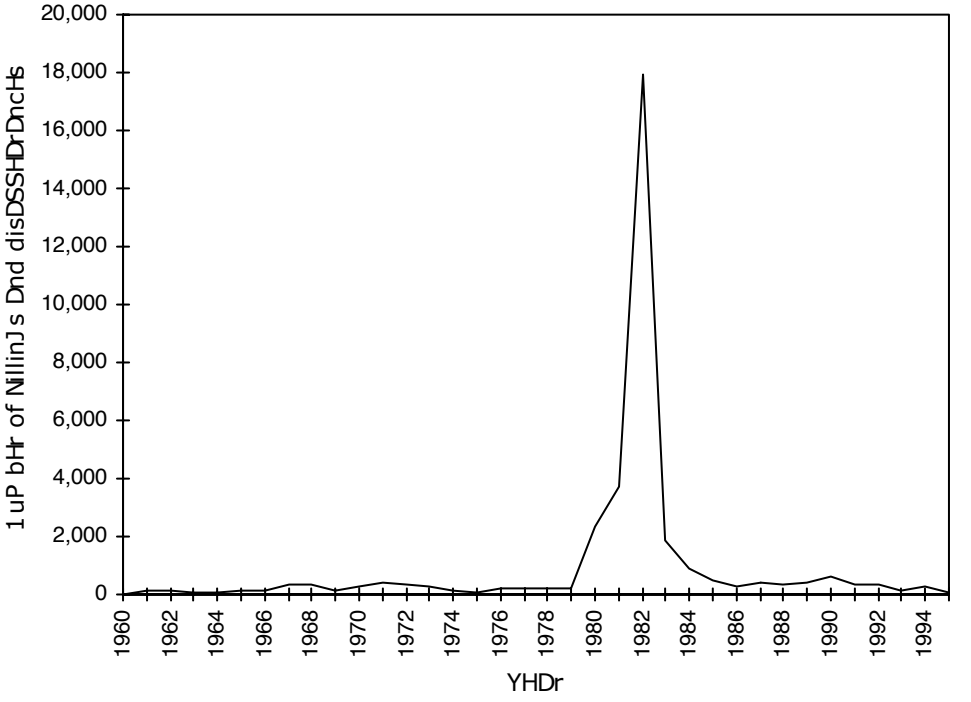
What the scale of this graph obscures are the ups and downs in the intensity of state violence, before and after the 1980 to 1983 peak. The rest of Part II presents the contours of this violence, decade-by-decade: the 1960s and the first period of guerrilla-government struggle; the repression of a rising popular movement in the 1970s; absolute military rule and the government's extermination of the political opposition in the 1980s; and the decline of counterinsurgency in the 1990s.

State violence in Guatemala was distinguished by how deliberate it was and how long it lasted. Over time, the armed conflict shifted from the city to the country to the city and back to the country again. State terror took different forms, from paramilitary death squads that murdered their victims one at a time, to massacres directed against entire rural villages.

Part III uses the CIIDH database to analyze these shifts: in urban versus rural violence; selective versus mass killings; the different methods of repression; and how the violence was reported in the press and thus understood at the time. It also explores how the

[5] Figure 1.1 only includes cases of forced disappearance and killing in the CIIDH database for which the year is known. Figures in this report cover 1959 -1995 because the CIIDH collected data on cases that fell in this period. The narrative covers the period of the armed conflict, 1960-1996. Adding cases of unknown date increases the total to 36,906 (see Appendix A1). Even this larger number presents only a fraction of the deaths attributable to the Guatemalan State during the years of armed conflict. Documentary sources as well as information not included in this database (for example, that included in the work of the official Historical Clarification Commission and the Catholic Church's project for the Recovery of Historical Memory, REMHI) suggest that the government extra-judicially murdered a much higher number between 1960 and 1996. On the basis of one non-random, non-probabilistic sample, however, we hesitate to estimate total numbers of Guatemalans killed or disappeared during the conflict.

Figure 1.1. Number of killings and disappearances by year, 1960-1995



intensity of violence varied by president. While the 1978 to 1982 regime of General Fernando Romeo Lucas García was extremely violent, both the absolute number of violations and the *monthly rate* of killing and disappearance rose even higher during General José Efraín Ríos Montt's program of pacification.

Part IV examines characteristics of the victims, both the direct targets of government repression as well as survivors affected by that repression. The State attacked, at different times and in different ways, students, intellectuals, unionists, journalists, catechists, priests, politicians, and peasants. This last category of victims was by far the largest throughout the armed conflict. We also describe the perpetrators, including the government's regular and irregular forces. The section concludes with an analysis of Guatemala's civil patrols, in which civilians became part of the repressive apparatus, to highlight the enduring legacy of violence and militarization for many survivors.

Chapter 2
The 1960s

The armed conflict officially began November 13, 1960, when discontented army officers, many of them trained in the United States, attempted a *coup d'état* against the corrupt and unpopular government of General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes (Moss 1972: 175). The incident led to the formation of Guatemala's modern revolutionary movement, and, in response, the creation of a counterinsurgency state.

The start of Guatemala's modern political drama can also be dated earlier, to 1954. That year, a mercenary invasion nominally led by Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas (and organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency) overthrew the most democratic and populist government in the nation's history. The so-called "Liberation" returned Guatemala's military to a leading role in shaping the nation's politics.

In the aftermath of the invasion, the government set about destroying the country's former social democratic and communist leadership and their organizations. Hundreds of peasant and labor activists and intellectuals faced detention, torture and sometimes death. Fear forced others into exile or withdrawal from political life.

Anti-communism became an obsessive guiding principle for both the military and for Guatemala's economic elite. The government both banned and vilified the communist party, the Guatemalan Worker's Party (PGT, in its Spanish acronym). Soon any expression of opposition was condemned as communist-inspired and foreign-born. However, for years to come, the memory of the 1944 to 1954 social democracy inspired the country's political opposition, both communist and non-communist (Toriello Garrido 1979).

In 1959, revolution in Cuba heightened the intensity of political conflict throughout Latin America. In Guatemala, the installation of an independent socialist government in Cuba gave hope to the nationalist opposition defeated in 1954. At the same time, these events worried Guatemala's upper classes and the regime's U.S. sponsors. Worried about a return of an independent and populist government, the U.S. made Guatemala a pilot program for both military and covert political intervention in the Caribbean basin. The single-minded insistence of "no more Cubas"

would soon destroy Guatemala's political system (Jonas 1981).

As Figure 2.1 suggests, political violence in Guatemala increased from 1960 through 1968. At first state violence consisted of police repression of occasional expressions of political protest. By 1966, the military was involved in a widespread attack on an armed guerrilla movement and its civilian supporters.

After the November 1960 coup attempt, resistance and repression started on a small scale. In April 1961 on the streets of Guatemala City, students and members of the outlawed communist party protested the government's participation in training Cuban exile mercenaries for the Bay of Pigs invasion. Security forces opened fire on the gathering, killing three (CIIDH interview).

The next year, students took to the capital's streets in the largest public demonstration since 1954. Protesters at first meant to shake up public complacency following fraudulent congressional elections. But the March 1962 protests grew as labor and middle-class groups joined the strikes and demanded that President Ydígoras step down.

At this point, the government lacked the capacity or the freedom to simply terrorize its opponents. It began by attacking protesters through the press. Then Ydígoras made a deal with the army to gain their support (he would soon replace his cabinet ministers with military officers) and both demonstrations and the government reaction grew more violent. Scores were killed during March 1962 in clashes with the police, mostly working-class youth from insurrectionary urban neighborhoods. Then in April 1962, after the street fighting had calmed, army soldiers opened fire on a gathering of law students, killing four (Voz Universitaria Informativa: 1977; CIIDH and GAM 1999).

For many, the government's violent response showed the futility of mass protest. In 1963, on the verge of national elections, an army coup (again encouraged by the U.S. government) further undermined faith in democratic alternatives. The high command installed former Minister of Defense Colonel Enrique Peralta Azurdia as President. He canceled the elections and strengthened the military's control over the different government ministries.

A series of attempts to create a guerrilla uprising emerged, following the model established in Cuba's Sierra Maestra. The first of these, the 20th of October Front made up of students and ex-army officers, was annihilated during the March 1962 protests when it ran into an army patrol in Concúa, Baja Verapaz, not far from the

Figure 2.1. Number of killings and disappearances by year, 1960-1969

capital. That same year, army officers involved in the 1960 coup attempt established an alliance with the outlawed PGT. By 1963, various guerrilla fronts had merged into the Armed Rebel Forces (FAR), under the political influence of the PGT.

On March 6, 1966, Guatemalans elected as President lawyer and university professor Julio César Méndez Montenegro. For a moment, open political competition again appeared possible. Méndez received the support of the PGT and other opposition parties, and the military respected the results.

The election of the civilian Méndez Montenegro regime did not represent the triumph of democracy or the rule of law, but rather the triumph of military rule. As the new President prepared to take office, he was forced to sign a pact with the military command allowing it to fight the guerrillas on its own terms, without interference from the civilian government and without having to work through the justice system.

The week of the election, security forces detained at least 28 members of the PGT and other underground groups who had let down their guard. They were never arrested, nor tried, nor freed,

nor did their bodies ever turn up. They were simply "disappeared." When law students at the University of San Carlos used legal measures to try to force the government to present the detainees, some of them in turn were disappeared. It would be only the first of many reprisals against those who defended the human rights of government opponents (McClintock 1985: 82-83; CIIDH and GAM 1998).

For its first few years, the armed conflict was considered a "Gentleman's War," limited in scope and fought largely between members of the urban middle classes. The State's response to the guerrilla movement in the early 1960s was quite different from how it would react over the next two decades. The CIIDH database includes many cases from this period in which rebel combatants were captured and then released.

The mass disappearances of March 1966 signaled a new government resolve to fight the opposition by any means necessary. Rebels, too, increased their resolve. After 1966 they no longer targeted only their Guatemalan military foes, but also civilian opponents, foreign diplomats and U.S. military advisers who had come to Guatemala to direct the counterinsurgency.

In a program designed by these advisers, the Guatemala army in 1966 began to bomb villages in the area of guerrilla operations in the eastern departments of Zacapa and Izabal, a largely Ladino (non-Indian) region of the country. Government forces killed or disappeared thousands of civilians during its escalation of counterinsurgency between 1966 and 1968. Observers estimate that between 2,800 (Melville and Melville 1971) and 8,000 (Jonas 1991) Guatemalans were killed during this period. (The CIIDH database includes relatively few cases from the 1960s and Figure 2.1 does not reflect this early wave of violence).

With U.S. guidance, Guatemalan society had become subject to an increasingly powerful military apparatus without any responsibility to civilian authority. The government established a wide-reaching network of counterinsurgency surveillance that it would employ for the next 30 years not only to battle the guerrilla organizations but to also exercise control over the civilian population. Fresh from the conflict in Vietnam, U.S. advisers had the army authorize thousands more military commissioners who became privileged local representatives of the counterinsurgency (see Chapter 18).

Perhaps the most troubling characteristic of Guatemala's first

period of counterinsurgency was the "poisonous flowering" of clandestine terror groups like "Eye for an Eye" and the "New Anticommunist Organization." Most of these paramilitary "death squads" were security forces personnel dressed as civilians; others represented more or less independent interests on the far right of the political spectrum. They converted murder into political theater, often announcing their actions through death lists or decorating their victims' bodies with notes denouncing communism or common criminality. Their secret nature not only provoked terror in the population, it also allowed the army and police to deny responsibility for a systematic campaign of extra-judicial killing (Aguilera and Imery 1981; Black 1984: 46).

As Figure 2.1 illustrates, the level of political violence abated towards the end of the 1960s. The guerrillas were militarily defeated and had retreated to the capital to regroup. But the decline in the armed conflict was not accompanied by a decline in military control. Instead, in 1970 the army presented as their official presidential candidate the architect of the counterinsurgency terror in Zacapa, Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio. Military rule continued to consolidate.

Chapter 3
The 1970s

In November 1970, shortly after taking office, President Arana suspended constitutional guarantees by declaring a state of siege that would last through February 1972. In the countryside, the siege transferred authority from elected officials to the military commissioners. This siege undermined civilian authority and contributed to political tensions that would erupt in the early 1980s (Brintnall 1979: 160).

Arana used a series of kidnappings by armed insurgents as a pretext for declaring the siege. Yet another concern for the President was the mass legal organizing against his rule, especially the movement to block a proposed government contract with EXMIBAL, a subsidiary of a Canadian nickel-mining concern. Many intellectuals and opposition politicians felt that the contract was a corrupt deal to give away the nation's mineral reserves and that the military-political ruling alliance was trying to profit (to an unprecedented degree) from its control of the government.

To quell public protest, Arana ordered mass arrests and suspended the constitutional right to assembly. When protests against the EXMIBAL contract continued, the army occupied the University of San Carlos, the center of opposition. Hours after the occupation ended, death squads killed law professor Julio Camey Herrera as the State began a systematic attack against leading university intellectuals in a committee studying the contract. Other victims included law professor and congressional deputy Adolfo Mijangos López, who was shot dead in his wheelchair on a crowded street in the center of Guatemala City (Fuentes Mohr 1971: 202-203; Toriello Garrido 1979).

Under the state of siege, the level of political violence rose to levels comparable to the 1966 to 1968 period.[6] Guatemalan sociologist Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, author of a key study of political

[6] In 1971, the Guatemalan daily newspaper, *El Gráfico*, registered 959 political assassinations, 194 disappearances and 171 kidnappings (Menton, Goodsell and Jonas 1973: 2). These numbers reflect only cases covered in the press; actual totals are likely far higher. The Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared, one of the first human rights groups to operate in the Guatemala, estimated that 7,000 Guatemalans were disappeared or found dead in 1970 and 1971. However, this number includes state violence of a less political nature directed at petty criminals, another population targeted in the government's recourse to rule through extra-judicial terror (Amnesty International 1976: 5, 11).

violence in the 1960s and 70s, felt that this new wave of state terror was limited by the appearance of the National Front Against the Violence, a mass movement that courageously battled for human rights and constitutional rule. The Front brought together opposition political parties, Church groups, labor organizations and representatives of Guatemala's private universities. It was led by students and professors from the public University of San Carlos. The University's constitutional autonomy enabled it to maintain resistance to the military government, despite the history of violence against its members and repeated occupations of its campus (Aguilera and Imery 1981: 133; CIIDH and GAM 1999).

By the end of 1972 the siege had ended. In September of that year, the government had succeeded in capturing the top leadership of the outlawed PGT. After torturing their victims, they reportedly threw the bodies into the Pacific Ocean (Menton, Goodson and Jonas 1973; Alvarado 1975). With less armed opposition activity, the military government gained confidence in its control and allowed a slight political opening. However, despite a period of sustained economic growth in the 1970s, the government undertook few measures to alleviate the extreme poverty, political exclusion and inequality between rich and poor that made revolutionary change an attractive goal for many (Jonas 1991).

Death squad killings continued in 1973 and 1974, the last two years of Arana's reign, but at lower levels than earlier in the decade. In 1974, Arana's hand-picked successor and Minister of Defense General Kjell Laugerud García became President in another fraudulent election. This time the defrauded opposition was led by fellow general Efraín Ríos Montt, who would himself later become associated with the most extreme levels of state terror in Guatemalan history.

Laugerud's lack of political legitimacy compelled him to begin his regime not with a wave of repression, as had become standard practice in Guatemala (Chapter 12), but rather with a program of political and social reforms to co-opt the opposition. He permitted a level of labor and popular organizing not seen since before the 1954 invasion. The government even allowed some labor disputes to be resolved through negotiation, rather than the usual recourse to violence against union organizers (Levenson-Estrada 1994: 105).

The Laugerud-era political opening was associated with low levels of state violence, as illustrated in Figure 3.1. The democratic opening allowed the opposition to build a well-organized if not always unified popular movement, centered in Guatemala City. The

Figure 3.1. Number of killings and disappearances by year, 1970-1979

clandestine PGT continued to act as a revolutionary organization. But one of the main factions, the Central Committee, placed its immediate hopes in a legal, electoral challenge to rule by the military and national economic elite (CIIDH and GAM 1999).

In February 1976, a massive earthquake brought organized students and union members in closer contact with both urban slum-dwellers and peasant villagers, those most affected by the destruction. The mass opposition movement began to grow and become more militant. State repression, as Figure 3.1 shows, was also on the increase.

In 1977, at a time of rapid economic expansion in Guatemala, more workers went on strike than in any other year in the nation's history. That year ended with "The Glorious March of the Miners of Ixtahuacán," a workers' protest that originated in an isolated Mam-speaking region of Huehuetenango and attracted thousands of sympathizers on its way to Guatemala City. The march represented for many the potential union of city and country, Indian and Ladino, in the struggle against an unpopular government. State

forces also took notice: in 1978 three student labor organizers from Huehuetenango who worked with the strikers were killed or disappeared (Amnesty International 1979: 8; Levenson-Estrada 1994: 127-29; CIIDH and GAM 1999).

This violence formed part of the government response to the growing popular movement: an intensifying campaign of selective killing of labor activists and other militants. In one month, August 1977, Amnesty International registered 61 murders that appeared to be the work of paramilitary death squads. The majority of the victims were peasants, workers and residents of poor urban neighborhoods (Amnesty International 1978: 123).

Nevertheless, popular militancy increased throughout 1978. The conflict grew sharper when General Romeo Lucas García became President in July 1978 and immediately raised prices of many basic goods. Events led to the August-October transit strikes, where a broad-based urban movement fought for a repeal of a bus fare increase from five to ten cents (at the time the Quetzal was on par with the U.S. dollar). The movement did not limit its goals to immediate economic issues. Protesters' rhetoric, both in street graffiti and in the speeches of leaders, increasingly spoke of "revolution," though its precise meaning remained elusive (Coordinadora de Organizaciones Sindicales y Populares 1979; Levenson-Estrada 1994).

After weeks of street clashes, the government capitulated and the bus fare was returned to five cents. While the popular movement celebrated its victory, the Secret Anticommunist Army (ESA), a major government-controlled death squad in the late 1970s, published a death list of 38 key opposition figures. The first victim was the dynamic secretary general of the University Student Association, Oliverio Castañeda de León. He was machine-gunned to death immediately after speaking at a rally in the city's central park, in full view of hundreds of bystanders. Although scores of police witnessed the shooting, none moved to pursue the assassins (Aguilera and Imery 1981: 137; CIIDH and GAM 1999).

Oliverio's death typified state terror in the early years of the Lucas García government: a selective assassination by heavily-armed, non-uniformed men, often performed in broad daylight in a crowded urban location, for which the government would then deny any responsibility. But the government's message was clear: it would silence anyone who dared speak against it and do so with complete impunity.

A series of murders of key figures in the well-organized political opposition followed. Many of the victims had been condemned in the ESA death list of October 1978. In 1979 they included respected politicians like Alberto Fuentes Mohr (leader of the Social Democratic Party), and Manuel Colom Argueta (populist former mayor of Guatemala City and pre-candidate for President for the FUR, United Front of the Revolution). In the case of Colom Argueta, assassins used a helicopter to chase down their victim in zone 9 of the capital, leaving little doubt that security forces were responsible (CIIDH case ca0000182).

In retrospect, Lucas García appeared determined not to let happen in Guatemala what was then occurring in Nicaragua, where a broad urban popular movement had allied with a rural-based insurgency to bring down the Somoza dictatorship.

Indeed, Guatemala's rebel movement, after a period of quiet, had begun to reestablish its presence in the countryside. This time guerrilla organizers avoided eastern Guatemala, a region which had become disillusioned with rebellion by the counterinsurgency experience of the 1960s. Instead, they moved their operations to the isolated mountains and Maya communities of the western highlands.

In the early 1970s, two new groups had emerged from the weakened FAR, which by now had split from the PGT. In 1972 the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) began to organize in the jungles of northern El Quiché. A few years later, FAR dissidents who would come to be known as the Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA) began to operate cautiously on the mountain slopes above the coastal plain in south-west Guatemala.

In the mid-1970s, the western part of the country got its first taste of the state repression to come. The army and paramilitary groups selectively disappeared or murdered community activists and guerrilla collaborators, especially in areas of EGP organizing: first, in 1975, in the isolated producer cooperatives of the northern Ixcán jungle (Falla 1992); then through the rest of the decade in the Ixil region just to the south (Davis 1988; Stoll 1993). This violence is reflected in the late-1970s rise in Figure 3.1.

But there was also a new popular organization in the western highlands, the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC), a multiethnic group that appeared in 1978 with the slogan "a clear head, a heart of solidarity, and a clenched fist." CUC would take news of these rural killings to the capital. So begins the most extreme period of state terror in Guatemala, the early 1980s.

Chapter 4
The 1980s

In January 1980 a group of K'iche' and Ixil Indians made their way to Guatemala City to denounce the kidnapping and murder of nine peasants from the municipality of Uspantán, El Quiché (Stoll 1999: 60). For the Lucas García government, the presence of indigenous people demanding that the government respect their human rights was a subversive act, even more so considering that the peasants involved were advised by members of CUC and a radical university student group, FERG ("Robin García" Revolutionary Student Front), organizations influenced by the EGP rebels. The government was far from receptive: protesters were denied a hearing in Congress and their legal adviser was assassinated outside of police headquarters.

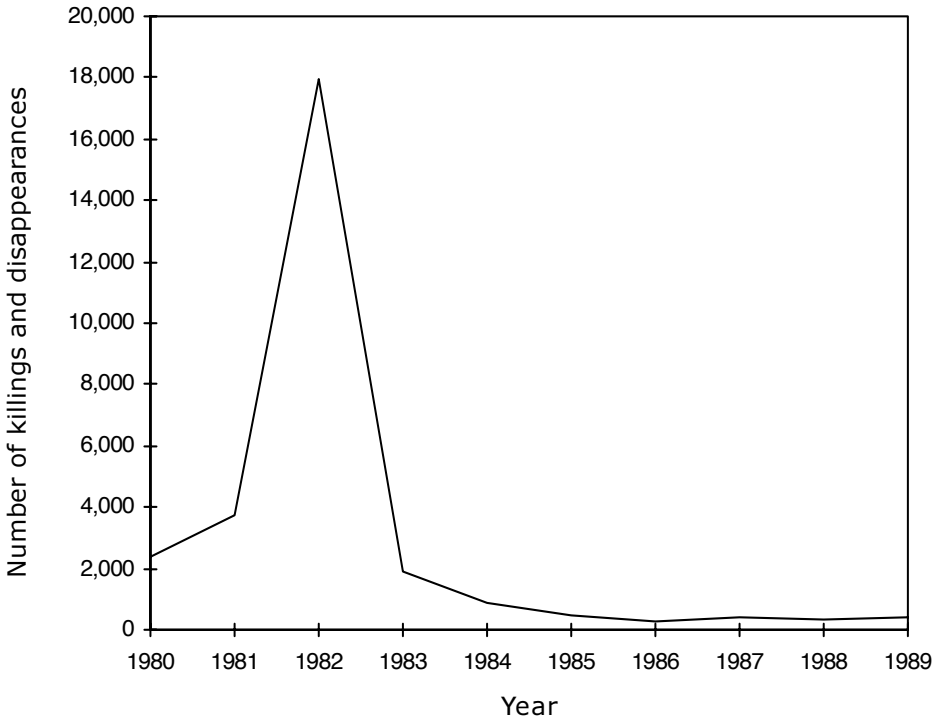
In response, on the morning of January 31, 1980, protesters occupied the Spanish Embassy to alert the world to the growing violence in Guatemala. Upon hearing of the Embassy takeover, President Lucas García, police chief Germán Chupina Barahona, and Minister of the Interior Donaldo Alvarez Ruíz met in the National Palace and decided to use force to expel the occupiers rather than negotiating with them (Blanck and Miranda 1998).[7]

Minutes later, police charged the ambassador's office where the protesters had barricaded themselves and their captives. The police hurled incendiary devices and apparently ignited Molotov cocktails that protesters had brought along, causing an explosive inferno. As the occupants screamed in agony, the police refused to unblock the door or let fireman control the blaze. Thirty-nine people were burned alive that day, including protesters and hostages (CIIDH database cmc000274; CIIDH and GAM 1999).

The massacre at the Spanish Embassy showed that the Guatemalan government would stop at nothing, not even destroying its standing in the international community, to defeat its foes, armed or unarmed. The entire history of the 1980s stands as testament to that willingness.

[7] In Nicaragua, only a few months before the Spanish Embassy occupation, Sandinista rebels had, prior to their victory, gained enormous credibility internationally and within the country by forcing the Somoza regime to negotiate a hostage release at the national Congress.

Figure 4.1. Number of killings and disappearances by year, 1980-1989



After such a tragic start, the violence in 1980 only got worse. As Figure 4.1 illustrates, the level of state killing continued to rise in 1981 and increased dramatically in 1982, a year of mass murder unequaled in Guatemalan history. The CIIDH database records nearly 18,000 state killings in 1982 alone. Though the intensity of killing declined in 1983, by then the country had become almost entirely militarized. Even with the return of a civilian president in 1986, selective killings continued through the end of the decade.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Guatemala City remained the principal scene of struggle. After killing key opposition leaders in 1978 and 1979, by 1980 the State mounted a major assault on unionists, students, intellectuals or anyone else who continued to participate in the mass opposition movement. Especially targeted were those who also belonged to the PGT and the other revolutionary groups.

People were kidnapped on the city's streets with alarming frequency. Between March and August, hardly a day went by when the newspapers did not report on a political disappearance or the

appearance of a mutilated corpse in the metropolitan area. Events climaxed at the annual May Day march. Masked protesters carried banners advocating revolution; later security forces swept through the city center, kidnapping 31 protesters. The tortured bodies of some of the protesters later turned up. Others simply joined the ranks of the disappeared (*Guatemala 80* 1980: 191; Witzel de Ciudad 1991: 618).

The capital, the national center of power and long the focus of opposition to the government, had become too repressive for members of the popular movement. As state violence escalated, many withdrew from political life. Others escaped into exile or went into hiding within the country. Many joined the armed guerrilla cause, both out of conviction and as a means of survival.

Even when urban guerrillas attempted to go underground and set up "safe houses," security forces used intelligence techniques provided by the Argentine and Israeli governments to detect and destroy them. Few rebels received any kind of trial. Instead they died in gun battles with security forces or were tortured and executed while in government detention (Payeras 1987). Captured guerrillas who were offered some kind of amnesty appeared in front of television cameras to denounce their former comrades, part of the State's campaign of "psychological warfare."

The focus of the social conflict in Guatemala began to shift back to the countryside, this time to the Maya villages and towns of the western highlands, a region of the country long-ignored by the government and by Guatemala's urban society.

At the beginning of the decade, the apparatus of state repression appeared less well-developed in the countryside. In February 1980, when the popular movement in the city was in retreat, CUC organized a labor strike of the plantation workforce along the country's Pacific south coast. Organizing among permanent workers as well as migrant laborers, CUC successfully fought for an increase in the minimum wage. The strike showed the possibilities of rural mass organizing. In the following months many of the strike's leaders were murdered or disappeared, showing the possibilities of rural repression (Menchú and CUC 1992).

As the various guerrilla armies—the EGP, FAR, ORPA, and even the urban working-class-based PGT—expanded their presence in the interior, the army followed them there, building military bases in every area of the country, and occupying churches and public buildings in hundreds of rural communities with their troops

(Krueger and Enge 1985: 21). Once established in the countryside, government forces showed even less regard for civilians' rights than they had in the city.

To rural villagers, rebels presented themselves as bands of guerrillas fighters that could slip in and out of isolated communities, organizing residents for the coming conflict. In a few rural zones, the guerrillas had built their revolutionary movement slowly and carefully. But in 1980, encouraged by guerrilla advances elsewhere in Central America, Guatemala's rebels, especially the EGP, tried to quickly expand their influence through a wide geographic area and across many different ethnic groups.

In early 1981, the guerrillas launched their biggest offensive ever. Towards the end of the year another guerrilla offensive in the highlands was aided by civilian supporters who sabotaged roads on rebel orders (Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres 1983).

The government increasingly viewed unarmed villagers as participants in the insurgency. But the EGP overestimated the military strength it had relative to the force of the counterinsurgency. Once the army attacked, the guerrillas would prove incapable of defending these communities (Payeras 1991).

Meanwhile, the army under Lucas García mobilized for rural combat, building up its ranks through mass forced recruitment. In addition to troops stationed at the various departmental military bases, the army developed a system of strategic mobile forces operating out of larger military brigades.

Using this "task force" model, in mid-1981 the army launched offensives against the guerrillas in the economically important coffee regions along the coastal mountains and in San Martín Jilotepeque in Chimaltenango, a department close to the capital that provided the urban population with much of its food. Army violence forced thousands of area residents to flee from their homes and into the mountains (Chapter 20).

Soon army troops moved to isolated areas with a more extensive guerrilla presence and with less agro-industrial investment. The government's greater destructiveness would reflect these different conditions. What followed was a series of well-planned military campaigns, part of an army strategy calculated to defeat the insurgency by terrorizing the civilian population.

The army began *Operación Ceniza* in November 1981 and continued in 1982. The name "Operation Ashes" clearly stated the

campaign's intent, suggesting how the army planned to deal with villages in the guerrilla zone of activity. The army first committed mass killings and burned villages to take control of the Pan-American Highway running through Chimaltenango and southern Quiché. Then some 15,000 troops participated in a slow sweep through the department of El Quiché, into Huehuetenango, and all the way to the border with Mexico (Aguilera 1982; Fried et al. 1983).

Armed guerrillas typically harassed army troops and then slipped back into the mountains. The army, frustrated by these attacks yet undeterred by any moral consideration for their civilian victims, responded by attacking entire villages. By the early 1982 peak of terror, troops regularly burned villagers' houses and crops and killed their farm animals in a "scorched earth" policy designed to depopulate the zones of guerrilla operations (Americas Watch 1982). What had been a selective campaign against guerrilla sympathizers turned into a mass slaughter designed to eliminate any support or *potential* support for the rebels, and included widespread killing of children, women and the elderly. It was a strategy that Ríos Montt called "draining the sea that the fish swim in."

The large number of civilian dead and displaced during the army's campaigns in western Guatemala was a product of the lack of any limits on the military's behavior, either moral or organizational. Faced with an unlimited army assault, guerrillas could do little to defend the villages that they were organizing. Mass civilian killings were deliberately committed by the state, and responsibility rests with them.[8]

In March 1982, at the height of the state violence, an army coup replaced the Lucas García regime with a dictatorship headed by General Ríos Montt. Under Ríos Montt, the State took on a clearer counterinsurgency character. He suspended constitutional guarantees and set up secret courts to try suspected subversives (Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala 1983; Schirmer 1997).

The government of Ríos Montt pacified nearly the entire Guatemalan countryside in less than six months. It did not stop the massacres in the countryside but combined them with highly effective forms of population control, such as food for work programs, militarized "model villages" to process refugees displaced by state violence, and the civil patrol system in which the army forced rural

[8] Chapter 17 argues that the patterns of state violence also had much to do with the ethnicity of the victims.

villagers to purge their own communities of government opponents. In the words of one human rights group, Guatemala's military government "created a desolation and called it peace" (Americas Watch 1983).

The four guerrilla armies, unified since 1982 in the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG), continued to exist, though largely in exile or retreat, cut off from the population except in the most isolated parts of the country.

In Guatemala City, government terror continued in 1982, though the level of killing remained far below that in the countryside (see Chapter 8). By the second half of 1983 and into 1984, the military intelligence apparatus again turned its focus to the city, wiping out remaining expressions of support for the revolutionary movement as well as attempts to recreate a militant popular movement (Albizures 1985; Amnesty International 1987).

In August 1983 yet another coup put another army general in the National Palace, Oscar Humberto Mejía Víctores, who promised to return the country to civilian rule. By 1986 Guatemala had a new constitution and a civilian President, Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo. This process of democratization did not signify an end to disappearances and death squad killings. Extra-judicial state violence had become part of the political culture (Americas Watch and British Parliamentary Human Rights Group: 1987).

Even before the end of Guatemala's formal military rule, new human rights groups began to emerge. These new groups directly represented the victims and survivors of state violence. In June of 1984, in the midst of a wave of death squad killings of trade unionists and university students, distraught family members met at the residence of Archbishop Próspero Penados del Barrio to form the Mutual Support Group for the Appearance Alive of Our Relatives (GAM). GAM soon brought together urban and rural survivors and began to challenge the government's practice of forced disappearance by demanding to know what had become of their family members who had neither been released nor whose bodies had ever been identified. In the coming years other human rights groups appeared, part of a "survivor-based" movement (Billings 1995), and an activist popular movement returned to the city.

State violence was much lower in the mid-1980s than it had been a few years earlier. As in the early 1970s, the drop in violence was accompanied by the emergence of a movement for human rights. Similar to the earlier period, it is not clear how much of the reduc-

tion was the result of social movement pressure and how much due to the lesser activity of the armed insurgency.

In the mid-1980s, the new human rights movement itself became a target for state violence. Soon after GAM's formation, for example, death squads tortured and murdered its founders Hector Gómez Calito and María del Rosario Godoy de Cuevas. Unlike in the late 1970s, however, the social movements of the mid-1980s survived the repression (Americas Watch 1985c; Simon 1987: 159-61, 197-98).

Figure 4.1 shows a slight drop in killings and disappearances for 1986, the first year of nominally civilian rule. For a while, the new civilian government lived up to expectations. Many exiles returned to Guatemala and political participation increased. But the level of violence would rise again in the final years of the decade.

In 1987 the army unleashed its "Year-End Offensive" on remaining areas of resistance to its control on both the south coast and in northern Quiché. As in 1982, the latter campaign caused many casualties in the civilian populations living in proximity to EGP guerrilla forces, though in lesser number than the earlier offensives (Chapter 20).

The next year, a faction of the army attempted to overthrow the civilian government. Though President Cerezo was allowed to remain in office, he reportedly had to concede to most of the demands of hard-line officers, including the cancellation of a dialogue with the URNG guerrillas. In the wake of the coup attempt, the level of state violence increased in both rural and urban areas. Popular organizations returned to the city's streets to criticize military control and the government's economic policies. Urban death squads increased as the State attempted to crush opposition activity, in a repeat of the pattern of political organizing and reactionary violence ten years before (Americas Watch 1988: 1-5).

The decade ended, in August and September of 1989, with a wave of kidnappings of leaders of the University Students' Association (AEU), an organization that at the time supported much of the URNG's political strategy. Victims included students who had taken a leading role calling for a negotiated end to the armed conflict (the URNG position) and activists in that year's schoolteachers' strike. The corpses of some of the victims later appeared in the weeds near the University. For example, after twenty days in detention, the body of psychology student Silvia Azurdia Utrera was marked with needle tracks and cigarette burns, her fingernails doubled over

and semen from various men found in her vagina, indicating multiple rape (Americas Watch 1989b; Amnesty International 1989c; *El Periódico* 1997; CIIDH and GAM 1999).

At the end of the 1980s, as at the beginning, the Guatemalan State regularly employed violence against the opposition, attempting to close down any political space that it did not fully control.

Chapter 5
The 1990s

Figure 5.1 illustrates how state violence steadily declined in the 1990s. In 1989, the Central American states signed the Esquipulas II agreements, obliging the region's governments to achieve peace with their internal oppositions. Facing domestic pressures and persistent international condemnation for its human rights record, the Guatemalan government and the army began to seriously consider a negotiated settlement with the URNG guerrillas.

Despite the efforts of the military and other reactionary elements in Guatemala, the idea of respect for human rights began to gain greater acceptance in both official circles and among the population. This change occurred in part because of the persistence of organizations both inside and outside of Guatemala: international groups such as Amnesty International, Americas Watch, and the Washington Office on Latin America; exiled Guatemalan organizations like the Justice and Peace Committee and the Center for Human Rights Legal Action (CHRLA, which functioned as CALDH in Guatemala from 1994 on); and groups within Guatemala, including the popular movement organizations CUC (which was founded in 1978, and survived as a clandestine organization during the height of state violence), GAM (active since 1984), and the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission (active since 1981 though based in Mexico until 1995). Later, in 1990, the Catholic Archbishop's Office for Human Rights (ODHA) opened after years of delays (Americas Watch 1989: 52).

Change also occurred within the government. Congress appointed Ramiro de León Carpio the government's Ombudsman for Human Rights in late 1989. He brought unprecedented official concern to issues of human rights, especially in the countryside.

The government continued to send mixed signals about its commitment to human rights. On the one hand, officials of the Jorge Serrano Elias government (the second civilian administration) emphasized the importance of the rule of law in speeches and sent army and police personnel to human rights training courses. On the other hand, Serrano and other government officials sought to undermine rights groups by linking them to the URNG rebels (Americas Watch 1991: 1-3).

Figure 5.1. Number of killings and disappearances by year, 1990-1995

State-sponsored repression of human rights activists continued, especially in the countryside. Unlike previous decades, army personnel no longer committed the vast majority of murders and disappearances. Instead, army loyalists in the civil patrols acted against neighbors who challenged the army's hegemony or the local patrol's authority (see Chapter 19).

Meanwhile, negotiations to end the armed conflict slowly moved forward. In 1993 Ramiro de León became President after the Serrano Elías unsuccessfully attempted to consolidate his power by suspending Congress and the constitution. Though de León did little to curtail the army's power, by 1994 the government and guerrillas had agreed to a United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA), charged with guaranteeing compliance of a number of agreements on human rights and demilitarization. With the U.N. presence, state agents, especially members of the army, faced unprecedented limits in their ability to commit extralegal violence against the population. Never had so many resources been dedi-

cated to investigating abuses, following up on allegations, and challenging the army's impunity (Amnesty International 1997c: 44; MINUGUA 1995a; 1995b; 1995c; 1996a; 1996b).

The level of state violence continued to diminish through the end of 1996 when the URNG rebels and the Guatemalan government signed a final peace agreement ending the armed conflict. The State's main pretext for attacking the political opposition was now gone: the guerrilla insurgency no longer existed. What remained was the process to clarify exactly who did what to whom during this conflict and to hold the aggressors responsible for their crimes. The following chapters are written with these goals in mind.

Part III

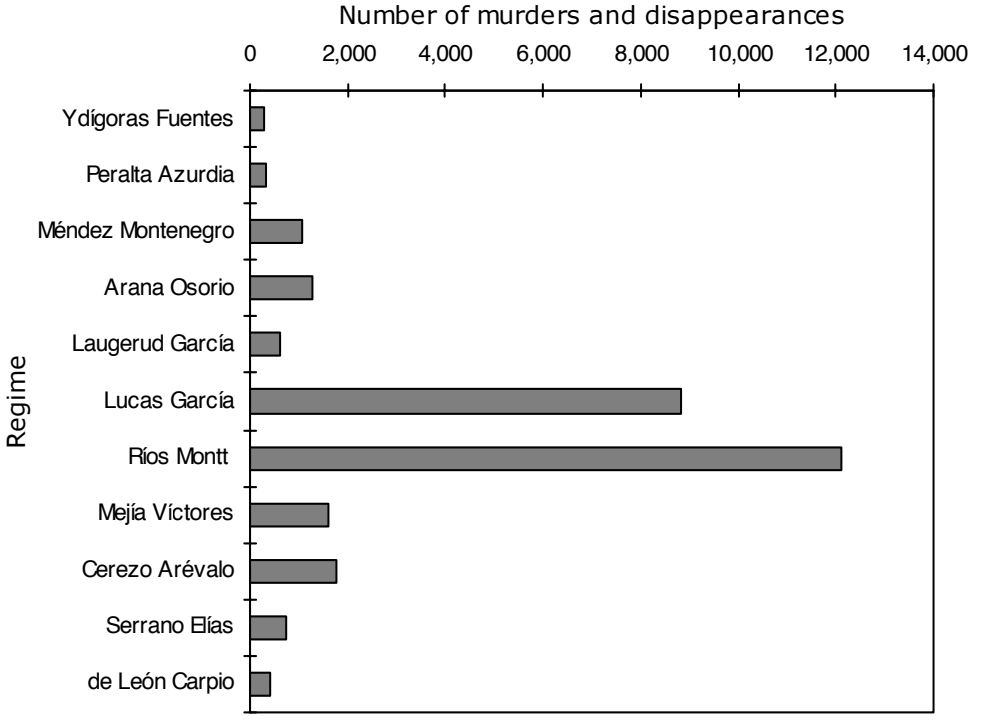
Analytic Comparisons

Chapter 6
Terror and Regime

From 1960 to 1996, state repression and political killing occurred in Guatemala across all presidential regimes, military as well as civilian, elected as well as imposed. But Guatemala's governments have used the recourse to extra-judicial killing to different degrees.

Figure 6.1 shows a steady increase in state violence through the regimes of the 1960s and early 1970s, then a brief decline during the Kjell Laugerud García years. Killings and disappearances soar during the Lucas García and Ríos Montt presidencies, as the violence became more rural and less discriminating, especially during 1982.

Figure 6.1. Number of killings and disappearances by regime, 1959-1994



The graph shows that after the Ríos Montt government pacified the countryside and caused a guerrilla retreat, the level of violence declines steadily during later regimes. Political violence after 1982 tended to be directed against citizens working to challenge military control and defend the rule of law (Chapter 11). Thus the *effects* of

state repression continued to devastate Guatemalan society and its political culture. Figure 6.2 shows the dates for the regimes.

In the turbulent history of modern Guatemala, not all presidents have served a traditional four-year term. Figure 6.3 shows the *intensity* of state terror during each regime, presenting the average number of murders and disappearances *per month* in office. Here again we see a sharp rise during the Lucas García regime of July 1978 to March 1982, a time of constant political repression.

But Lucas García's deserved legacy as a mass murderer is dwarfed by that of General José Efraín Ríos Montt. The database

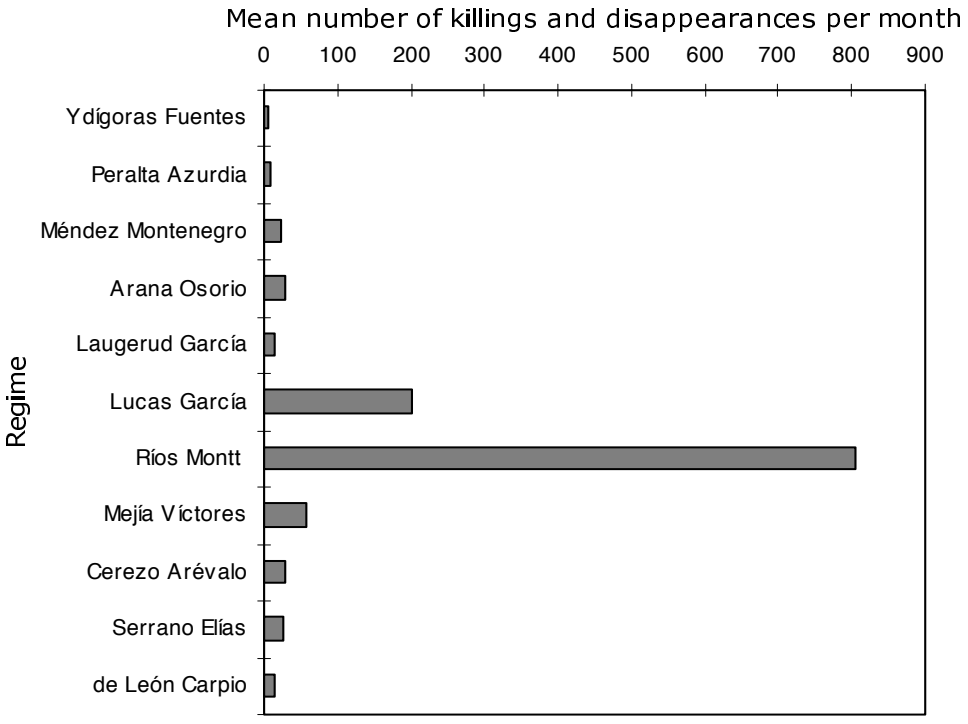
Figure 6.2. Dates of presidential regimes, 1959-present

President	crom	To
Miguel Ramón Ydígoras Fuentes	02-Mar-1958	30-Mar-1963
Enrique Peralta Azurdia	01-Apr-1963	30-Jun-1966
Julio César Méndez Montenegro	01-Jul-1966	01-Jul-1970
Carlos Manuel Arana Osorio	02-Jul-1970	01-Jul-1974
Kjell Eugenio Laugerud García	02-Jul-1974	01-Jul-1978
Fernando Romeo Lucas García	02-Jul-1978	23-Mar-1982
José Efraín Ríos Montt	24-Mar-1982	08-Aug-1983
Oscar Humberto Mejía Víctores	09-Aug-1983	15-Jan-1986
Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo	16-Jan-1986	14-Jan-1991
Jorge Serrano Elías	15-Jan-1991	25-May-1993
Ramiro de León Carpio	29-May-1993	14-Jan-1996
Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen	15-Jan-1996	present

documents over 800 killings and disappearances *per month* during Ríos Montt's 17-month occupation of the National Palace. The actual numbers must include tens of thousands of murders not documented by any database project, certainly higher than those reported here. Documented monthly killings increased by more than three times between these two military regimes. In less than a year and a half, security forces under Ríos Montt were responsible for 43 percent of the state killings with known date that appear in the CIIDH database committed during the entire 36-year armed conflict.

Remarkably, Ríos Montt, now retired from the army, remains a leading political figure in his country, heading the country's largest opposition party, the Guatemala Republican Front (FRG). Today

Figure 6.3. Mean number of killings and disappearances per month, by regime, 1959-1995

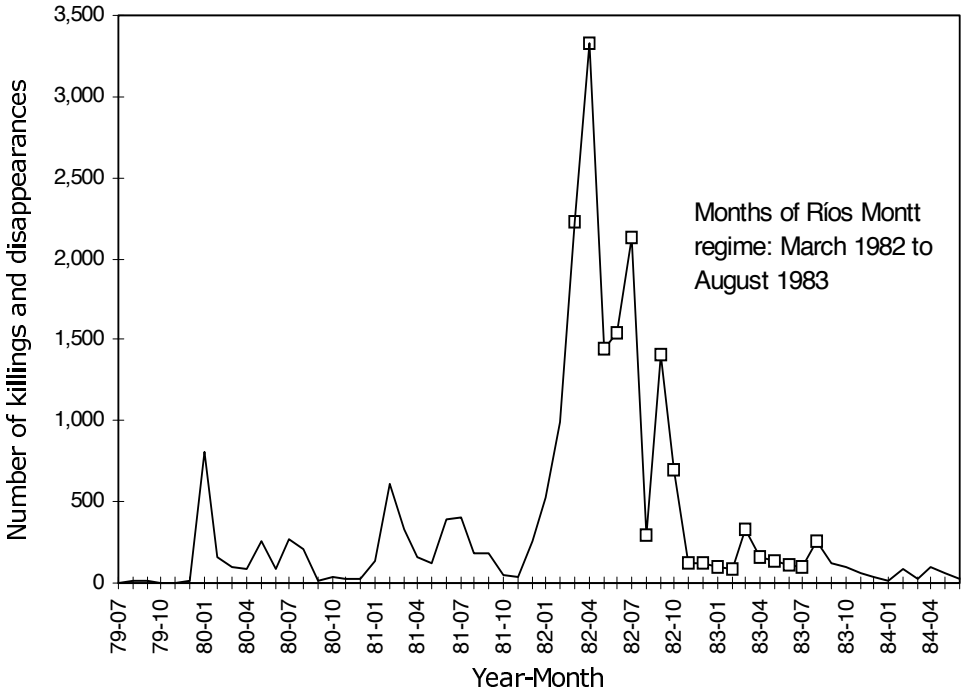


many Guatemalans consider the former general a savior who brought the open conflict with the guerrillas to a close.

The popularity of Ríos Montt, despite his use of state terror, was due, in part, to how different communities have understood the history of the armed conflict in Guatemala. In addition, his image was actively enhanced by forces both inside and outside the country.

First, Ríos Montt must be understood in relation to his predecessor. It was Lucas García who nearly destroyed the urban political opposition. And it was Lucas who instituted the indiscriminate terror in the countryside, what Amnesty International called a *Government Program of Political Murder* (1981). By March 23, 1982, the day Ríos Montt took power, much of the country was living in a state of terror. Even a recently concluded electoral process had not provided Guatemalans with a respite from the violence. In rural areas, the abusiveness of soldiers and military commissioners reached an all-time high as they searched for any sign of guerrilla support.

Figure 6.4. Number of killings and disappearances by month, 1979 – 1984



After Ríos Montt took over, the level of violence increased. Figure 6.4 shows how the number of state killings and disappearances rose even higher in April 1982, Ríos Montt's first full month in office. The 3,330 documented deaths and disappearances in the CIIDH database that month represent the highest one-month total number of documented violations of the right to life for the entire armed conflict (the actual total is higher). For the first hundred days of the Ríos Montt regime, mass killings continued throughout the highlands, especially in El Quiché and Huehuetenango. Americas Watch, using data from the Peace and Justice Committee and the Guatemala Human Rights Commission, detailed 69 massacres during this period (Americas Watch 1984).

As Figure 6.4 shows, killings peaked again in July 1982. In June of that year, Ríos Montt had declared a 30-day amnesty, ostensibly to give the political opposition the chance to surrender. When the month ended, the General promised a "state of war" in the highlands. The brief respite was over and the methods of violence became even more gruesome. A new army campaign, *Victoria '82*, soon reached the border region with Mexico. Human rights reports

from the period demonstrate that in isolated regions of the country, the army under Ríos Montt in its fight against the guerrillas tended towards overkill, beheading their victims or burning them alive, and smashing the heads of children against rocks (Chapter 13). Amnesty International also observed that the rape of women survivors, even when pregnant, became more common under Ríos Montt (Amnesty International 1982: 4-5; Nairn 1983; Falla 1983).

Furthermore, the government continued the Lucas García policy of using indiscriminate killings to force peasants to reject the guerrillas or flee their villages. Jesuit priest and anthropologist Ricardo Falla reports that in mass killings in the Ixcán cooperatives at this time, army troops made no distinctions between collaborators, sympathizers and people who were either indifferent or opposed to the insurgency (Falla 1994: 183).

Sustaining a different view, anthropologist David Stoll argues that state violence became less chaotic and much more predictable under Ríos Montt, at least in the hard-hit Ixil country of northern Quiché (Stoll 1993: 111). Unlike the Lucas García government, Ríos Montt offered peasants a way out of the uncertainty of the army-guerrilla conflict. In the wake of army massacres, he instituted forms of "civic action" that encouraged civilians to turn away from the guerrillas and towards what continued to be a murderous government. He also expanded the civil patrol system started under Lucas García, forcing villagers in contested areas to turn on their neighbors and become active participants in the counterinsurgency violence.

In some areas such as northern Huehuetenango, patrollers initially refused to serve the army. Instead, they used the patrols to pass information to the guerrillas and refugees hiding out from government forces (Falla 1984). But in areas where the guerrillas had not established deep support for their revolutionary project, many remember Ríos Montt as having "organized the people" through the patrols, making villagers themselves actively renounce the guerrillas, thus allowing them a sense of control over their lives and their communities.

In much of the highlands, resistance to the government quickly evaporated once the civil patrols began. In return, the army decreased its hostility. Many rural people thus view the Ríos Montt *coup d'état* as an historical turning-point, rather than a continuation of state terror as data for the whole country would suggest (and as illustrated in Figure 6.4). To this day, ex-civil patrollers in rural areas pacified by Ríos Montt remain his FRG party's political base

(Kobrak 1997).

Furthermore, Ríos Montt's image has also been actively enhanced by subsequent military governments and their allies in the United States. After 1982, in both its official publications and its indoctrination of civil patrollers and captured refugees, the Guatemalan army frequently acknowledged the excesses of past regimes, while contrasting them to the "developmentalist" governments of Ríos Montt and his successor General Oscar Mejía Víctores. The army recognized the suffering it had caused rural people while insisting that the survivors give their loyalty to a "new" army (Ejército de Guatemala 1984, Gobierno de Guatemala 1984).

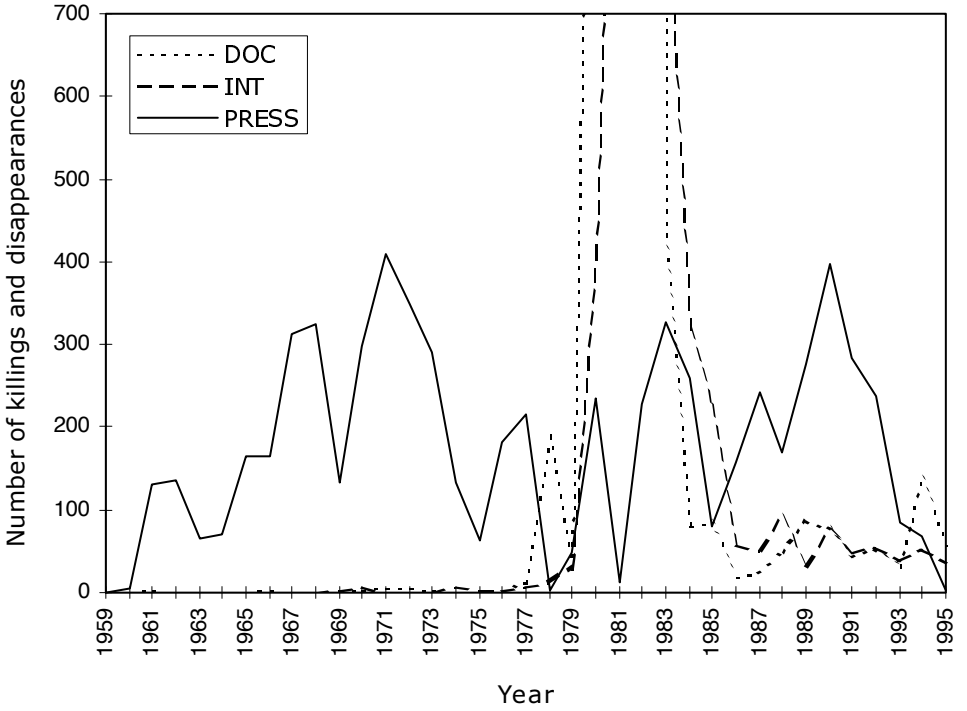
In the United States, the switch to Ríos Montt allowed Ronald Reagan's administration to lobby for a restoration of military aid to Guatemala (cut off by the U.S. Congress in 1977) and an expansion of U.S. intervention throughout the Caribbean Basin. The State Department had previously been reluctant to criticize the Lucas García government. After the March 1982 coup it changed direction and condemned the ousted leader as a terror against his own people, while portraying the Ríos Montt regime as a significant improvement for human rights in Guatemala. In December 1982, President Reagan described Rios Montt as "a man of great personal integrity and commitment" who is "totally dedicated to democracy" (Schirmer 1998: 33). In resuming military aid to Guatemala, Reagan made it clear that the General could fight the war against his internal opposition as he wished, without regard to human rights considerations and without fear of losing his U.S. funding (*Department of State Country Reports* 1983; Americas Watch 1985b: 7-8).

Still another reason for Ríos Montt's popularity may be that Guatemala's 1982 state terror, and especially the army campaign of rural mass killings, went largely unreported, the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 7
Reporting the Violence

Figure 7.1 shows that in the CIIDH database, most of the information for human rights violations prior to 1977 comes from press sources.[9] Although the Guatemalan press has never given a complete picture of state violence, the nation's newspapers played an important role in reporting the struggle between government and opposition in the early years of the armed conflict.

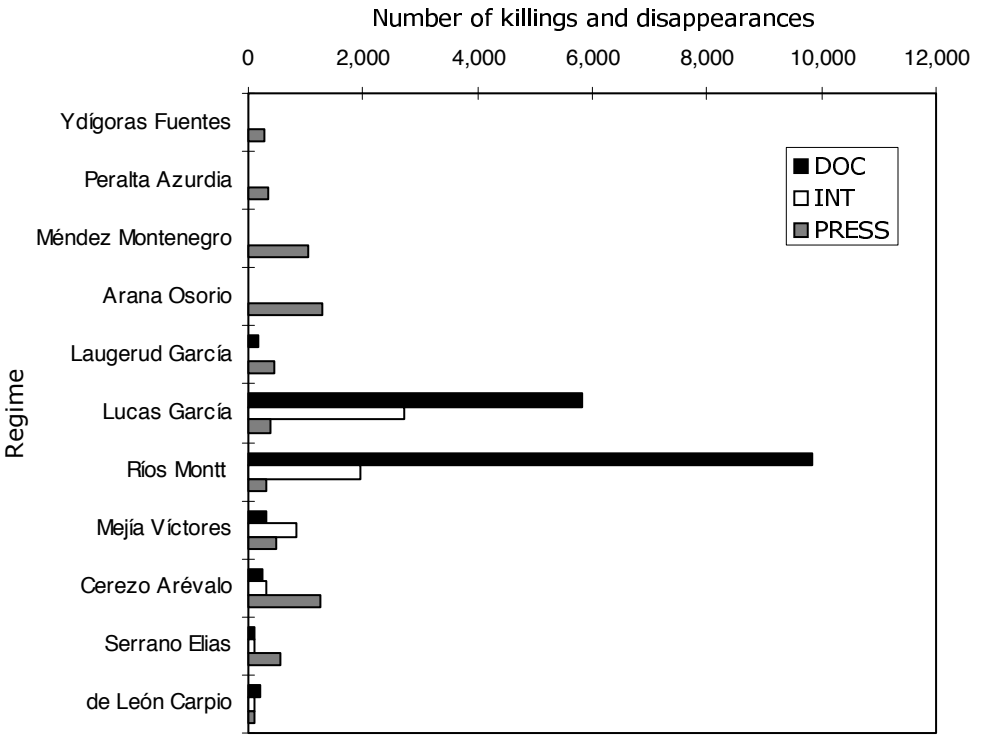
Figure 7.1. Number of killings and disappearances by three sources, by year, 1959-1995



For example, in March and April 1962, the attempt to bring down the Ydígoras government through mass protest actually played out in the press, with both the regime's allies and critics taking out full-page announcements in the *Prensa Libre* and other dailies to state

[9] Approximately 10,890 cases were coded from the newspapers. Sixty-three percent of the press cases were taken from *Prensa Libre*, 10 percent from *El Gráfico*, 8 percent from *La Hora* and *El Impacto* respectively, and 6 percent from *El Imparcial*. The remaining 5 percent is made up by eight other newspapers.

Figure 7.2. Number of killings and disappearances by regime and by data source, 1959-1995



their positions. Groups associated with the business sector and the conservative Catholic Church used these *campos pagados* to defame the opposition as unpatriotic troublemakers in the pay of Moscow and Havana. This defamation divided the coalition opposing Ydígoras and helped keep his increasingly militarized regime in power. But compared to later years, the press in the 1960s was still a valuable source of information on political conflict in Guatemala.

By the mid-1960s, the Guatemalan State had established a campaign of extra-judicial violence by turning its death squads on the political opposition. Instead of a law enforcement approach to the armed insurgents, extra-legal terror became an important means of government self-defense through the end of 1996. One difficulty with reporting state violence, then, is that the State has consistently worked to maintain a posture of innocence.

Throughout the armed conflict, the government lied about the

sources of violence. Méndez Montenegro's civilian regime regularly blamed the terror on conflicts between left- and right-wing extremists (Aguilera Peralta 1980: 104-5). Between 1978 and 1980, police chief German Chupina Barahona feigned concern at the rise in terror while the Secret Anticommunist Army, which he controlled (Dunkerley 1988: 472), assassinated leaders of the popular movement (*Siete Días en la USAC*, various dates 1978-1980). Throughout the 1980s, soldiers in the countryside disguised themselves as rebel combatants to commit mass kidnappings and murders or to check the loyalty of villagers (Americas Watch 1989b: 24; CIIDH database testimonies). In the 1990s, violence of a clearly political nature was disguised to appear as acts of common crime (Amnesty International 1993).

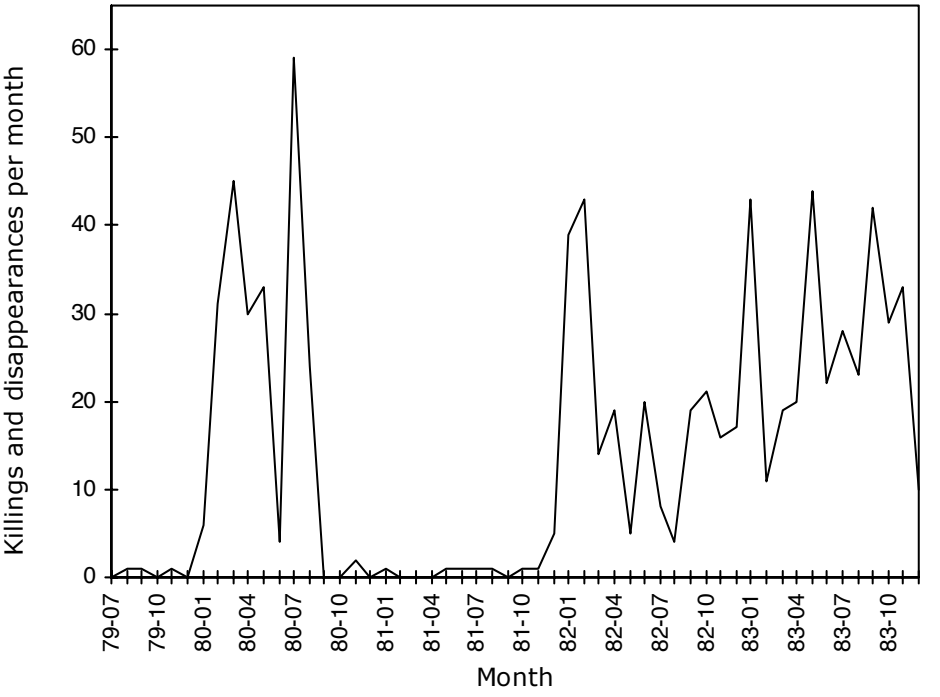
For much of the period of counterinsurgency, the press did report on the repression of protests, the appearance of cadavers and evidence of other types of state violence, but often without attributing the violence to state forces. Despite the State's denials of responsibility, testimonies and documentary sources provide ample evidence of official involvement in most of Guatemala's recent political violence.

Figure 7.1 shows another problem of relying on the journalistic record to understand the history of state terror. When the level of violence increased dramatically in the late 1970s and early 1980s, numbers of reported violations in the press stayed very low. In 1981, one of the worst years of state violence, the numbers fall towards zero. The press reported almost none of the rural violence (Chapter 9).

Figure 7.2 presents the data on killings, by different source, for different presidential regimes. The print media reported fewer murders and disappearances during the Lucas García government than in the mid-1970s under Kjell Laugerud, a less-repressive regime but one in which the press openly covered the activities of the urban popular movement. Remarkably, there are even fewer reported government killings during the Ríos Montt regime, which other sources establish as the period of greatest state terror.

In part, increasing state censorship explains the silence. The Lucas García government, as it liked to remind the public, never suspended the constitution, nor declared a state of siege, nor shut down the press. Still, threats against the press during the Lucas years contributed to the *self-censorship* of the press, as did the death

Figure 7.3. Killings and disappearances reported in the press, by month, July 1979 to December 1983



squad murders of a number of journalists who dared report on the escalation of state violence. The business elite contributed to press intimidation by removing their advertising from papers that published denunciations of state terror (Aguilera 1983: 107).[10]

Under Ríos Montt, press censorship was simpler. He decreed that the press could not publish news "that may cause confusion or panic or aggravate the situation," effectively banning reporting on the political violence (Americas Watch 1984: 34). The General also preempted Sunday night television for a weekly live-broadcast of his moral diatribes against subversion and corruption.

When press reports of disappearances increased after the Mejía Víctores coup (reflecting a well-documented campaign of urban ter-

[10] A ominously similar event occurred after the peace accords had been signed, in 1998, when President Alvaro Arzú Irigoyen pressured businesses to remove their advertising from media outlets most critical of his government, including the leading weekly magazine *Crónica*. By the end of the year, the magazine had been bought by investors tied to the ruling party.

ror against rebel activists and the civilian opposition), then-Colonel Hector Gramajo Morales, commander of a Guatemala City military base implicated in the repression, blamed the coverage on media collaboration with subversive forces (ibid.: 19).

Journalists were not only the object of government defamation. They were also victims of its terror. The URNG claims that 49 "democratic" journalists were silenced during the 18 months ending in April 1982. For the entire period of armed conflict, the CIIDH database details the cases of 46 journalists murdered or disappeared, 14 of whom were killed in 1980 alone. Some journalists died at the hands of rebels who were disgruntled with press coverage or because they were alleged to be government spies. But the majority of killings appear to be the work of pro-government forces (Amnesty International 1980a: 43-52; Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca 1982: 4; Americas Watch 1984: 34-46).

Figure 7.3 presents month-by-month when press coverage of state terror fell in Guatemala. According to CIIDH data, the press stopped reporting the violence beginning in September 1980. Perhaps not coincidentally, the database lists seven murders of journalists in July and August of that year.

The apparent rise in Figure 7.3 for 1982 does not signify a return to significant press coverage of state violence. Throughout the 1980 to 1983 period newspapers documented only a fraction of the killings and disappearances committed by the State. The maximum monthly value on the graph is only 60 for a period when monthly extra-judicial murders regularly totaled in the thousands.

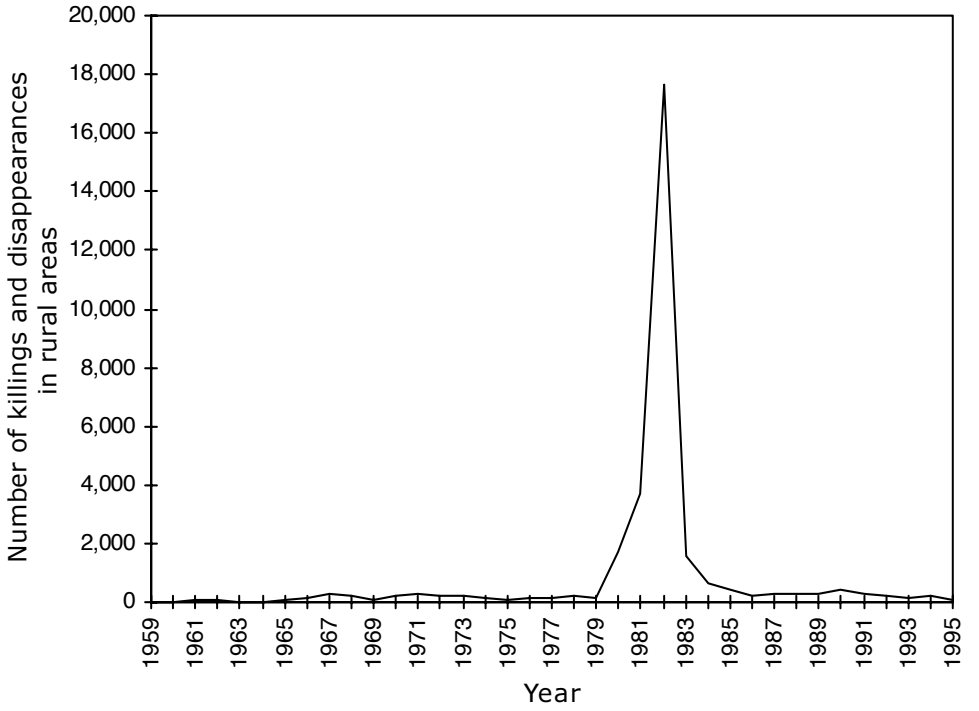
For the period of civilian government after 1986 newspaper reports are again the principal source for the CIIDH database. Press coverage by this time included human rights issues and judicial initiatives to deal with past state abuses. But after the May 1988 coup attempt by a hard-line faction of the military, press freedoms were again curtailed and critical outlets forced to close. Those that remained open limited their criticism to the civilian government, evidence of the continuing fear of alienating the military (Americas Watch 1987: 59; Barry 1989: 88).

A further cause for the silence of the press was the incapacity of urban-based journalists to know what was going on in the countryside, a topic we return to in Chapter 9.

Chapter 8
Urban Versus Rural Violence

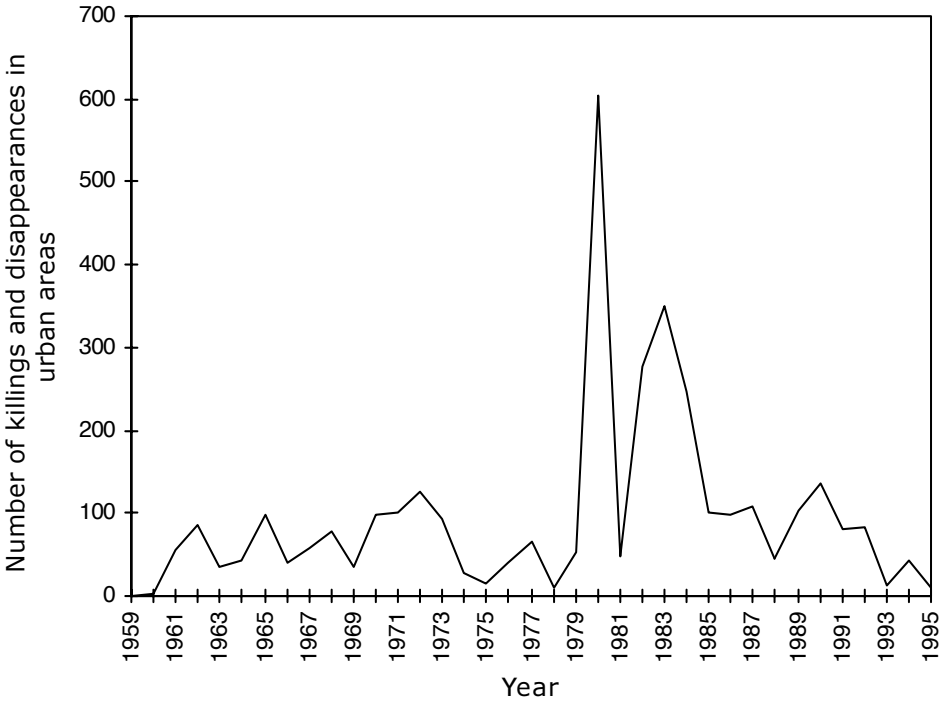
This chapter compares the different patterns of state violence in urban and rural regions of Guatemala.[11] Figure 8.1 indicates the heavy concentration of rural killings that began in 1980. Urban killings are much more spread out over various years, as Figure 8.2 shows. Note the different scales on the two graphs: the rural scale peaks at 18,000 while the maximum urban value is 700. Rural killings outnumber those in the city even for most years outside the 1980 to 1983 peak of rural terror.

Figure 8.1. Number of killings and disappearances in rural areas, by year, 1959-1995



[11] In the CIIDH database, "urban" refers to the capital, Guatemala City, plus three municipalities that help make up the bulk of the metropolitan area: Mixco, Villa Nueva, and Amatitlán. Economically and socially this corridor of four municipalities has a distinctly non-agricultural character, with a historically higher level of industrial activity than the rest of Guatemala. "Rural," then, refers to the rest of the country, predominately agricultural. Note that Guatemala's census bureau,

Figure 8.2. Number of killings and disappearances in urban areas, by year, 1959-1995



The top five years for rural killings and disappearances are all between 1980 and 1984. This was the period when the military concentrated its troops in the western highlands and terrorized the guerrillas' potential civilian base of support. During these five years the Guatemalan State committed fully 82 percent of rural murders for the entire 36 years of armed conflict (see Appendix A4).

For urban killings, various peaks appear: in 1966, when mass disappearances were first employed; in 1979 and 1980, when the government undertook a widening terror campaign against the urban popular movement; the 1982 to 1985 period when the government again attacked opponents in the city, including armed

the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística*, considers all municipal centers "urban" areas, as opposed to "rural" villages. We have decided not to follow their convention as most "urban" towns are quite rural in nature, and culturally closer to villages than to the nation's capital. Many of those killed or disappeared in town centers were residents of villages, thus making the official rural and urban categories difficult to compare.

Figure 8.3. Percent of killings and disappearances occurring in rural areas, by year, 1960-1995

guerrillas and activists in the incipient human rights movement; and finally in 1987 to 1990, after the return of civilian rule, when the State again tried to silence a strengthening urban popular movement.

Figure 8.3 illustrates how state violence became progressively (if not steadily) more rural. During the first few years of the armed conflict, the majority of killings and disappearances recorded in the CIIDH database occurred in the metropolitan area. In 1966 the army intensified its attack on areas of guerrilla activity in rural areas of eastern Guatemala. That year, the percent of killings committed in rural areas rises dramatically to approximately 75 percent, where it stays for the rest of the conflict. During the 1970s, the percent rural of violations decreased slightly as security forces concentrated their violence in the capital, as a weakened guerrilla movement retreated to the capital and as organizing by an urban-based mass movement began to threaten the power of the military government and the economic elite.

The sharp increase in percent rural of violence in 1978 reflects the army slaughter at Panzós, Alta Verapaz in the country's northeast on May 29 of that year (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs 1978). This tragedy inaugurated the government policy of rural mass killings, one that it returned to in earnest in 1981 and 1982. In the early 1980s, especially under Ríos Montt, the percent rural approaches 100 percent as the scale of rural violence transcends the level of urban killing, despite the continuation of terror in the city.

The urban share of violence increases somewhat during the transition to civilian rule under Mejía Víctores and Cerezo Arévelo when the government tried to repress the reemergence of the popular movement, especially in the city. But Figure 8.3 shows that the level of state violence in the countryside remained greater than in the city throughout the different periods of conflict, despite the difficulties of reporting rural violence.

Over the course of the armed conflict, most of the State's victims have been rural civilians, peasants of humble means, a fact frequently recognized by human rights groups even when the more visible violence was occurring in the city (on the 1966 to 1976 period see CIDC 1980 and Amnesty International 1976; on 1977 and 1978 see Amnesty International 1978). Maya peasant communities became a convenient battleground for the struggle for state power. This occurred even though most of the leading protagonists of this struggle were from the capital, and even though Guatemala City and the agro-export zones were in many ways the prizes the protagonists were fighting over.

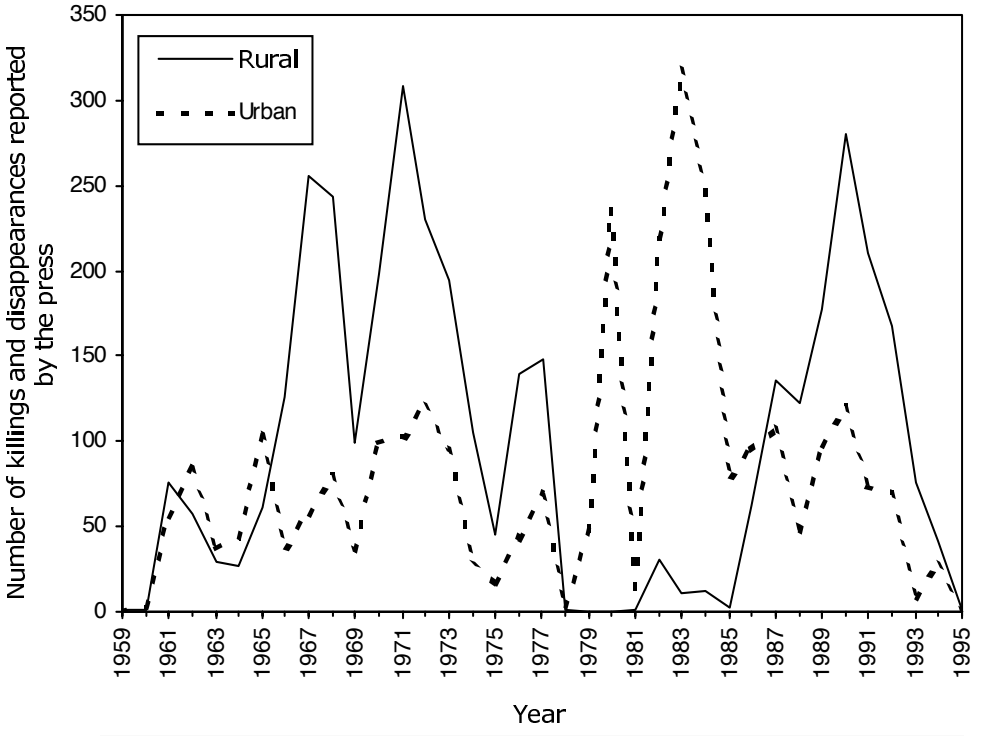
Chapter 9
Reporting Urban Versus Rural Violence

Testimonies and documentary sources in the CIIDH database establish that the violence increased, and became increasingly rural, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Press coverage in Guatemala completely missed this story.

Figure 9.1 demonstrates that in the 1960s and through much of the 1970s newspaper reports of the violence roughly followed the pattern of rural versus urban killing. For example, in 1970 to 1973 the increase and subsequent decrease in reported rural violence corresponds to the pattern of reported urban violence.

But from 1979 on, as state terror shifts to the western highlands, the solid line in Figure 9.1 that represents rural killings falls to zero and then stays very low. In 1982, press sources collected in the CIIDH database report only 31 rural killings, while the database as a whole details over 18,000 rural victims. The State's campaign of terror against Maya communities took place largely in silence, especially within Guatemala.

Figure 9.1. Number of killings and disappearances reported by the press, 1959-1995



The press was not completely shut down during the Lucas García and Ríos Montt governments. The dashed line in Figure 9.1 shows that the press did manage to publish some accounts of the violence in the early 1980s, but they were almost exclusively about urban killings.

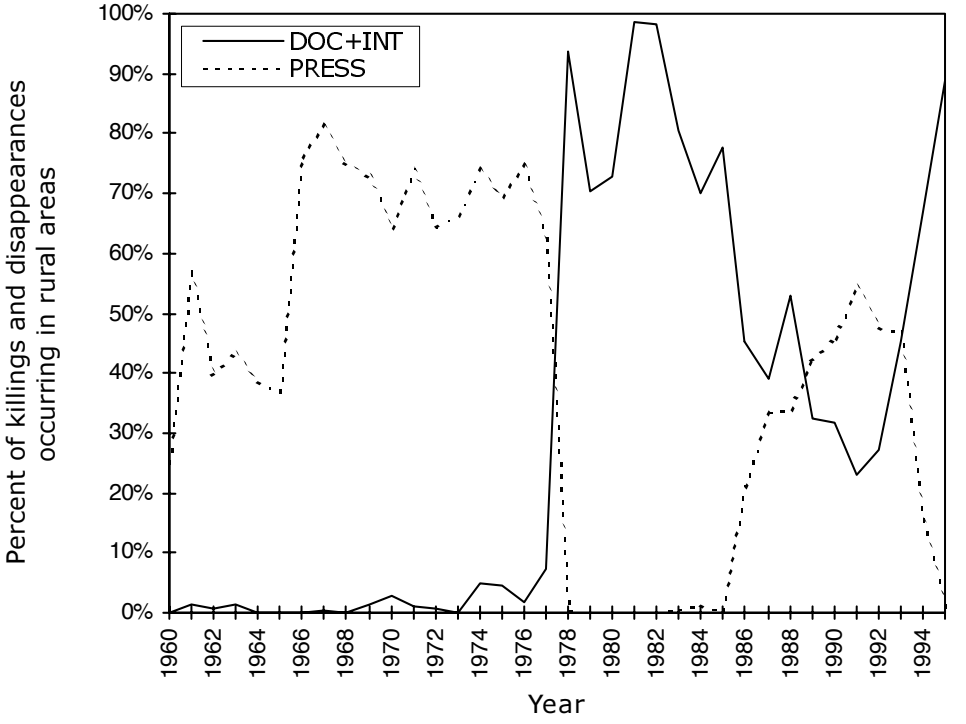
Figure 9.2 presents this information a different way. At the same time that documentary and interview sources begin to pick up the increasingly rural character of state violence (the percentage rural represented by the solid line), press coverage which had previously done a better job capturing rural violence grows silent (the dashed line). The percent of violence committed in rural areas reported in the press falls close to zero all the way through 1985. This is precisely during the years that rural mass killings became a deliberate state policy. For Guatemalans who depended on newspapers for their information, the state terror in the highlands barely registered.

The interests of the urban readership may explain part of this phenomenon. Even if Guatemalan newspapers had felt free to publish the whole story of the government's atrocities in the countryside, space for reporting the terror would have been limited by the need to appeal to middle-class readers, who preferred news about the economy, sports and social events. Many better-off city people have little interest in what happens on the country's rural margins. For many, the existence of Maya communities speaking their own languages and observing their own customs is a point of national embarrassment (if occasional folkloric pride). Some, especially those who supported the government's pacification campaign, may have wanted to know as little as possible about massacres of rural people in the name of stopping a "communist" insurgency.

Furthermore, few urban-based journalists have successfully covered the lives of Guatemala's rural majority. Living in both geographic and cultural isolation, Maya communities were hard to get to and hard to get into, especially for reporters without local contacts.

News of some of the atrocities in the countryside reached human rights groups in Mexico and elsewhere, and occasionally received mention in the foreign press. *Noticias de Guatemala*, a popular movement periodical, regularly published news of state repression and the rebel uprising, though in 1981 and 1982 this news source was unavailable to most Guatemalans not living in exile. The same was true for *Inforpress Centroamericana*, a Guatemala City publication that retained considerable independence during the terror,

Figure 9.2. Percent of killings and disappearances occurring in rural areas, by year and by source, 1960-1995



although it had a very limited circulation. It was, says one contributor, "the elite of the left writing for the elite of the right" (CIIDH interview).

Within Guatemala, press coverage and political debate remained more open in the public University of San Carlos. Its autonomy from the rest of the State allowed it to publish opposition literature, even during times of greatest repression. In 1978, the administration of rector Saúl Osorio Paz began publication of *Siete Días en la USAC*. In addition to University news and left-wing political analysis, this weekly frequently printed denunciations of state violence. It concentrated on the repression of the urban popular movement, but also covered happenings in the countryside. Still, by the end of 1980, just before rural violence crested, the death squads had driven Saúl Osorio into exile and *Siete Días* stopped denouncing state ter-

ror. A series of interim rectors who followed Osorio tried to improve relations with the Lucas García government. As a result, *Siete Días* began to criticize radical students as much as government repression. By the time Ríos Montt took power little remained of a critical press to cover the peak of state terror (CIIDH and GAM 1999).

Thus few Guatemalans were fully aware of the mass killings taking place in 1982. Even in the western highlands, in the areas of greatest repression, survivors lived in isolation from one another. Many were afraid to discuss the massacres or mass disappearances. Even if they dared to talk, there was little opportunity to denounce the government's crimes. They might have known what had happened in their immediate area, but had little idea of events elsewhere in the country. Villagers' understandings remained local, and dependent on their own experiences. Only in exile or in the Communities of Population in Resistance were victims able to come together and develop a general critique of the state terror (Chapter 18). Even today, much of the story of the state killings in the Guatemalan countryside remains untold.

Chapter 10
Naming the Victims

The CIIDH database is not a complete record of the political violence in Guatemala. But it does give a sense of how state violence was understood as it developed from a limited attack on a modest opposition to an indiscriminate assault on civilians living in a region where guerrillas attempted to spark an insurrection. As a reflection of victims' and witnesses' understandings of the terror, Figure 10.1 presents the known versus anonymous character of victims of killing and disappearance that appear in the database.[12]

As shown in Figure 10.1, for every year during the 1960s and through the mid-1970s a majority of the State's victims are named. In 1978, the percent of named victims falls sharply. The database for that year includes the army slaughter at Panzós, for which the identities of the approximately 130 victims are not known in the database. The proportion of named victims remained low for the next few years, especially during 1981 and 1982 when rural mass terror was at its peak. For 1982, only 13 percent of all victims are named, the low point for the entire armed conflict.

During the worst state repression, many mass killings were made public months or years later. In the CIIDH project, participating popular organizations collected many of the testimonies long after the time of the killings, when people were less clear about details, especially the identities of all the victims.[13]

Oftentimes, few witnesses were available to relate the deaths and disappearances of so many victims. Typically, during the collection of testimonies, a surviving witness might provide the names of one or two victims, perhaps close relatives, while estimating the number of other neighbors in the community without giving their names.

[12] This graph refers to whether victims' names are known or unknown in the data sources that mention a particular act of violence. If the victim's identity does not appear in *any* source, she or he is coded as unnamed. An unnamed victim in this database may appear as a named victim in other databases or in other published sources. Note that for both named and unnamed victims, the database was repeatedly checked to avoid counting the same person twice. Nonetheless, some duplicates remain, especially for anonymous victims whose names cannot be checked.

[13] An exception is Ricardo Falla's timely work on the army's July 1982 mass killing at Finca San Francisco in Huehuetenango (Falla 1983).

Figure 10.1. Percent of all killings and disappearances for which victim is identified, by year, 1969-1995

Anonymous victims tend to be rural and Indian, versus named victims, who are disproportionately urban and white or Ladino. The situation in the countryside contrasted with that in the city, especially at earlier periods when state violence was far more selective, and the popular response to terror was far more organized.

In June 1977, for example, the urban popular movement was shaken by the death squad murder of Mario López Larrave, law professor and legal adviser to various unions. A key figure in constructing the opposition coalition, his death was widely reported in the press. Six weeks later, two young student leaders, Aníbal Caballeros and Robin García, disappeared on their way home from a secret EGP event near Guatemala City. The cadaver of Caballeros soon appeared in Zone 11 of the capital. After years of relative calm, members of the popular movement organized to oppose the resurgence of state terror. Over the next few days the papers were filled with denunciations of the kidnappings while high school students throughout the country surrounded government buildings and filled public parks, proclaiming "We want Robin back alive."

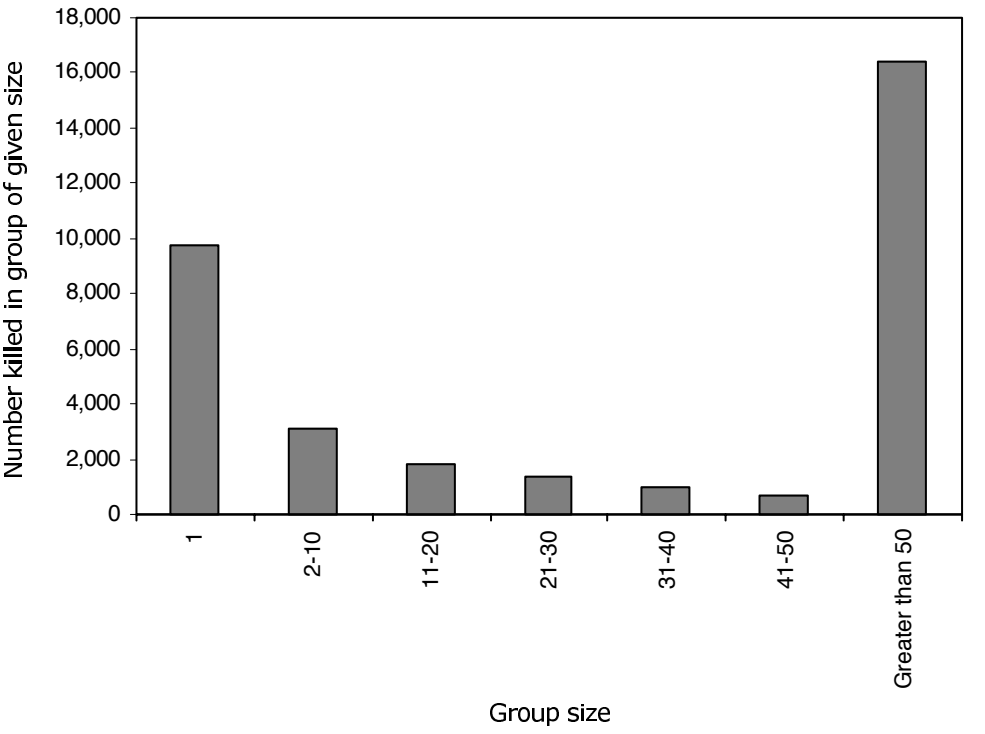
A week after he disappeared, Robin García's mutilated body appeared by the side of a rural highway. Robin García did not join the ranks of anonymous victims, as might have happened a few years later. Instead, he became a public martyr. His funeral shut down the capital as 50,000 mourners accompanied the casket carrying red carnations, a symbol of friendship that Latin American popular movements converted into a symbol of struggle (CIIDH and GAM 1999).

Soon there would be too many victims to make each into a martyr, and too much fear and too few survivors to give them all the funerals that they deserved.

Chapter 11
Selective Versus Mass Killing

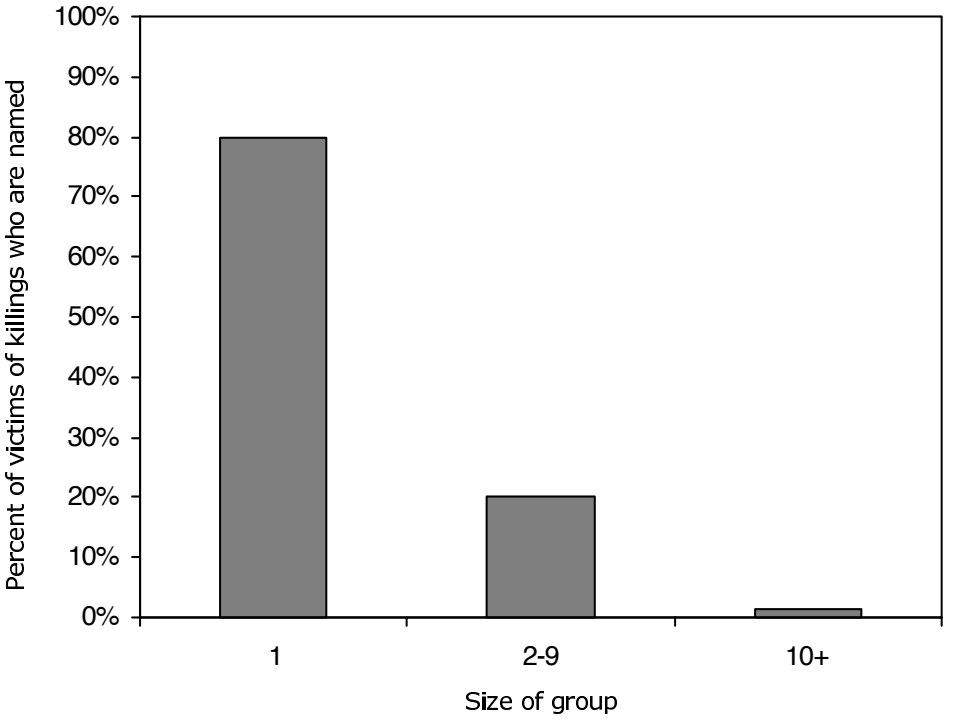
Many of the victims of state violence in Guatemala were killed selectively, one at a time. Figure 11.1 classifies victims according to the size of the group in which they were killed. More people were killed alone than in any specific other group size. However, a majority of the government's victims were murdered in large groups, usually in a very indiscriminate manner. Twenty-nine percent of the victims of killing were assassinated individually and twenty-three percent were killed in groups of between 2-50 victims. Forty-eight percent of all victims were killed in groups of larger than 50 people, victims of the government destruction of entire rural communities.

Figure 11.1. Histogram of number of victims killed, by size of group, 1959-1995



Following the analysis from the last chapter, Figure 11.2 shows how victims of mass killings tend to appear anonymously in the database. Almost 80 percent of the victims of selective killings are

Figure 11.2. Percent of victims of killings who are named, by size of group, 1959-1995



identified by name in the database; only about one in a hundred victims killed in groups of ten or more are properly identified.

Figure 11.3 reveals that for each victim group size the greater share of violence occurred in the countryside. Reading across, the graph distinguishes the patterns for rural and urban violence.

The darker bars show how the government committed many selective killings in rural areas: the CIIDH database documents more than 7,000 selective killings, as represented in the first darker bar for group size of one. The second darker bar shows fewer people killed in groups of two to nine. The overwhelming majority of victims of rural killings, more than 20,000 people, died in groups of ten or more.

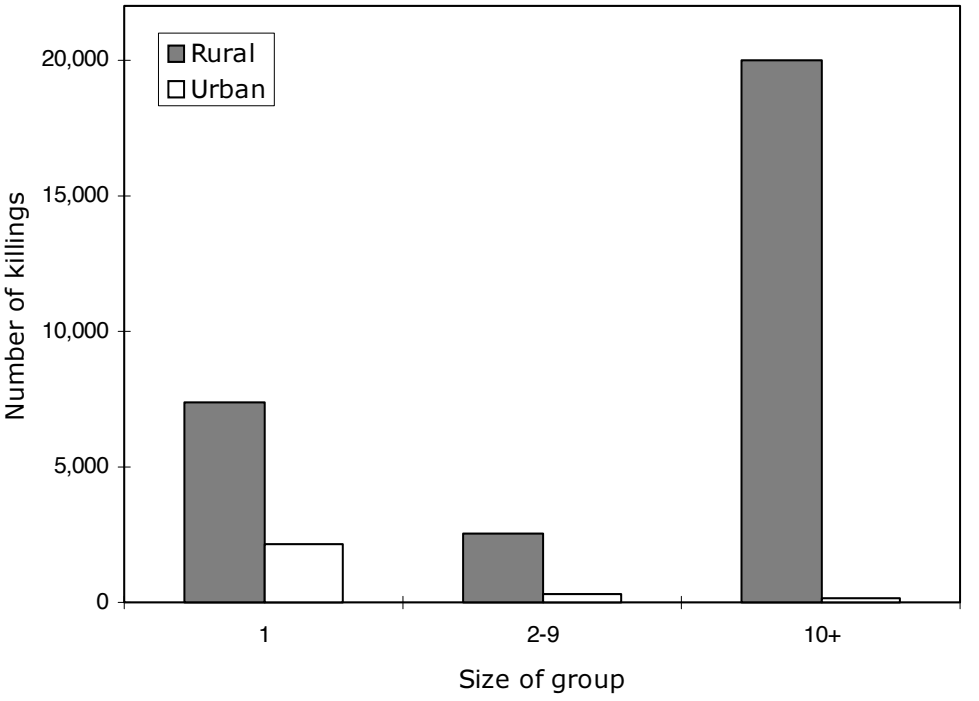
The lighter bars show that although mass killings occasionally occurred in Guatemala City, the State killed most of its urban victims one at a time. The largest of the three lighter bars is for group size of one. The bars representing the number killed in groups of two to nine victims and for groups of ten or more are progressively smaller. Compared to the indiscriminate terror in the countryside, government forces chose their targets more carefully in the city.

In both rural and urban areas state violence became less selective as the repression intensified. In Guatemala City in the late 1970s, the repression began with individual killings of key opposition figures. In 1980, as selective assassinations became even more frequent, mass killings also occurred in the city, beginning with the Spanish Embassy massacre on January 31.

One of the principal targets of the terror was organized labor, the historical nemesis of Guatemala's business interests. On June 21, 1980, state agents disappeared 27 union leaders from the headquarters of the CNT (National Workers' Central), a labor movement coordinating body. State terror made attending a labor meeting highly dangerous: on August 24, 17 more trade unionists were disappeared from the Finca Emaús in Escuintla (*Guatemala 80* 1980).

At the University of San Carlos, on the morning of July 14, moments after guerrillas had ambushed and killed a police colonel, men in plainclothes opened fire on students arriving at the main bus stop. The University was at the time a center of support for both the popular movement and the armed insurgency. However, few of the victims of this terrorist act were politically involved.

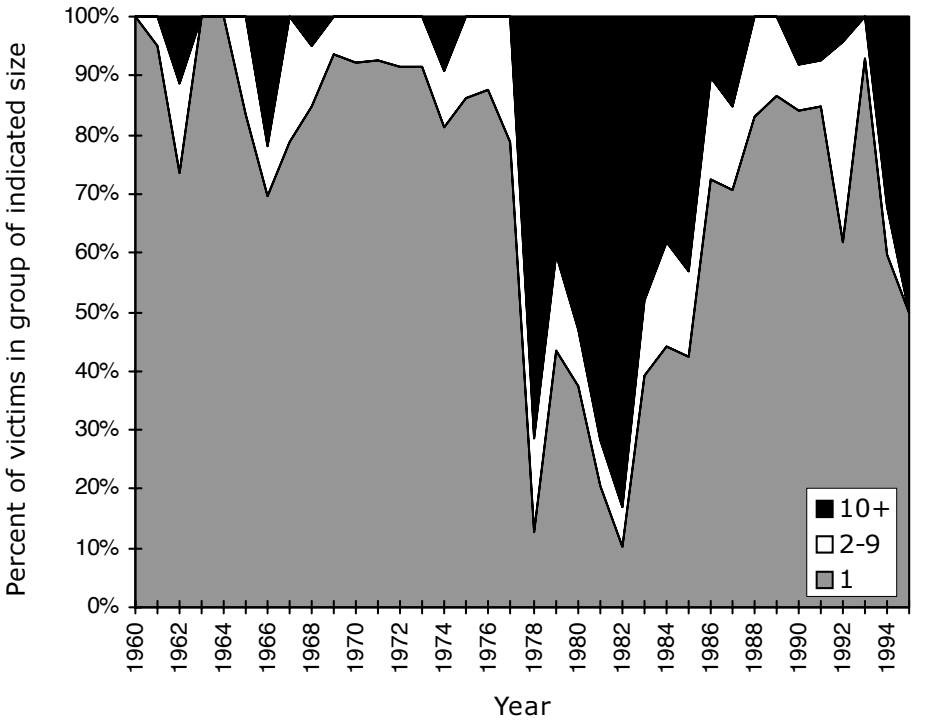
Figure 11.3. Number of killings, by geographic area and size of group, 1959–1995



Seeking revenge, security forces indiscriminately attacked the University as a whole (CIIDH and GAM 1999).

A similar pattern holds for hard-hit areas of the countryside. In the mid-1970s, army repression of cooperatives in the Ixcán jungle of northern Quiché consisted of secret or open disappearances of cooperative leaders allegedly linked to the EGP rebel organization. By February 1982 the army began to openly burn entire villages in the region, killing trapped residents with little or no distinction between those who did or did not support the guerrillas (Manz 1988: 76-8; Iglesia Guatemalteca en el Exilio 1992; Falla 1992).

Figure 11.4. Percent of victims in group of indicated size, by year, 1959-1995



For the army's goal of containing the rebel movement, selective killing proved less effective than mass terror. In the capital, the first targeted assassinations only served to convince many militants of the danger of opposing the government in a public, legal manner. In the wake of these killings, the guerrilla organizations quickly increased their urban ranks (CIIDH and GAM 1999).

The same pattern occurred in the countryside. In 1979 and 1980, in the K'iche' heartland around Santa Cruz del Quiché and in the Ixil region to the north, individual killings of community leaders and guerrilla organizers made people fear the army, but these acts of repression also inspired family and friends of these early victims to become guerrilla combatants, both for self-protection and to avenge the deaths of their family members. The government responded not by improving relations with the civilian population, but by increasing the scale of violence. By the end of 1982, an army campaign of mass terror had depopulated most villages in northern Quiché. Together with the civil patrols, mass terror convinced most survivors to distance themselves from the rebels. Thus the army stopped the growth of the EGP, but at the cost of tens of thousands of civilian lives (Carmack 1988b; Stoll 1993).

The above examples reflect the country-wide pattern of mass versus selective killings. Figure 11.4 illustrates how, starting in 1978, killings in groups of ten or more became a greater share of government violence. After 1982, the percentage of large-scale killings and disappearances began to drop as selective assassination began to dominate the pattern of state repression. A few isolated mass killings in the 1990s increased the proportion of 10-plus killings during the low-violence years at the end of the armed conflict. But the years of systematic rural mass killing were over.[14]

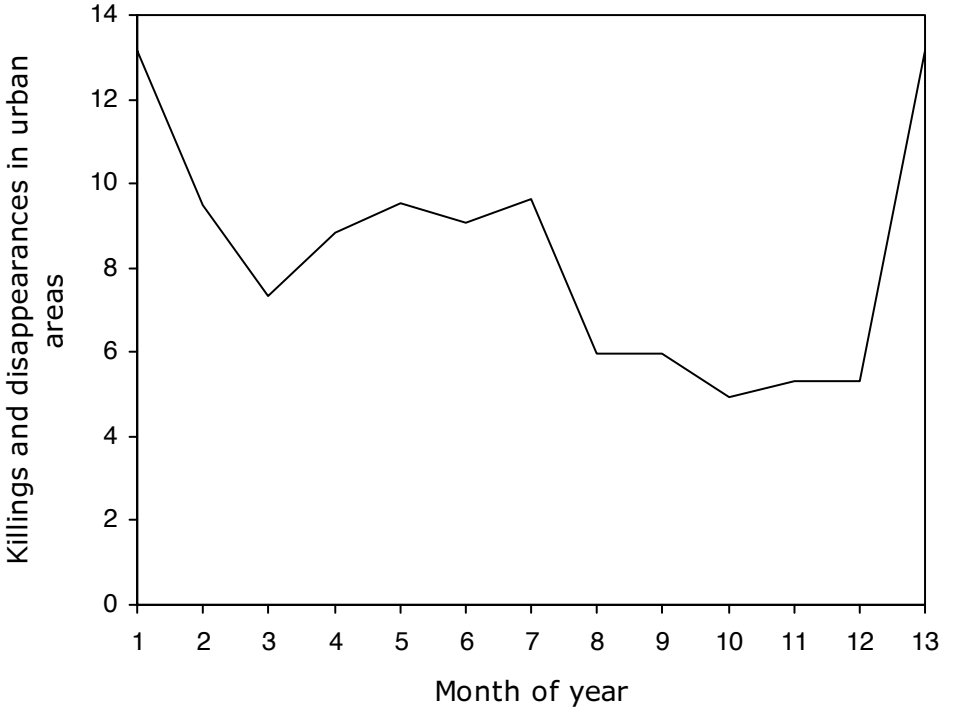
Amnesty International reported that government murder began to take place on a more selective basis under the Mejía Víctores government (1987: 125-6). State terror continued during this regime, especially in late 1983 and through 1984 and 1985 as student leaders, unionists and human rights defenders once again became frequent government targets. Remarkably, this spate of *selective* killings represented a significant improvement from the situation in Guatemala a few years earlier.

[14] The experience of state violence in the department of Sololá reverses this pattern. ORPA guerrillas most active in this region avoided trying to organize whole villages. During the height of the counterinsurgency the army and its paramilitary death squads largely limited their terror to individual killings, including those of community activists from the municipality of Santiago Atitlán. One of the most notorious mass killings occurred in Santiago, but not until after the 1980s. On December 2, 1990, army soldiers opened fire on a crowd of unarmed protesters who were demanding that the army leave their town, killing 13. Only after the local protests and international outrage caused by the massacre did the army close its base in Santiago. Resistance to the army by town residents became one of the key elements in the growing struggle for demilitarization in Guatemala (Americas Watch 1988: 11, 92; Americas Watch and Physicians for Human Rights 1991: 53-64; Carlsen 1997).

Chapter 12
Terror and Seasonality

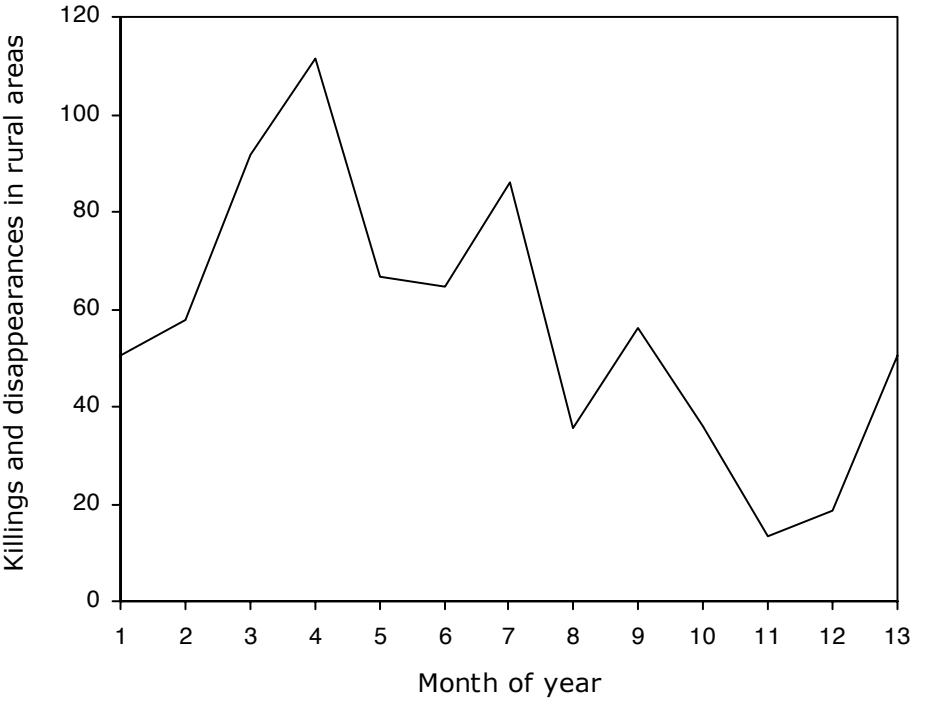
State violence in Guatemala also varied by season of the year. Figure 12.1 averages killings and disappearances for urban areas, by month of the year, for the cases in the CIIDH database. In Guatemala City, the level of violence is relatively consistent, though it tends to decrease slightly as the year goes on. Note that December's rate of killing is much lower than that for the following month of January (repeated at the far right of the figure). In December, state offices close and much of the country slows down. State terror, it appears, also takes a holiday.

Figure 12.1. Average number of urban killings, by month, 1959-1995



This pattern is even more marked for rural areas, as Figure 12.2 shows. The level of state violence is much lower in November and December than for other months of the year. January presents a significant increase and the average level of violence rises to a peak

Figure 12.2. Average number of rural killings, by month, 1959-1995



in March and April.[15] After April, rural violence steadily declines through the end of the year.

One explanation of this rural pattern is that in much of Guatemala, May to October is the rainy season when both rebels and their government adversaries have lesser mobility, thus slowing operations.[16] The slope of the graph is more pronounced for rural violence than for urban violence, where the rainy season apparently does not have as big an effect on the state's ability to commit violence.

The database also provides evidence of *political* seasonality. That is, throughout Guatemala's armed conflict, levels of violence have fluctuated around the time of regime changes. For example, in 1966, the government enticed guerrillas and members of opposition par-

[15] Note that this peak is heavily weighted by the extraordinarily high levels of rural violence in these months in 1982, during the transition from the Lucas García to Ríos Montt regimes. See Appendix A5 for tests of significance that confirm non-random differences by season.

[16] For example, in 1981 in the humid Ixil region of northern Quiché, the army waited for summer to begin an offensive against villages distant from their headquarters in the town centers (REMHI 1998 III: 172).

ties to participate in the electoral process by easing the repression. As soon as the campaign season ended, but before the new president's inauguration, security forces attacked the guerrillas through a mass disappearance of its leadership. A similar pattern took place during the 1970 election cycle. After the election of Arana Osorio and before he took office, the death squad Eye for an Eye (*Ojo por Ojo*) claimed responsibility for 27 killings in reprisal of FAR rebels' murder of the German Ambassador Karl von Spretti (Cáceres 1980; McClintock 1985: 98).

A pattern emerges: during the months just prior to elections, political violence tends to decrease as the State tries to promote the image of a functioning democracy. Once a new President is elected (by either legitimate or fraudulent means), violence may rise as the lame-duck predecessor becomes free to employ violence to consolidate government control. Once the new President takes office, violence may decrease for a time as the new government attempts to gain popular support.

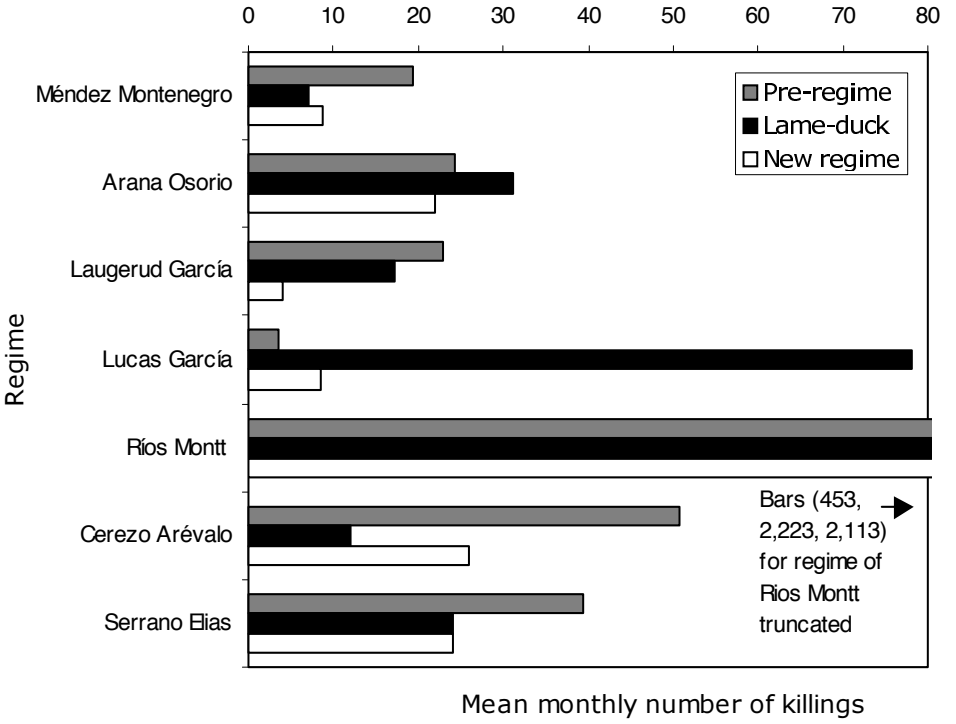
Figure 12.3 shows graphically that such a progression occurred during various regime changes. For the 1970 transition between Méndez Montenegro and Arana Osorio, the monthly level of violence rose after the election during the lame-duck period, then fell again after Arana's inauguration.[17]

As the earlier narrative discussed, 1974 was an anomalous election year when open electoral fraud compelled the State to try to co-opt the political opposition through reforms instead of disciplining it through extra-judicial violence. That year, according to CIIDH data, killings fell immediately after the election, though the lame-duck period that year was also characterized by state repression. Amnesty International reported a spate of killings by paramilitary organizations in the days following the March elections, including that of human rights activist and vocal government critic Edmundo Guerra Theilheimer (1976: 6). And at that year's May Day march, also during the interim period, the police's anti-riot Pelotón Modelo opened fire on protesters, killing five and wounding hundreds (Cáceres 1980). Figure 12.3 shows that in 1974 as during other regime changes, state repression declined dramatically after the new president's inauguration.

[17] Each electoral regime transition was divided three periods: 1) the three months before the election was held; 2) the period between the election and the transition; and 3) the first three months of the new government.

The pattern of political seasonality is even more marked for the 1978 regime change. The level of violence increased dramatically between the election and the inauguration of Lucas García. It was in the interim period that the Secret Anticommunist Army killed activist priest Hermógenes López Coarchita in San José Pinula (one of the earliest government attacks on activist members of the Catholic Church) and when army troops opened fire on protesters in Panzós,

Figure 12.3. Average monthly killings and disappearances for three periods, by regime



Alta Verapaz, killing over a hundred civilians and sending a sharp message to opposition groups organizing in the countryside.

By the 1982 elections, Guatemala's democratic façade was in shambles. The armed rebels encouraged villagers under their influence not to go to town to vote. Conversely, the government said that anyone who did not come to the polls on election day would be treated as a guerrilla supporter. Then the army used election-day activities to abuse and detain peasants from suspect communities

making a rare and dangerous trip to the town center. The official candidate, former Defense Minister Angel Aníbal Guevara, "won" the March 7 election, but he never took office. Two weeks after the election, fellow general José Efraín Ríos Montt seized power following an army coup.

For this election cycle, at the height of state terror, levels of killing in the database for all three periods are literally off the graph: 453 deaths per month during the four-month campaign season; 2223 killings during the abbreviated one-month lame-duck period (defined as the month of March as a proxy for the March 7 to 23 period); and 1813 killings per month during the first four months of the Ríos Montt regime. During this regime change, the government apparently did not worry about its legitimacy and the elections appear to have had a negligible effect on the patterns of violence.

A new pattern emerged in 1985 when the military dictatorship prepared to hand formal control back to a civilian government. For that election cycle, levels of state violence were much higher before the election than after. Leaders of the military government appear to have prepared for the transition by accelerating attacks on the opposition during their final days of absolute control over the state apparatus.

Chapter 13
Methods of Terror

During the early years of the armed conflict, the Guatemalan State used mass detention to repress its opposition. Throughout the conflict, it employed torture to collect information and to discourage further participation by opponents. But relative to other authoritarian states in the region that regularly used mass detentions and torture to fight their opposition, such as El Salvador,[18] Guatemala built its coercive rule on the twin practices of outright murder and disappearance. As Francisco Villagrán Kramer, Lucas García's civilian Vice-President, said in a resignation statement before going into exile, "There are no political prisoners in Guatemala—only political murders" (Amnesty International 1981: 5).

Consequently, the CIIDH database primarily contains cases of government murders and disappearances. As Figure 13.1 shows, killings easily outnumber other types of violations. Even though a large proportion of victims killed remain anonymous, killings also represent the majority of violations of *named* victims.[19]

Figure 13.1 may underreport some types of violations more than others. Relative to other violations, killings might be easier for witnesses to recognize as a grave human rights violation, and would then be more likely to be denounced. Compared to killings, a smaller proportion of acts of kidnappings, torture, or injury are listed in press reports or documentary sources. In testimonies both torture and rape (coded as a form of injury) are seldom denounced, perhaps due to the intimate nature of the violation. In addition, survivors tend to more easily and more comfortably recall cases of

[18] In 1983, the Salvadoran State replaced a policy of state murder with one of mass detention and systematic torture of captured government opponents, according to data collected by the non-government Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES). The number of documented state killings and disappearances peaked at 1610 in 1981. The annual totals fell steadily through 1984, and then stayed below 100 per year through the end of the armed conflict in 1992. while killings fell, torture and illegal detention rose dramatically, peaking in the late 1980s. For example, the CDHES documented 328 cases of torture in 1981, and over 1000 in 1989 (CDHES 1992).

[19] Note that Figure 13.1 counts *violations* and not *victims*. For example, many of the reported cases of torture happened to victims who were also illegally detained or killed by the State.

murder or disappearance, even though other rights violations have serious human consequences as well.

Disappearances, on the other hand, may or may not get reported less than outright murder. Unlike relatives of known murder victims, the family of a disappeared person can hold out hope that the victim may still be alive and in state custody. Thus, family members may be more likely to pursue disappearances than other violations with more certain outcomes. Indeed the persistence of this hope, and the associated nightmare of never knowing whether

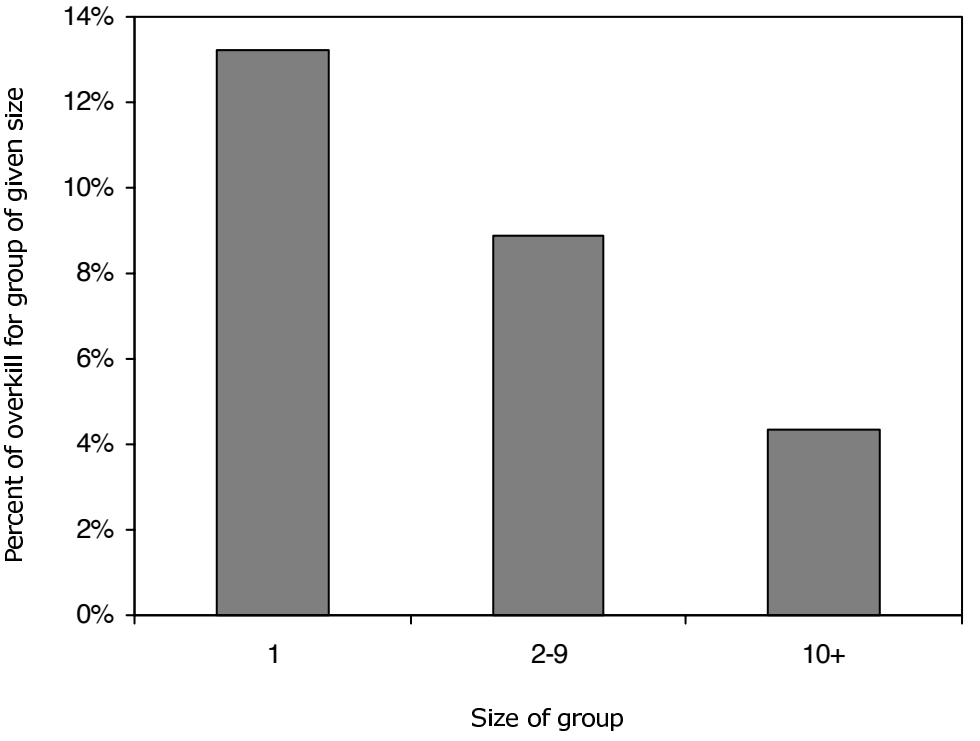
Figure 13.1. Number of total violations and named violations, by type, 1959-1995

	Number of Violations	
Violation	Total	Named
Killings	34,146	8,669
Kidnapping and Illegal Detention	3,506	2,640
Disappearance	2,760	1,405
Torture	1,279	379
Injury	1,083	326
TOTALS	42,774	13,419

a loved one is dead or alive, helped create two of Guatemala's the most important human rights groups: the Mutual Support Group (GAM), and the Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared in Guatemala (FAMDEGUA, whose leadership split from GAM in 1992).

Even with the presence of these organizations, many forced disappearances have never been denounced. Through threats and further violence, the Guatemalan government regularly intimidated victims' families from proceeding with investigations (ACAFADE 1988: 17). Furthermore, activists challenging the State on the issue of the disappeared have been murdered, including members of GAM and the rural-based human rights group CERJ (the Council of Ethnic Communities "Runujel Junám"). The same hope and the same organizational capacity that may have encouraged the pursuit of justice for the disappeared also made these survivors a target of state terror.

Figure 13.2. Percent of overkill for group of given size, 1959-1995



Admittedly, the emphasis on killing in this report reflects the availability of data. We do not want to suggest that other forms of state violence are not important or less destructive to the victims or the society at large. The widespread practices of kidnapping and torture, for example, have also damaged lives and helped establish rule by state terror in Guatemala.

Guatemalan security forces often went beyond simply eliminating their victims. "Overkill" we define as the practice of committing additional indignities on someone who is either in the process of being killed or who is already dead. For example, overkill includes burning or mutilating a corpse, decapitating a corpse after death, shooting bullets into a body already killed by stabbing, raping a victim before killing her, or torturing a victim to death.

Overkill can serve many purposes. Disfiguring a corpse can augment the impact of a murder on survivors. It can also demonstrate to the politically active that the government's willingness to harm its opponents has no limits. When a superior officer forces troops (or police or paramilitary agents) to commit such horrors, it

helps break down subordinates' aversion to violence and makes them more effective operatives for the government's campaign of violence (Montejo et al. 1992).

Figure 13.2 provides evidence that overkill appears more often in individual rather than in mass killings. As group size gets bigger, they include smaller proportions of victims of mutilation and torture. That is, state forces appear to spend more time per victim on individual murders than in collective ones. This difference is consistent both for victims from the city and those killed in the countryside (see Appendix A6).

This finding contradicts one commonly-held understanding of the methods employed during the counterinsurgency: that overkill is associated most frequently with rural massacres. Journalist and case-based human rights accounts of rural mass killings from the early 1980s often highlighted the most horrendous rights violations that took place during a mass killing, including graphic examples of torture and mutilation. This reporting helped alert the world to the state terror in Guatemala. But it also suggested to readers a qualitative association of overkill with massacres.

Information from the CIIDH database presented in Figure 13.2 suggests that state forces usually committed rural massacres as efficiently as possible. Although overkill was employed in mass killings, a higher proportion of victims of selective killing were subjected to it. During army sweeps, state forces would decimate one village and proceed to the next, moving quickly perhaps out of fear of a guerrilla ambush. It may also be that by the time the State moved its apparatus of violence to the western highlands it had less time for, or interest in, each of its victims.

Part IV

Victims and Perpetrators

Chapter 14
The Victims

As the armed conflict developed in Guatemala, state violence attacked different populations in different ways. Previous chapters have discussed how, as the violence reached its peak in early 1982, it became more rural and less selective, and its victims more often indigenous and unnamed.

For much of the period of armed conflict, state terror was directed at active government opponents, principally those committed to the use of violence in the struggle for political change, the armed insurgents. The CIIDH database includes little information about whether the victim in a specific case was a member of a guerrilla group. Much of the documentary human rights information and most of the testimonies were collected during the period of armed struggle when few sources were forthcoming about victims' political-military activity. Even today, after so many years of government terror, many if not most Guatemalans still consider discussing the guerrilla movement dangerous. Still, press reports and documentary sources included in the database suggest that many of the 1960s victims of the State's political violence were armed combatants.

By the 1970s, the State expanded its list of appropriate targets for death or displacement to include people who had never disobeyed the law but in some way threatened the interests of the military government or its upper class sponsors. Both critics of official corruption and leaders of the popular movement were murdered, especially during the Arana Osorio and Lucas García regimes. By the end of the decade, this repression encouraged members of the unarmed political opposition to become active supporters of the armed insurgency (Levenson-Estrada 1994).

So did guerrilla recruitment of embattled activists in the mass opposition movement. For example, each of the different guerrilla organizations had recruited members of Guatemala's union movement, and the PGT and FAR in particular viewed the organized working class as their revolutionary vanguard. The violence against unionists may in certain cases have represented an attack on individuals committed to the overthrow of the government. However, the systematic repression of strikes, and indeed all forms of labor organizing in Guatemala, also served to inhibit any challenge to the private control of production (Levenson-Estrada 1994).

In other cases, the State killed unarmed civilians as an easy way to respond to guerrilla actions. For example, in 1980 the police and death squads responded to rebel violence in the capital by killing students at the University of San Carlos. In the countryside, the army often reacted to a rebel ambush by attacking nearby peasant villages. Unarmed university students and peasant villagers, different in so many ways, were similar in being accessible targets for government revenge.

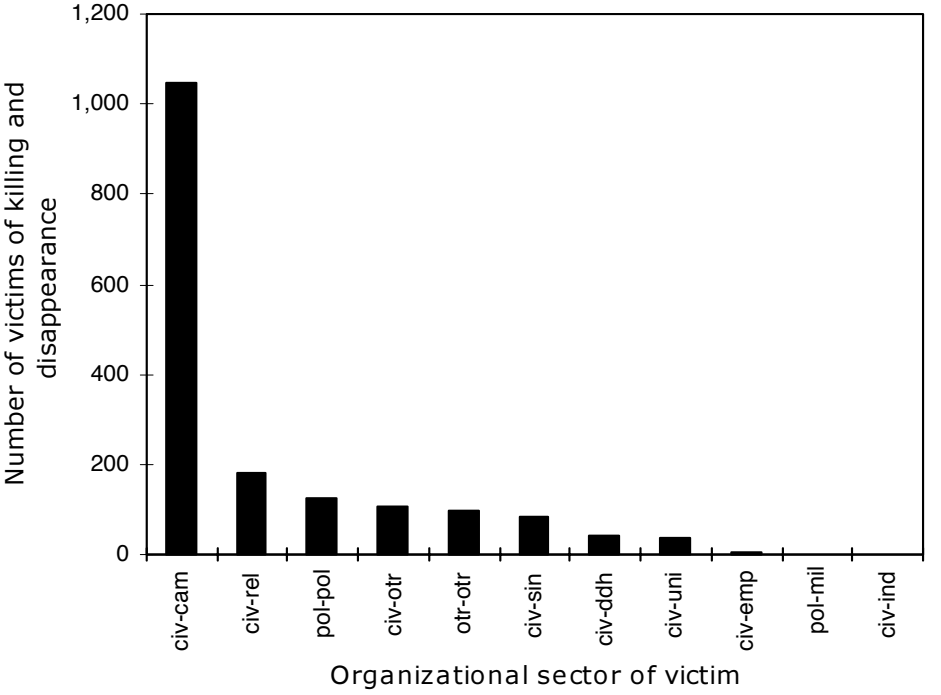
By the early 1980s, most victims of state violence were unarmed Indian peasants living in the guerrilla zones of operation. At first the army focused its rural violence on community leaders, often members of religious, peasant or cooperative organizations that had thrived in the country's highlands and in the Ixcán jungle during the 1960s and 1970s.

Some of these community leaders had adopted a rhetoric of revolution, such as those who signed the Declaration of Iximché in 1981 (Arias 1990) or who belonged to organizations that shared the goals of the guerrilla movement, like the Peasant Unity Committee (CUC). But the army appears to have killed many other catechists, health workers, bilingual teachers and other community organizers simply because they were agents of change or an example of a new assertive ethnic identity in a politically repressed region—the western highlands and adjacent lowland jungles—precisely at the time guerrilla armies began to focus their attention there. That is, the State attacked Maya community leaders because they represented the *potential* union of the rebels and an organized Indian peasantry (Carmack 1988b; Le Bot 1995).

Figure 14.1 shows that for killing victims who are known to have belonged to an organization, a majority belonged to peasant groups. Much of the CIIDH data were collected through popular organizations with a peasant orientation, especially the Communities of Population in Resistance (CPRs).

On the other hand, the Catholic Church's Recuperation of Historical Memory report, using data collected through the Church's local organizations, emphasizes that many victims were members of religious organizations, especially Catholic base groups (REMHI 1998). In the CIIDH data, members of religious groups were the second most frequent category of victims with identified affiliations. It is often hard to identify a leader by one particular affiliation. Many community leaders killed or disappeared by the State had many

Figure 14.1. Number of victims of killing and disappearance by organizational sector, 1959-1995



The codes in cigure 14.1 indicate the social sector to which the victim pertained; a single victim may have been in more than one sector. The most common sectors were civilian-peasant (civ-cam), civilian-religious (civ-rel), politician (pol-pol), civilian-other (civ-otr), civilian-trade union (civ-sin), civilian-human rights activist (civ-ddh), and civilian-university community (civ-uni).

different organizational roles at once -- as leaders of village development committees, members of cooperatives, indigenous activists, catechists, and members of other kinds of peasant organizations.[20]

By the beginning of 1982, terror turned massive as the government attempted to halt the guerrillas' expansion in western

[20] In the CIIDH database, as in others, what organizational sector victims were ascribed to depends on to whom they gave their testimony and under what conditions. For the CIIDH data, 1984 and 1985 were the peak years for killings of persons with an organizational affiliation (many of the victims being members of the CPRs). This is after the peak in the early 1980s, when many other people in organizations had been killed, but for which scant information of group affiliation appears. Thus, the rural poor continued to organize after the height of the terror, though more often in the human rights and popular movement groups, and less frequently in religious community base organizations.

Guatemala. In some areas, army intelligence coded villages as "red": those where rebel support was allegedly total, or wide-spread enough for the army to resort to mass terror (Davis 1988). In such zones (and there were many), anyone who crossed the army's path could become a victim. For example, in 1981 the EGP reported a series of ambushes on a rural highway running through an isolated region between the departments of Huehuetenango and El Quiché (*Noticias de Guatemala* 1981, 1982, nos. 72-77). In the nearby village of Llano del Coyote, several people died when they ran into an army patrol. They were abused and intimidated so that they would provide information on rebel movements, and then forcibly disappeared or killed on the spot. Others were shot as they tried to escape (case cm0001745).

More common was the army occupation of specific villages. Soldiers often arrived with a list to identify suspect residents or brought along a hooded informant to do the job on the spot. In "red" communities the whole community was the target, and the army made no distinction between active guerrilla collaborators and those who merely lived in a village where guerrilla influence was strong. Soldiers might take the accused away, never to be seen again, or execute them in front of their neighbors, to impress upon survivors what happens to "bad apples."[21] Such actions served to destroy support for the guerrillas, both directly by eliminating guerrilla supporters, and indirectly by terrorizing survivors. Many others died as they tried mass movement to flee an army incursion, and even more were hunted down in their mountain hiding places (Chapter 20).

Maya villagers and their local organizations played a key role in the expansion of the guerrilla movement in the highlands. But only a minority of the army's rural victims had more than a limited role in the armed opposition. And as the guerrillas would soon realize, not all the rebels' peasant collaborators had a deep commitment to revolutionary change, at least not deep enough to withstand the intensity of repression. For the army, many rural victims' "crime" (*delito*) was to have attended guerrilla organizational meetings, or to have lived near where the guerrillas operated. Others were falsely accused and in this way became victims of the militarization of the highlands.

[21] Both army officers and civil patrol enthusiasts employed the metaphor of "rotten fruit," justifying purging villages of alleged guerrilla sympathizers so that other villagers would not also go bad (Kobrak 1997; REMHI 1998 II: 123-4).

Chapter 15
Gender and Violence

Most of the protagonists in Guatemala's armed conflict were men: from the decision-makers responsible for the counterinsurgency, to the troops that carried out much of the terror, to the villagers forced to serve the government cause in the all-male civil patrols. Although the guerrilla movement recruited women into its ranks as armed combatants and in their support populations, the revolutionary movement was also largely male-dominated.

Similarly, most of the victims of state violence were men. But as the terror turned massive and indiscriminate during the government assault on rural communities, women became a greater proportion of the dead and disappeared.

Figure 15.1 shows that just as the violence peaked in 1982, killings of women also peaked. In 1981 and 1982, a period of the counterinsurgency characterized by rural mass killings, the

Figure 15.1. Number of killings and disappearances by year, by sex of victim, 1960-1995

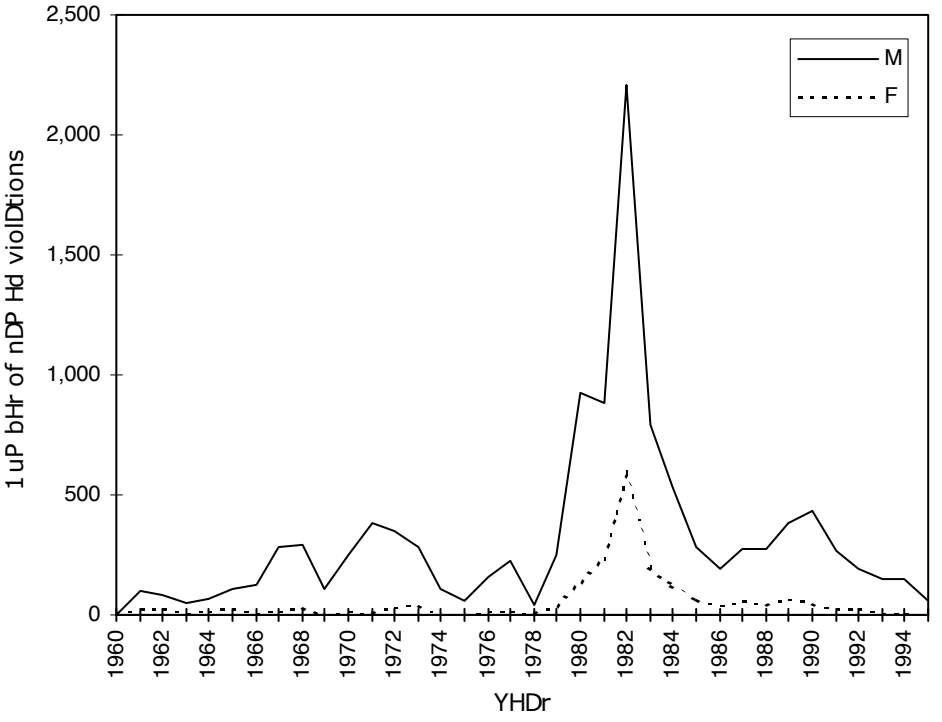
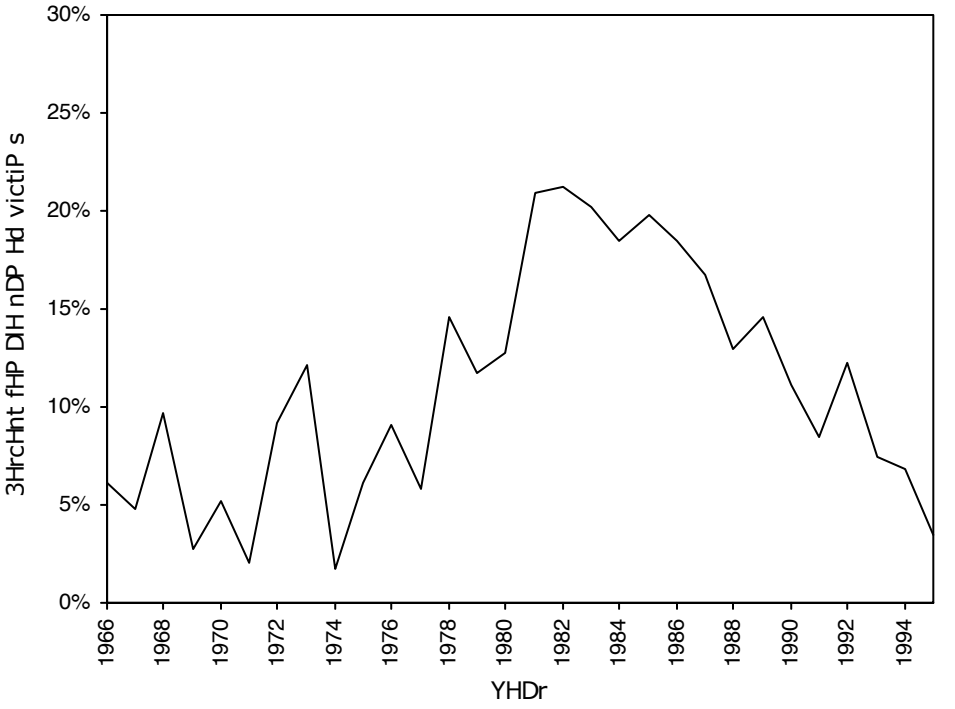


Figure 15.2. Percent female of victims of killing and disappearance, by year, 1966-1995



proportion of women among all named victims reached 21 percent, its highest point since the expansion of the conflict in the 1960s. For the entire armed conflict, women represent 15 percent of the named dead in the CIIDH database.

Figure 15.2 presents this relation in a different way, giving the percent of women killed for different years after 1966.[22] The main trend in Figure 15.2 is that women become a larger share of the state's victims throughout the escalation of the social conflict from the mid-1970s on, peaking during the early 1980s years of the army's scorched earth campaigns, and falling slowly as the pattern of state violence again becomes more selective. When and where the counterinsurgency was least discriminate, more women died.

In peasant communities, the State appears to have considered male residents primarily responsible for local political activity, including support for the guerrillas. Government forces typically searched out male victims first. As villagers in the highlands began

[22] The number of political murders are so small before 1966 that the percent female fluctuates widely.

to understand the logic of repression, men, especially younger men, would often flee the village at the first sign of army approach or would sleep in the fields or forests to avoid a pre-dawn army attack. In the absence of men, the military attacked any villagers they could capture, including women, children, and the elderly.

In May 1982, for example, the Guatemalan army under Ríos Montt laid siege to the village of Saquillá II, in Chichicastenango, El Quiché. Though few men remained in the village, the army killed who they could. On May 8, 23 children, 15 women and 6 men died in an army raid. Ten days later the army's elite *Kaibiles* returned to Saquillá II, conducting a house-to-house search and killing 25 children, 15 women (three of them pregnant) and 3 men (*Situación de los derechos humanos en Guatemala* 1983: 206-7; Amnesty International 1982).

An even more notorious example of this pattern took place earlier during the Lucas García government in the village of Río Negro, Rabinal. On February 14, 1982, civil patrollers from the nearby community of Xococ summoned the men of Río Negro to their village, where they murdered most of them. The few that survived stayed away from their homes. But that did not stop security forces from attacking Río Negro again, killing 70 women and 107 children on March 13 (Equipo de Antropología Forense de Guatemala 1995; testimonies provided by CALDH).

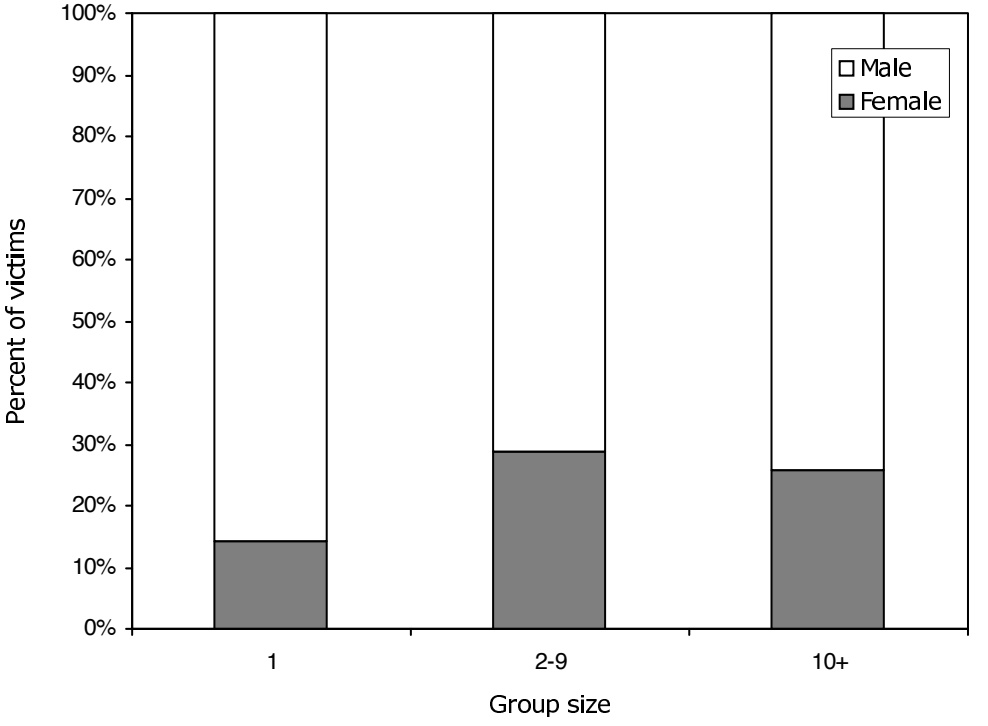
Many other women died when army troops destroyed whole villages, killing residents without even a minimal level of selectivity.

Figure 15.3 confirms that women tended to die in mass killings. Female victims make up 26 percent of the those killed in groups of ten or more and 29 percent of those killed in smaller groups. Only 14 percent of individual assassinations or disappearances involved women victims.

Though more of the direct targets of political murder have been men, many of the effects and after-effects of state terror have fallen disproportionately on female survivors, both in the long term and immediately following massacres.

For example, Guatemalan security forces have treated women's bodies as one of the spoils of victory. Security forces often raped survivors in communities where they killed widely (and also raped women before killing them). In the breakdown of moral order, soldiers and civil patrollers abused female survivors because they could, due to these women's extreme vulnerability, and because there was

Figure 15.3. Percent male and female of victims of killings, by group size, 1959-1995



nothing to stop them. Rape also served a counterinsurgency function: humiliating, emotionally injuring and breaking the resolve of survivors to discourage further collaboration with the rebel movement.[23]

Widows, as surviving heads of affected families, have disproportionately had to cope with the economic and emotional aftermath of violence. Many rural victims lived close to subsistence levels even before the coming of the armed conflict. With their husbands absent, many survivors experienced a sharp decline in their fortunes, not to mention the psychological difficulties of coping with the loss of loved ones. Their problems were often compounded by ostracism in their communities after government forces targeted their family members.

[23] It is difficult to establish the prevalence of rape as a practice of political violence. REMHI notes in its discussion of rape that, relative to other types of violence, this act is seldom denounced, due to survivors' sense of guilt and shame for having been so intimately violated (REMHI 1998 I: 210). Similarly, the CIIDH database contains few denunciations of rape.

Some widows were forced to abandon their homes and property. Local counterinsurgency leaders used their husbands' or families' alleged collaboration with the guerrillas to justify banishing these women from militarized, pro-army communities, as continues to occur in San Martín Jilotepeque, in Chimaltenango (GAM testimonies).

In extreme cases, rape victims have had to deal with unwanted pregnancies and raise alone the children of their rapists. In communities where civil patrol authority took an especially gruesome form, some widows spent the years following the height of counterinsurgency terror serving patrol leaders in a form of long-term sexual slavery.

Yet it would be a mistake to view women simply as victims. State terror and the experience of survival pushed women to take up non-traditional roles beyond the household domain and have helped make women leaders in the reconstruction of Guatemalan society. For example, women have taken a leading role in the development of the human rights movement and in the resistance to military rule.

Activist survivors include Nobel Prize winner and former CUC leader Rigoberta Menchú Tum, who suffered the loss of both her parents and a brother to state violence, and two widowed congressional leaders: Nineth Montenegro de García of GAM, and Rosalina Tuyuc of CONAVIGUA, the National Widows' Coordinating Committee. Indeed, women have dominated the leadership and the political base of GAM, not to mention the Mamá Maquín women's refugee group and CONAVIGUA. CONAVIGUA's activism has extended beyond widows' immediate concerns. It includes their successful fight against forced army conscription, and for the exhumation of various clandestine cemeteries (CONAVIGUA 1992; CONAVIGUA 1994).

Women activists, like men, have often paid for their politics with their lives: for example, Adelina Caal (*Mamá Maquín*), in 1978 leader of the ill-fated Panzós demonstration, killed by government soldiers along with over a hundred other protesters; Irma Flaquer, journalist and founder of the National Human Rights Commission in the late-1970s, disappeared in 1980 as her son was shot dead; GAM leader Rosario Godoy, tortured and left murdered together with her brother and infant son in a body dump outside Guatemala City; CONAVIGUA member María Mejía, an outspoken opponent of the civil patrols in Parraxtut, Sacapulas, El Quiché, shot dead in 1990 in

her home by local patrol enthusiasts; and anthropologist Myrna Mack, critic of the government's policy towards the displaced populations, knifed to death on a city street by an army presidential guard (Pacheco and Salazar 1985; Americas Watch 1985c: 41; Americas Watch 1989: 44; Americas Watch and Physicians for Human Rights 1991: 36-50).

Women have also taken a principal role in bearing witness to government atrocities. In the 1980s, Rigoberta Menchú used speaking tours and her book (Menchú 1985) to alert the world to events in Guatemala. Within Guatemala in recent years, Maya women have provided key testimony in court cases against members of security forces.[24] In the CIIDH database, though women represent 15 percent of the victims of state violence, they are over 40 percent of those who gave testimony.

[24] The Guatemalan justice system has a long history of systematic discrimination against Maya Indians giving testimony (Brintnall 1979). Even today, the testimony of Indian women is discounted by judges acting favorably to defendants, as in the case of Cándido Noriega Estrada, a former military commissioner and army intelligence agent accused of orchestrating various massacres in Tuluché, Chiché, El Quiché. Noriega was acquitted in 1997 despite the testimony of 30 eyewitnesses, mostly K'iche'-speaking widows of dead and disappeared villagers.

Chapter 16
Age and Family

State violence in Guatemala caused a massive disruption in the lives of thousands of families. On top of economic crisis, families—parents, spouses, children, and others—faced in their process of grieving the task of trying to make sense of deaths that often made no sense at all, especially when they were committed by authorities who systematically abused the trust of the people through a drawn-out policy of extra-judicial murders.

The political repression was ongoing and lasted decades. This made families fearful to confront their grief in any but the most private way. It also turned the survivors into objects of government suspicion and further abuse, rejected by those who, in a militarized society, did not want to associate with neighbors marked by the taint of "subversion," however unjustified (REMHI 1998 I: 171).

Figure 16.1. Histogram of named victims of killing and disappearance, by age, 1959-1995

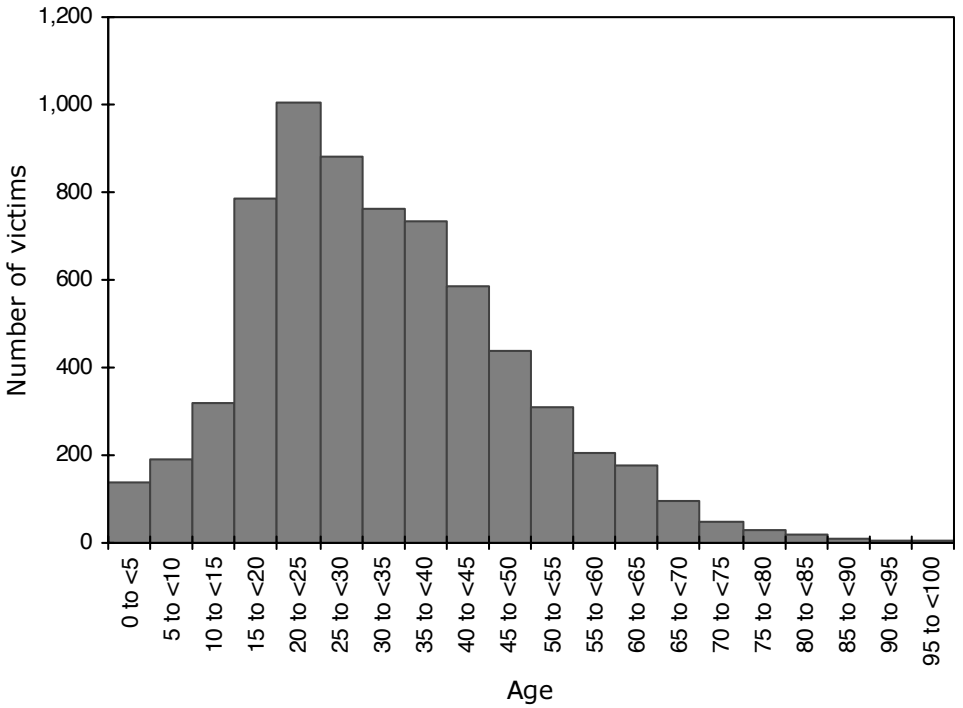


Figure 16.2. Double histogram of victims and population in general, 1959-1995

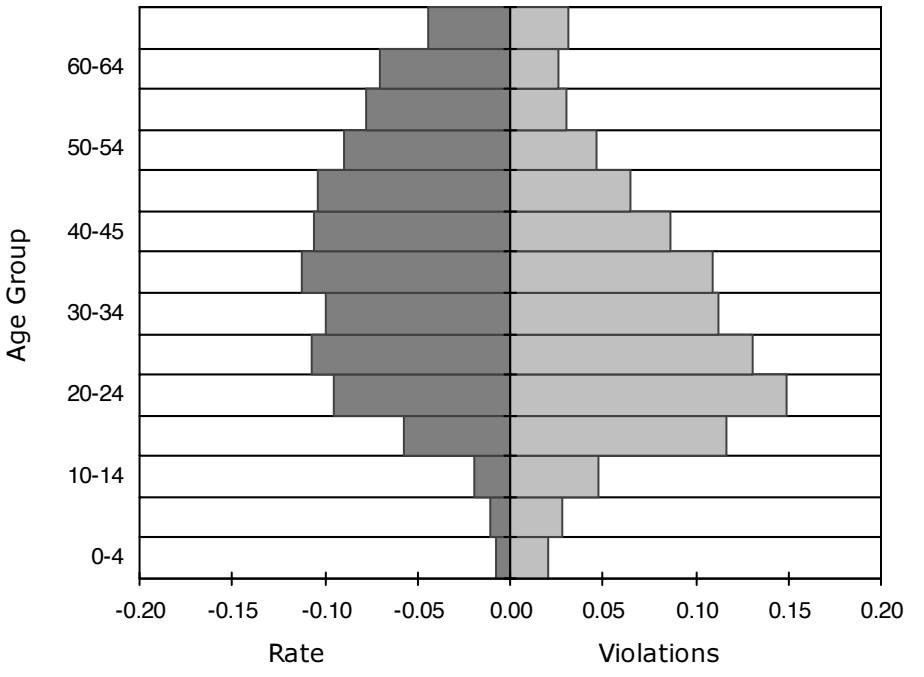


Figure 16.1 gives an idea of the demographic impact of state violence on families. The terror in Guatemala affected people across the age spectrum, both direct victims and those they left behind. Sixty-five percent of named victims of known age were between 20 and 49, the principal age of parents of dependent children.

At first glance, Figure 16.1 appears to suggest that young adults were hardest hit by the violence, especially those between 20 and 24. In Figure 16.2, the right side repeats Figure 16.1, presenting the *gross* number of violations for each age group. The left side of Figure 16.2 takes into account the different sizes of these age groups in the Guatemalan population. It suggests that all age groups between 20 and 49 were killed at essentially the same *rate*. The left side shows that older people were also killed at a high rate. The proportion of elderly people is low in Guatemala's fast-growing population, so the absolute number of elderly killed was lower than for other groups.

The graphs confirm what a study conducted by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Juvenile Division of the Guatemalan Supreme Court found in 1984: that state violence created

Figure 16.3. Percent of victims of killing or disappearance who were 14 years old or younger, 1970-1995

an enormous population of orphaned children. The report estimated that between 1980 and 1983 at least 100,000 and as many as 200,000 children, mainly in the western highlands, had lost at least one parent to the violence, and that 20 percent of these youth lost both their parents (quoted in Krueger and Enge 1985: vi). Young survivors of the state violence have high incidences of health and psychological problems, and tend to live in precarious situations (Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala 1986).

The lowest rates for victims of murder and disappearance correspond to the youngest age groups. Note, however, that Figures 16.1 and 16.2 heavily underreport children because they include only *named* victims. The great majority of child victims of state violence died in mass killings in the early 1980s for which few victims' identities are known (see Figure 11.2). Within the population of victims of mass killings, children are perhaps the least likely to be identified by survivors giving testimony as they are less well-known in the community relative to adults.

Figure 16.3 shows the percent of all named victims of killing and disappearance who were aged 14 years or less (unnamed victims are almost never identified by age, so only named victims are used in this analysis). Except for an anomalous peak in 1973 which results from that year's very small number of killings and disappearances that makes the percentages unstable, the graph follows from the analysis of indiscriminate killing. 1981 and 1982, the years with the greatest number of killings, are also the years with the highest proportion of child victims. Soon thereafter, the proportion of victims who are children declines to lower levels. During the early 1980s, the proportion of all victims who are 14 years old or younger rises above 12 percent. At the height of the army's counterinsurgency, approximately one in every eight victims of killing and disappearance were children.

The mass killing of children is one of the most disturbing aspects of state terror during the Lucas García and Ríos Montt regimes. In giving testimonies about indiscriminate massacres, peasant sources often wondered what kind of "sin" (*pecado*) children could possibly be guilty of to justify their murder by state forces. Yet the army treated many Indian communities as uniformly hostile. Their rhetoric described all residents, even infants, as dangerous "communists," and worthy of death.

It is difficult to comprehend this type of official behavior, or to see its rationale. The government may have slaughtered children to avoid dealing with an even greater orphan problem than the one it had already created. Another reason may be the army's stated belief that allowing children in hostile villages to live would only lead to the growth of future generations of vengeful guerrilla fighters. In any case, the early 1980s government policy of killing unarmed civilian children shows how little it cared about the human consequences of its fight against the insurgency. Often the Army was willing to destroy entire communities to facilitate its own survival.

Chapter 17
Ethnicity

Part II of this report discussed how political violence in Guatemala lasted so long and how the scene of political violence shifted from the city to the countryside in the 1960s, then back to the city and back again to the country over the next decade. As Figure 1.1 showed, the level of killing rises sharply in the early 1980s, when both guerrillas and their government adversaries moved their conflict to the peasant Indian communities of the western highlands.

The CIIDH database includes victims from 14 of Guatemala's 22 linguistically-distinct Maya populations. For victims for which ethnicity is known, 81 percent are identified as indigenous.[25] This chapter addresses why indigenous communities suffered so much of the human cost in Guatemala's fight for state power.

One explanation is that the guerrillas' ambition and their popular support increased at the same moment that repression in the Guatemala City hastened their displacement to the western highlands. In the wake of the 1979 Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, and contemporaneously with the guerrilla offensives in neighboring El Salvador, Guatemala's rebels saw their opportunity. Guerrillas had been organizing for years in the highlands, and their presence in certain areas coincided with the growth of local movements for Indian liberation. But in a spirit of "triumphalism" that later became a source of self-criticism, the guerrillas, in particular the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, felt that victory was imminent and began a mass incorporation of civilians on a scale unlike anything seen previously during the armed conflict (Payeras 1991).

But whatever the role of the guerrillas in attracting the government's attention to the western highlands and Ixcán cooperatives, it was the Guatemalan *State* that chose to lay waste to entire regions of the country in order to drive the guerrillas out. Only after a sustained period of indiscriminate mass killing in 1981 and early 1982 did army strategists begin to consider social action pro-

[25] Only ten percent of victims of killings and disappearances in the CIIDH database have their ethnicity listed. Documentary sources and newspapers did not often mention ethnic origins. Even testimonies from the Maya communities of western Guatemala regularly fail to determine what language group victims belonged to. Non-reporting may a greater problem for non-Indian victims, as there is no clear ethnic category for them. "Ladino," for example, is an identity not accepted by many to whom it is ascribed.

grams like food for work programs and the civil patrols that, however coercive, allowed civilians in disputed areas their right to life.

The use of mass terror in western Guatemala is clearly related to the class and ethnic position of the victims involved. The government could kill Maya peasants indiscriminately because there was little political price to pay. The country's elites on whom the regime depended raised little protest to Lucas García and Ríos Montt's scorched earth campaigns.[26] This occurred in part due to the coercive power of these military regimes. But it was also a result of the historical absence in Guatemala of any sense of common humanity by non-Indians towards Indians. Most of the government's victims belonged to communities whose basic civil rights had, for nearly 500 years, rarely been recognized.

Instead, Maya communities have been viewed by the upper classes as either a means or a hindrance to the accumulation of wealth. To the degree that their exploitation was recognized, they were treated as a potential source of rebellion to be repressed (Martínez Peláez 1971; McCreery 1994). The association of guerrilla insurgency with the highlands population awoke among the privileged classes historic fears of an Indian uprising. That is, the early 1980s destruction of hundreds of Indian communities was not unusual in Guatemalan history, but the product of a much longer pattern of repressive rule (Castellano Cambranes 1985; Lovell 1988; Smith 1990).

Guatemala's ethnic divisions facilitated political violence in different ways. The army used troops from the Ladino regions of the Oriente to carry out many of the massacres in Indian communities. By 1982, the army was recruiting and conscripting heavily in the western highlands itself. Similar to armed forces in other parts of the world, the army began to use Guatemala's history of social exclusion to present itself as a means of upward mobility for young indigenous men. Recruiting Indians into the army also helped establish a government connection with the population in contested regions (Wilson 1991).

The hostility between Indian communities and privileged Ladinos also pulled many communities into a cycle of violence. Sheldon Annis relates how aggression and legal trickery helped

[26] Nor did the international community protest state violence in Guatemala in an effective way, not even the U.S. government which has long treated the region as its political "backyard."

Guatemala City lawyer Horacio Arroyave Pantiagua dispossess many Kaqchikel Indians of their land in San Antonio Aguas Calientes, Sacatepéquez. In the late 1970s, community members tried to use the courts to defend their lands, but to no avail. Their tactics were violent on occasion, but nothing like the reaction of Arroyave and his government allies. Activists from CUC and the guerrillas were attracted to the Indians' cause. Soon thereafter a death squad began to assassinate community leaders. Other deaths in San Antonio included those of Arroyave's presumed spies (Annis 1988).

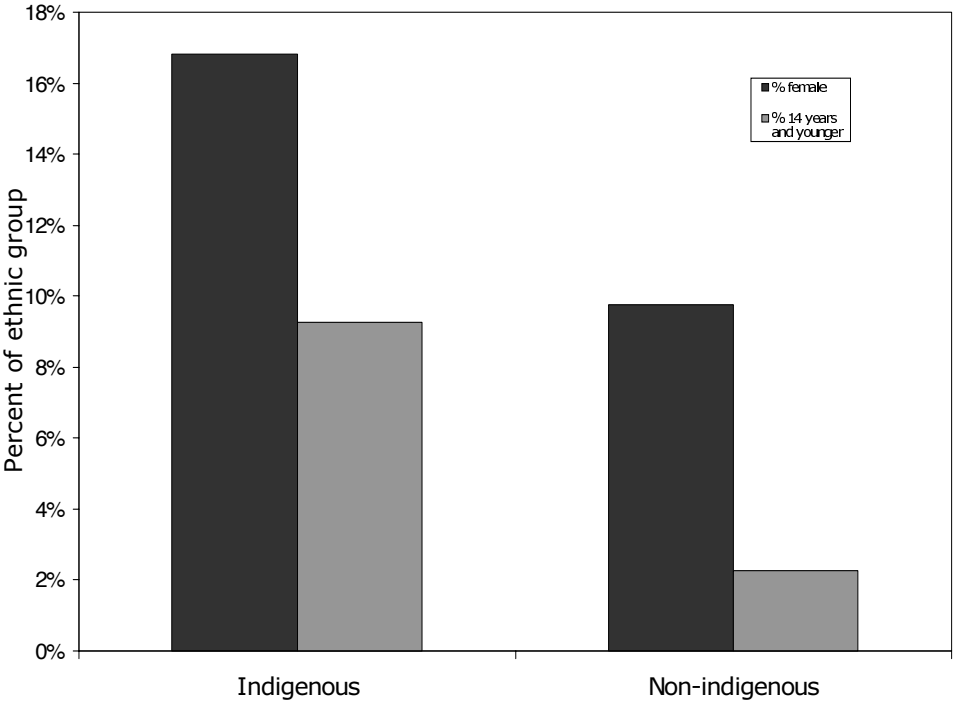
In militarized Guatemala, state violence could also arise from disputes between Indians, to land disputes between peasant communities, to internal tensions produced by class difference. In the mid-1970s, for example, Sebastián Guzmán, an Ixil labor contractor and traditional religious leader from Nebaj, El Quiché, approached the government of Colonel Arana Osorio to ask it deal with the presence of "communists" introducing cooperatives and Catholic Action programs in the region (and challenging Guzmán's livelihood). By January 1976, Guzmán and his associates had passed lists of peasant activists to the military base in Santa Cruz del Quiché. According to one author, violence against those denounced by Guzmán began soon thereafter (Arias 1990: 247-8).

The security forces also murdered non-Indians. At certain moments, such as in the aftermath of the 1976 earthquake and during the 1978 transit strike, and in regions like the south coast rural export agricultural zone, the government attacked poor Ladinos organizing for social change. Nor were the middle classes immune from the terror. The government extra-judicially and selectively executed well-off members of the political opposition, especially students and militants in the revolutionary movement.

But in battling insurgency, state forces used indiscriminate terror almost exclusively in isolated Maya peasant communities, directed at times at merely *potential* bases of rebel support.

Figure 17.1 uses the murder of women and children to measure the degree of indiscriminateness in government attacks on different ethnic groups. The darker bars show that, for cases where the victim's ethnicity is known, a much higher percent of indigenous victims were female than for non-indigenous victims. If we assume that men were the main protagonists in the armed conflict and that male heads of households were considered primarily responsible for the political orientations of their families, then these data suggest

Figure 17.1. Percent children and percent women for indigenous and non-indigenous victims of killings and disappearances, 1959-1995



that the government used less discrimination when operating in indigenous areas.

The data for children are even clearer. The lighter bars in Figure 17.1 present the percent of children aged 14 years or younger killed by the State for the two ethnic categories. Few children of this age took an active part in Guatemala's political opposition or in the armed insurgency. For Indians, the proportion of victims so young is over four times greater than non-Indians. The State, especially under Lucas García and Ríos Montt, did little to insure that their campaigns of political violence spared those who were not involved in the opposition movement, especially when attacking populations with ethnic origins distinct from their own.[27]

Chapter 9 of this report argues that these governments got away with this policy by inhibiting the reporting of mass killings. Chapter 11 suggests that part of the army's rationale for mass killings was

[27] Both generals came from Ladino families that lived in largely Maya parts of the country, Lucas García in Alta Verapaz and Ríos Montt in Huehuetenango, where ethnic hostility between Indians and Ladinos can often be more immediate and open.

due to the ineffectiveness of earlier selective killing in the highlands, which had often pushed survivors into the guerrilla camp.

But the government's recourse to mass violence was not simply a product of terror's effectiveness. The State's weakness and its ignorance also facilitated attacks on entire rural villages. Army intelligence might have known of rebel activity in a certain area, and ambushes of army personnel gave troops an immediate reason for wanting to destroy nearby support for the guerrillas. But the army often had little specific knowledge about the enemy's organization. Mass killings of civilians may have simply been the easiest way for the army to fight the elusive guerrillas.

In early 1982, army chief of staff General Benedicto Lucas García, the President's brother, explained his approach to a foreign journalist in the language of the ethnic outsider: "These people [the guerrillas] are difficult to distinguish from most of the rest of the population... Because of that, well, the population suffers" (Simons 1982).

Later, during the Ríos Montt government, the government's thinking became even more callous. Presidential adviser Francisco Bianchi, in an oft-quoted remark to another U.S. reporter, said: "The guerrillas have won over many Indian collaborators. Therefore, the Indian are subversives. And how do you fight subversion? Clearly you have to kill the Indians because they are collaborating with subversion. And then it would be said that you were killing innocent people. But they weren't innocent; they had sold out to subversion" (Amnesty International 1982: 6-7).

These quotes suggest that killing Indians indiscriminately may have also been a product of the government's having little idea of, and little control over, what was going on in culturally-distinct, geographically-isolated Indian communities.

During the Lucas García government, the army depended on the network of military commissioners to denounce guerrilla collaborators in their villages. But in many long-ignored Indian communities, local commissioners joined the rebel cause. In others, commissioners used their position to create a protection racket to shake down their neighbors, or they turned the army on personal rivals instead of denouncing local leaders of the revolutionary movement (Paul and Demarest 1988). Chief military commissioners that lived in the central towns in the Maya highlands (often members of the local Ladino elite) also denounced entire Indian villages as friendly to the "subversives."

With such dubious intelligence, the army often cast its net widely, killing people with little relation to the insurgency, apparently in the hope that such a display of unchecked power would frighten villagers into submission. The State showed little hesitation in ignoring the moral or human considerations of their policy.

Residents of Indian peasant communities appear to have been the most vulnerable among targets of the government terror. Social exclusion and government repression made joining the revolutionary movement an attractive choice for many Indians. But for rebels doing the organizing, it was the geographic isolation of Maya villages that made them most appealing, and this isolation contributed to these villages' victimization by the army. Indian peasants living in small communities, many neither literate nor conversant in Spanish, were largely cut off from happenings elsewhere and few had knowledge of what had already occurred in the previous two decades of guerrilla-government conflict. In the early 1980s, at the start of mass killings in the highlands, most Indians had only a vague idea of the scale of the repression to come (Kobrak 1997).

Once government forces did arrive, a lack of mobility further increased civilians' susceptibility to danger. Living close to subsistence and tied to the land both economically and culturally, many families facing army attack initially felt that they had no place to go and resisted taking flight (Manz 1988). In Chapter 20 we discuss some of those civilians who did leave: the Communities of Population in Resistance. For their resistance to army rule they faced government hostility well into the 1990s.

Another factor operating against the poor, especially the indigenous population, was the absence of allies that they could go to for protection or to plead for mercy. During the conflict, some middle-class opponents of the government survived the experience of detention when relatives or outsiders intervened on their behalf. In 1962, for example, Rodrigo Asturias (later ORPA commander *Gaspar Ilom*) was one of the few survivors of the army's annihilation of the 20th of October Front, aided, no doubt, by the fact that his father was Miguel Angel Asturias, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, and that his godfather was General Manuel Ydígoras, the country's President (CIIDH and GAM 1999).

Under Ríos Montt, while the government openly murdered thousands of Indian peasants, a coordinated campaign of international

human rights pressure helped win the liberation of two doctors at the University of San Carlos medical school, Juan José Hurtado Vega and Gustavo Castañeda Palacios (American Association for the Advancement of Science 1986). For many of those detained or disappeared, what made the difference between life and death was having some type of personal connection with the government (especially the military), or some direct means of publicizing their case to the international community.

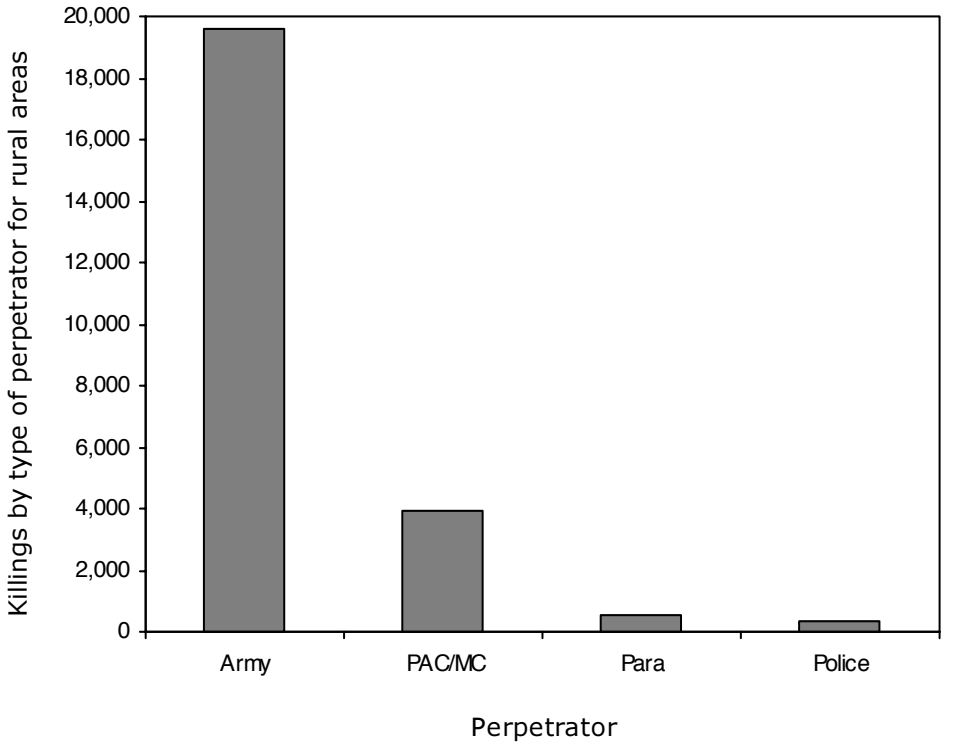
Chapter 18
The Perpetrators

Over the past 40 years, most political violence in Guatemala formed part of a planned, centralized campaign of state terror, aimed principally but never exclusively at destroying an armed insurgency.

The military high command has historically led this campaign, and its troops have carried out much of the terror. Nevertheless, in carrying out its policy of extralegal killing, the government has employed different security forces, both military and civilian, official as well as non-official.

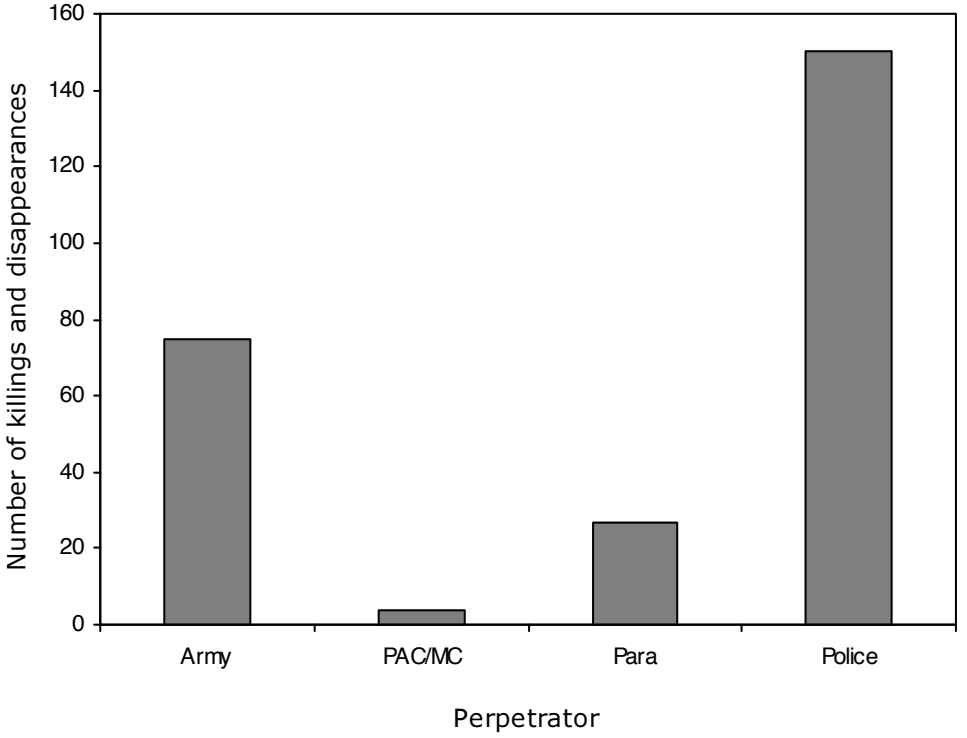
Figures 18.1 and 18.2 demonstrate this graphically.[28] In the CIIDH database, for cases in which the perpetrator is known,

Figure 18.1. Number of killings and disappearances by type of perpetrator for rural areas (for violations with known perpetrators), 1959-1995



[28] 66% of killings and disappearances have one or more identified perpetrator. Most of the killings in rural areas have identified perpetrators, wheras most of the killings in urban areas do not have identified perpetrators.

Figure 18.2. Number of killings and disappearances by type of perpetrator for urban areas (for violations with known perpetrators), 1959-1995



testimonies and documentary sources attribute the greater share of killings and disappearances to army personnel. Other types of government perpetrators include civil patrollers (PACs), military commissioners, clandestine death squads, the National Police and even the Treasury Police.[29] The CIIDH database contains few cases of violations by the different guerrilla armies. While opposition violence is an important issue, it is not included in this analysis.

Figure 18.1 shows that army personnel were responsible for most of the terror in rural areas. A significant minority of these killings were carried out by the army together with the participation of civilians, both civil patrols and military commissioners. Sixty-nine percent of rural cases attribute the killing to a known perpetrator,

[29] In 1987 and 1988, members of the Treasury Police (*Guardia de la Hacienda*) cruised the city in white vans and kidnapped, tortured and assassinated various student and union activists in the infamous *Panel Blanca* murders (Americas Watch 1988; Amnesty International 1989; Velásquez and Blanck 1997).

despite the generally poor reporting of the rural violence discussed in Chapter 9 (see Appendix A6). In the countryside, the State's campaigns were usually carried out by uniformed soldiers openly carrying out extra-judicial murder.

In Guatemala City the agents of state violence were forced to operate in a less open manner. Only 18 percent of cases of urban killing or disappearance attribute the violence to a known perpetrator. Figure 18.2 shows that for the few cases for which the killer is known, police killings outnumber those by the army over the course of the armed conflict. Still, many of the police groups that participated in the counterinsurgency, such as the National Police's *Comando 6* (headed by Pedro García Arrendondo, in 1998 the mayor of Cuilapa, Santa Rosa) and the Judicial Police (headed by Manuel de Jesus Valiente Tellez), followed orders given by the army command when carrying out terrorist and counterinsurgency functions.

Paramilitary death squads also participated in the government terror campaign, especially in the city. The data on *known* perpetrators presented in the figures greatly underreport murders by paramilitary groups. Such uncertainty was exactly the reason for creating the death squads: so that witnesses and survivors would not be able to know for certain that the government was responsible for the terror.

The death squads could never have operated without the State's permission, and it is now clear that different groups operated under official control. According to Marío Sandoval Alarcón, one of the death squads' early ideological architects, many of the killers were "army members passing as civilians" (REMHI 1998 II: 52-3, 110). Military intelligence officers have recently referred to their "G-2" directorate as "a death squad; it is a squad that is directly for killing," confirming what many army critics have maintained for years (Schirmer 1998: 288). On the other hand, the Secret Anticommunist Army (ESA) was allegedly run through the office of police chief German Chupina (Dunkerley 1988: 472). In 1982, police Chief of Detectives Valiente Tellez admitted, after resigning and fleeing the country, that security forces were involved in many killings attributed to the death squads (Amnesty International 1982: 8).

In rural areas, the army developed different kinds of paramilitary organizations, those involving a large number of civilians from all over the countryside: first a network of military commissioners, then a widespread system of civil patrols.

Military commissioners were once limited to army recruitment and locking up drunks. But in the 1960s, on the recommendation of U.S. advisers, the army named thousands more commissioners, extending the network to almost every village and hamlet in the country. Though officially unpaid, commissioners could acquire substantial power. They were authorized to detain suspects and carry guns, even machine guns, and were charged with reporting on the presence of insurgents as well as political organizers.

As the commissioners' power expanded, reports of abuses multiplied. In the 1960s, in the plantation belt along the south coast, military commissioners acted as private police for the rural elite. Meanwhile in the guerrilla zone of Zacapa the government armed and supported vigilante groups to help fight the insurgents. In some cases they came to function as semi-independent racketeers or hit squads that attacked labor and political organizers. These were different types of political violence, but all were sanctioned by the State (Amnesty International 1976: 3; Black 1984: 46; McClintock 1985: 65-6).

By the early 1980s peak of violence, military commissioners and other army spies (*orejas*) provided an important rural intelligence service for the army. In many communities commissioners went far beyond reporting on local political activity and joined in the violence, becoming involved in torture, murder, and disappearance. Guerrillas, meanwhile, tried to either co-opt or eliminate the commissioners, the most exposed members of the military hierarchy.

The guerrillas had a much harder time dealing with the civil patrol system, militias in which nearly every adult male remaining in the settled communities of the countryside was obliged to participate. As Figure 18.1 suggests, and as discussed in the next chapter, many village patrols went beyond a purely defensive role to participate in some of the worst mass killings in the entire armed conflict.

Chapter 19
Civilian Against Civilian

One of the most destructive aspects of state terror in Guatemala was the State's widespread use of civilians to attack other civilians. This practice began with the military commissioner system, but became fully realized in 1982 with the country-wide imposition of the civil patrol system.

In 1981, during the guerrilla movement's expansion in western highlands, the army under new Chief of Staff Benedicto Lucas García (the President's brother) began to search out communities in which to organize pro-government citizen militias to counter the guerrillas' organization of the population through its Local Irregular Forces (FIL). When Ríos Montt took power he expanded the "civic action" aspects of the counterinsurgency, including the peasant militias, under the name of the "civilian self-defense patrols" (PACs).[30]

By forcing villagers to patrol or flee, the State established a convenient method for separating the peasantry into compliant and "hostile" populations. It also created a hierarchy of vigilance and control that allowed the army to withdraw from communities suspected of harboring sympathy for the guerrillas. While soldiers retreated to their barracks, villagers were made to turn on each other (Americas Watch 1986a).

The army claimed that the patrols sprang from the spontaneous desires of peasants to protect themselves from the guerrillas (Americas Watch 1989: 7). Still, almost no village resisted the army order. One community that did was Cantel, a K'iche' textile factory town in Quetzaltenango with a long tradition of labor organizing. In response to Cantel's expression of independence, government forces systematically eliminated many of the community's leaders (Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala 1984; Americas Watch 1986a: 88-97; Grandin 1997).

Though supposedly for village "self-defense" from the guerrillas, the army frequently used the patrols as an offensive force. Some of the earliest militias accompanied soldiers during mass killings of

[30] In 1986, during the transition to the civilian government, the army changed the patrols' name to the Voluntary Civilian Defense Committees (CVDCs) and renamed local *comandantes* as committee presidents. Despite this attempt to give the army obligation a less military and more voluntary appearance, most participants continued to speak of "civil patrols" and "comandantes."

communities not yet under army control; for example, the infamous Xococ patrol in the case of the massacres in Rabinal, Baja Verapaz (Equipo de Antropología Forense de Guatemala 1995). Others served as army outposts in areas of hostility, as in the Ixil villages of La Perla (the site of the first EGP political murder in 1975) and Chacalté (later the site of an EGP massacre) (CIIDH database: cb0001521). Later, as the patrols became obligatory throughout the highlands, participants regularly helped the army go out and hunt down refugees who had fled the settled villages (Americas Watch 1986a: 56).

Through "scorched earth" terror and the imposition of the civil patrols, the army successfully divided the highlands into collaborating villages and enemy territory, and then forced patrollers to accept these distinctions. In doing so, the army also exploited ethnic distinctions.

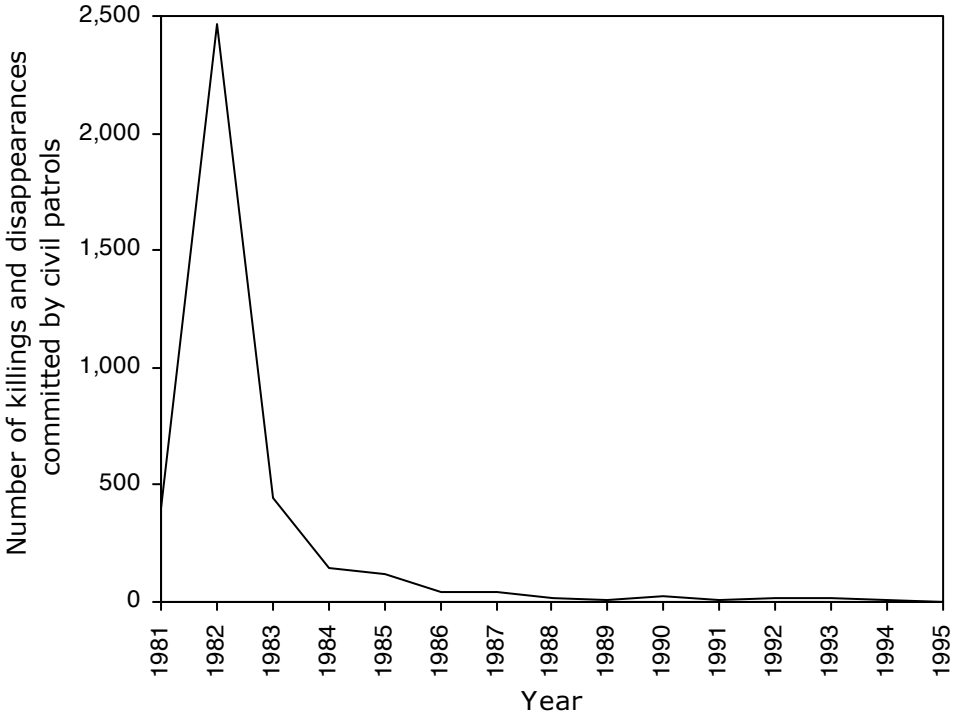
For example, in late 1982 and 1983 patrollers from Chiantla, Aguacatán, Sacapulas, Cunén and Uspantán (a string of municipalities that only months before had formed part of the EGP's area of expansion), accompanied the army north over the Cuchumatán range into the Ixil region of northern Quiché (the EGP's core base of support). There these Ladino, Awakateko, Sakapulteko, Uspanteko and K'iche' patrollers participated in mass killings in resistant Ixil villages. They also helped capture (or kill) members of the displaced populations (REMHI 1998 III: 173).

In the CIIDH database, most killings and disappearances with civil patrol participation took place in conjunction with regular army personnel.[31] In quite a few villages patrollers acted alone, though typically with military encouragement, to eliminate support for the guerrillas. In other instances patrol enthusiasts acted on their own initiative, doing far more than the army compelled them to.

The army gained the loyalty of some patrol leaders by allowing them to benefit materially from their role in the counterinsurgency. In 1982, CUC denounced the patrols as nothing more than a new paramilitary band, saying that "the army has offered those joining the patrols the lands, harvests, belongings and women of the peasants massacred" (quoted in Amnesty International 1982: 5). Even if not a stated government bargain with patrollers, arming peasants

[31] The REMHI project found a similar pattern of civil patrol participation in the violence (REMHI 1998 II: 3).

Figure 19.1. Number of killings and disappearances committed with the participation of civil patrols, by year, 1981-1995

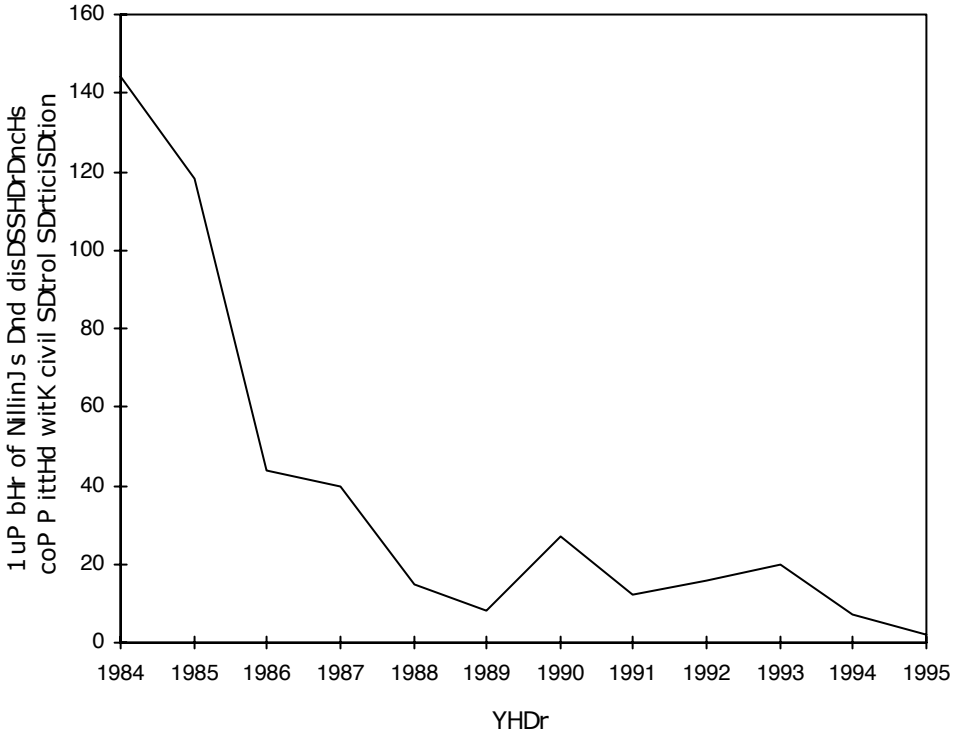


in politically divided villages clearly led to an expansion of civilian-on-civilian violence.

The patrol obligation represented a harsh punishment for the most vulnerable of state terror's victims. Survivors were forced to perform unpaid service for the same army that had destroyed their lives. The situation was even more onerous for those associated with the political opposition, including those who had fled the army and were thus considered somehow "guilty" of subversive tendencies. In some communities patrol leaders extorted money from displaced people wanting to come back to their lands (Krueger and Enge 1985: 21). Later, in areas of organized refugee returns, civil patrollers, those who never left, treated refugees and other displaced persons with hostility (Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala 1993; Human Rights Watch/Americas 1996).

Patrollers' victims included not only those who challenged government rule, but also those who resisted local patrol authority. Other victims were simply personal rivals of patrol commanders. Older disputes over land or local political competition could turn

Figure 19.2. Number of killings and disappearances committed with civil patrol participation, by year, 1984-1995



deadly due to the presence of the patrols and the army's guns. In much of the highlands, the civil patrols represented the triumph of militarism and militarist approaches to social problems, contributing to high levels of "secondary violence" (Krueger and Enge 1985: 20).

Figure 19.1 shows how patrol participation in killings and disappearances began in 1981 and peaked in 1982, the year the patrols expanded throughout Guatemala. By the late 1980s, most of the highlands had been pacified, the civilian government declared the patrols "voluntary," and civil patrol violence lessened considerably.

Figure 19.2 (on a different scale) shows more clearly how killings and disappearances rose again after 1989, in the period of civilian rule. The civil patrols remained obligatory in many rural communities even though the armed conflict had abated. The resurgence of political opposition, accompanied by persistent military control, produced new tensions over the patrol obligation.

In communities where support for the guerrillas had been strong,

especially in southern Quiché, human rights and popular movement organizations began to insist on their right to exist as a legal political opposition. These groups included CUC, GAM, CONAVIGUA, and CERJ (a group set up specifically to resist the patrol obligation). The army demanded that communities in such regions continue to patrol, as if to prove their ongoing loyalty. It instructed patrollers to treat activists as though they were armed guerrillas (Americas Watch 1988: 41). Although many of the human rights and popular movement leaders shared the political strategy of the URNG, the army not only failed to distinguish between political opposition and armed combatants but the difference was consciously confused.

The Thesis of National Stability, promoted within the military beginning in 1986, conflated political and military rivals into one category, "opponents of the State." According to the Thesis, opponents would still be dominated by violence, albeit violence employed more selectively and through proxies (Schirmer 1998). The result

Figure 19.3. Percentage of civil patrol killings and disappearances committed without other organizations, 1980-1995

was a rise in civilian-on-civilian rural violence between 1988 and 1995, committed by civil patrollers yet promoted by the State (Americas Watch 1989a; Americas Watch 1990b; Comité Pro-Justicia y Paz 1988; Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center 1993; Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center 1995).

The army's civil patrols helped sustain an atmosphere of violence even after the direct government-guerrilla conflict had subsided. In 1993 and 1994, for example, most of the abuses registered by the human rights group Human Rights Watch were committed by civil patrollers (Human Rights Watch/ Americas 1994: 11).

Figure 19.3 demonstrates this graphically. It distinguishes between killings committed by civil patrollers alone and when patrollers accompanied army personnel on a mission. During the early years of the patrols in 1981 and 1982, the majority of patrol violence occurred as part of an army action. In many cases patrollers acted as army guides and not in a direct combat role. Over time, the level of civil patrol killing fell, though the patrols' independence increased. Figure 19.3 shows a rise in the proportion of killings committed by patrollers' alone for the period of civilian rule beginning in 1986. This finding does not mean that patrollers ceased to be influenced and controlled by the army. Rather, it suggests that by the last decade of the armed conflict, the State had turned some village civil patrols into more independent instruments of repression.

The patrol system may have helped the government pacify the countryside, but it also deeply wounded the social fabric of communities that long operated independently from the government. Only pro-military forms of community organization were permitted, while patrol leaders could use their army backing to take advantage—politically, economically and even sexually—of other members of their village. The civilian participation in the violence forced many victims of state terror to live close to their victimizers, adding to the trauma of survival (REMHI I: 134).

Chapter 20
Populations in Resistance

Not all rural Guatemalans accepted army rule and the civil patrols. In 1993, residents of Santa Clara, a remote community in the mountains of northern Quiché, told their stories of government persecution to a research team from the CIIDH. Thus began the collection of testimonies that make up the heart of the CIIDH database. These "Communities of Population in Resistance" (CPRs), made up of peasant families that fled their homes in the early 1980s, were among the first rural victims to systematically denounce the State's persecution, years before the official Historical Clarification Commission or the Catholic Church's REMHI project began to take testimonies.

The CPRs are part of Guatemala's population displaced by state violence, a population that in the early 1980s numbered as high as one million, over ten percent of the Guatemalan population at the time (Russell 1996: 5). This human disaster was, along with the mass killings, a product of a deliberate government policy.

Some of the displaced came from villages burned to the ground by the army for supposedly giving aid and comfort to the guerrilla movement. Others were victims of more selective government hostility, where the army effectively gave the local population a choice: stay and submit to their control, or flee settled villages for less militarized regions of the country or for the wilderness beyond the army's reach.

Chapter 19 of this report concerns those who accepted army rule, including some who participated in the violence against other civilians. This chapter concerns those who never gave in to state terror, who in their resistance represented to the Guatemalan military the incompleteness of its desire to completely control the population.

Through mass killings and the destruction of homes, crops and livestock, the army under Lucas García and Ríos Montt made clear its intent to force hundreds of thousands of peasants from their homes. The army continued to pursue the displaced during their flight across the countryside. Even those who fled to save their lives were often viewed by the security forces as somehow "guilty" and worthy of death.

In many cases the army's goal was to force those in hiding back into areas of government control, and into an elaborate system of model villages and political indoctrination camps (Jorhdal 1987;

Centro de Estudios Integrados de Desarrollo Comunal 1990). Forced hunger, not just bombs and bullets, was used to discipline those who had yet to surrender. Meanwhile the guerrillas, especially the EGP, encouraged its supporters and others terrorized by state violence to hide and resist. Given the army's persistence and cruelty, most of the displaced turned themselves in to the army within a short time, unable to withstand the privations of the life in the forest. But a considerable minority did not.

The history of the community of Las Majadas, in Aguacatán, Huehuetenango, illustrates the choices that faced those under army siege. Survivors' testimony recalls how the army depopulated this K'iche'-speaking mountain village through a series of mass killings, beginning in April 1982. Survivors say that eventually everyone understood the army's message: flee or we will kill you.

Some families escaped to the coastal plantations despite the lack of employment there in the middle of the year. Some of them eventually migrated to the capital. A few moved in with relatives in neighboring villages that the army had not treated so fiercely. Others begged town residents in Aguacatán to take them in, and a small K'iche' colony established itself among Awakatekos living in the valley below. But another group of families, those most identified with the EGP guerrillas, fled away from government control, higher up the mountain, to the cold, windswept forests bordering the municipality of Nebaj.

At first they formed small, mobile settlements together with displaced residents of Parraxtut, Sacapulas and a number of villages of Nebaj. Though Las Majadas was by then an abandoned burned-out shell of a village, the forest dwellers continued to farm and raise animals on their plots of land. But by mid-1983 the army established a detachment on the mountaintop and cut off the refugees' access to the Wednesday market at Parraxtut. Civil patrollers from nearby villages helped the army capture or kill a number of the refugees. The situation got worse when the army resettled Las Majadas under its strict control. Refugees in the forest found themselves under attack from their former neighbors.

Those who did not turn themselves in were forced to retreat further north into El Quiché, away from army/civil patrol control and towards remaining rebel strongholds. They moved slowly, subsisting mainly on wild greens and avoiding the army and the civil patrols in the settled villages. They eventually joined with Ixil refugees that the army had driven out of another area of resistance around Cerro Sumal, Nebaj. Together they continued north on foot.

In other parts of the highlands—in southern Quiché, Chimaltenango, and Alta and Baja Verapaz—the displaced had nowhere to go and eventually turned themselves in to the army. But in northern Quiché, the isolation of the forests and the continued presence of the guerrillas allowed some to resist and survive.

In January 1984, this multi-ethnic group of refugees, including exiles from Las Majadas, reached the small burned-out village of Santa Clara, Chajul, deep in the forest and a few days walk from the nearest road. Residents there invited the newcomers to join their mobile community; many were themselves K'iche's originally from Las Majadas who had settled the forest in a land colonization scheme fifteen years earlier only to have their homes and livelihood destroyed by the army's scorched earth campaign in 1981 and 1982. Now Santa Clara was subject to regular army incursions from a base at Finca La Perla. Nevertheless, they kept their community together in the abundant forest. The Communities of Population in Resistance, the CPRs, were born.

Similar populations in resistance grew up around Cabá and Xeputul, in the mountains near Santa Clara, and further north in the warmer jungles of the Ixcán and the Petén.

Moving every week, sometimes as often as every two or three days, the exiles constructed rudimentary shelters from *pox* leaves, and subsisted on wild greens and edible tree roots that they dug up out of desperation. Corn was in short supply; army troops would burn any crops they found. Still, according to CPR members, they did occasionally manage to bring a small concealed crop to harvest.

For the rest of the decade the military laid siege to these areas of resistance. Army soldiers tried to capture the refugees in order to take them to their camp at Xemamatzé in Nebaj for six months of political reeducation. But residents established systems of self-defense, from vigilance patrols to staked pits, that slowed down army assaults. In addition, the CPRs counted on the armed support of the EGP. The rebels lurking presence in the dense forests made it dangerous for the army to spend any time in the area and made civil patrollers from nearby villages treat civilians in the CPRs with extreme caution. One leader of the CPRs believes that far more soldiers died during this siege than did refugees or rebel combatants.

In September 1987, the army moved most of its troop base and much of its firepower to northern Quiché for a "Year-End Offensive" to drive out the CPRs and eliminate the guerrilla presence. Key to the strategy were aerial bombardments of areas populated

by civilians, though the army regularly denied they were taking place (Americas Watch 1988: 93).

> Not a day went by that you didn't hear a shoot-out. Not a day went by that you didn't hear the helicopters, and not a day went by without a bombing. The people sought out refuge, in caves, or in holes or ditches that they dug and then covered with trees or rocks. They said from the helicopters, "Turn yourselves in. Next year there will be no forgiveness! Turn yourselves in and you will be forgiven." (resident of Santa Clara, CPR; CIIDH interview).

Government bombs and bullets killed or wounded hundreds of CPR residents during the offensive. During the terror of the siege and over the next few years, thousands of others turned themselves in, as the army continued its stepped-up attacks on the populations in resistance. Still, the offensive only partially achieved its goal. In 1993, after over a decade of army repression in Santa Clara, the CPRs in the region still contained 17,000 residents, down from a peak of around 30,000 (Ecumenical Program on Central America 1993: 8, 11).

In 1990, the CPRs began to publicly demand recognition as a civilian population and an end to army hostilities. The government, far from considering the CPRs victims of its early 1980s overreaction, had done little to reach out to these survivors. Rather it continued to view them as an enemy population (Mack 1990). But in the new decade the government found itself limited in its ability to carry out an unlimited counterinsurgency. A combination of the effectiveness of the EGP's defense of the CPRs (what they had been unable to do in the settled villages of the highlands), the CPRs own militancy and solidarity, and pressures from the international community, forced the government to end the siege. By 1992, the exiles began to build more stable homes and to integrate themselves into the economic life of the region. Their odyssey stands as a testament to the human capacity for survival in the face of unrelenting government atrocity.

Part V

Conclusion

In the early 1980s, the bodies of thousands of victims of state violence were buried in clandestine cemeteries or left to rot by their assassins. Ten years later, forensic anthropologists and community survivors began a series of large-scale exhumations in rural Guatemala, in order to provide the dead with a decent burial, but also to gather evidence for possible court cases against the state agents responsible.

Exhumations represent the assertion of victims' power and usually take place where survivors have organized to struggle for their rights. Opposing this are those who have the most to lose from allowing survivors to confront the past, including the army and local army agents who participated in the massacres or came to identify with the counterinsurgency. Since the December 1996 peace accords, state repression of political opponents has declined relative to previous years, but it has nonetheless continued.

For example, in San Andrés Sacabajaj, El Quiché, members of CUC and CONAVIGUA organized a 1997 exhumation of relatives interred in the town Catholic Church, victims of an army massacre in which local military commissioners and civil patrollers helped select the victims. The army visited San Andrés many times during the exhumation process, allegedly to invite local youths to join the armed forces, though members of CONAVIGUA felt the army's intention was to dissuade villagers from proceeding with the exhumation. CONAVIGUA accused former patrollers and military commissioners of accosting local widows. The former state agents have argued that with the peace accords, human rights investigations are no longer necessary, and they have warned that exhumations will polarize the community and bring the return of violence (interviews with CONAVIGUA representatives Fermina López and Dina Moscoso; Amnesty International 1998).

Similar opposition emerged during attempts to investigate the case of the army and civil patrol mass killings in Río Negro, Rabinal. A 1993 exhumation of the March 1982 murder of 177 women and children yielded the remains of 143 different victims. Three leaders of the Xococ, Rabinal civil patrol were arrested and charged with murder. The following year, as the case began to proceed through the courts, army soldiers arrived in Pacux, where the survivors from Río Negro now live. Soldiers demanded to know who was promoting the exhumations, and warned local widows not to associate with church and human rights groups (Russell 1996: 27-9).

Still, the survivors persisted. With the help of CALDH, they pressured the Public Ministry in Cobán to bring the captured patrollers to trial. After years of delays, on November 30, 1998, the three—Carlos Chen, Pedro González Gómez and Fermín Lajuj—were sentenced to death for ordering and carrying out the killings of the three victims in Río Negro that could be positively identified.

It was first prosecution involving any of the mass killings committed during Guatemala's armed conflict. But it was only the latest in a series of guilty verdicts against civil patrollers for their role in the counterinsurgency violence. Others serving jail sentences for murder include patrollers from Joyabaj, Chajul, and San Pedro Jocopilas, all in El Quiché, and from Colotenango, Huehuetenango (Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center 1999). However, patrollers typically committed violence on the orders of the military. In 1982, at the high point of violence, more than 80 percent of all killings in which the civil patrols were implicated were committed in combination with the army (Figure 19.3). Even where acting on their own, patrollers were encouraged by army sponsors to terrorize their neighbors. In the case of Río Negro, patrollers from Xococ carried out the killings themselves, though the court established that the army was present throughout the massacre, acting in a supervisory role and to protect the patrollers (information provided by CALDH).

Once again, Guatemala's poor are paying the greatest price for the armed conflict, not just as victims but also among those punished for carrying out the government campaign of terror. Despite gross violations of the law during the counterinsurgency, the army high command, as well as members of Guatemala's political class, continues to evade responsibility for its deliberate long-term policy of extra-judicial murder, even for the army's well-planned early 1980s scorched earth policy (Washington Office on Latin America 1989; Americas Watch 1991; Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala 1991; Amnesty International 1993; 1997a; 1997b; 1997c; 1997d; 1998).

Another measure of impunity is that those who work to clarify this history still face repression. On April 24, 1998, the Catholic Church presented its REMHI report on the armed conflict, detailing both the operation and the effects of the state violence. Two days later Juan José Gerardi Condera, the Church's Bishop for Human Rights, was murdered inside his parish garage. The government has shown little seriousness in pursuing those responsible, who presumably objected to the report's explicit denunciation of the terror.

There are signs that impunity in Guatemala may not go on forever. A number of human rights groups are developing cases against members of the military. As those of lesser rank get punished, the chance increases that they will turn against their commanders. With all the disappearances and mass killings that the State carried out over the last 36 years, some from among the many Guatemalans obligated to participate in these crimes will come forward to speak the truth.

As an example, a number of troops involved in the army's 1982 mass killing at Las Dos Erres, El Petén have agreed to provide court testimony in exchange for protection. On December 7, 1982, a few months after FAR rebels ambushed an army patrol in the area, killing 18 soldiers and recovering 18 army guns, 16 elite *Kaibil* fighters and 20 auxiliary troops from the army base at Santa Elena arrived at Las Dos Erres to search for the guns. The troops, dressed as civilians, claimed that they had come to provide vaccinations, then lined up the community members and conducted a house-by-house search. The army found no guns or any sign of guerrilla involvement. Undeterred, troops tortured residents for information about the guerrillas, raped many of the community's women and girls, and then proceeded to blindfold and bludgeon to death almost the entire village population. During a 1995 exhumation, 162 cadavers were found stacked in a well in the hamlet. Others were dug up from clandestine cemeteries further away. Survivors estimate over 300 people died that day at Las Dos Erres (information provided by FAMDEGUA).

Guatemala's Public Ministry has opened an investigation into the Dos Erres case. Sixteen members of the military, including then-President Ríos Montt, have been called to testify. So far they have exhibited a profound case of collective historical amnesia, and many deny remembering who their commanding officer was at the time.

Despite the evasions, this process represents a victory of sorts for the survivors of state violence. Many of the military officers appeared visibly shaken during their testimony and some could not contain their tears. "Never before have members of the military been made to declare publicly about the massacres and disappearances," says Aura Elena Farfán, former GAM leader and current member of FAMDEGUA, whose brother Rubén was disappeared in 1984. "For we family members of the victims, it gives us satisfaction, however small, to see them sit there, nervous and trembling."

In Guatemala, leaders of the counterinsurgency live comfortably. As shown in Chapter 6, former General Ríos Montt ruled during the most indiscriminate period of state terror. More state killings occurred during Ríos Montt's regime than during any other (Figure 6.1), and in the same period the monthly rate of violence was more than four times greater than for the next highest regime (Figure 6.2). Despite this legacy, Ríos Montt continues to exercise power as the head of the Guatemalan Republican Front.

Half a world away, General Augusto Pinochet faces extradition from England to Spain to possibly stand trial for crimes against humanity during his campaign of terror against Chile's political opposition. No matter the result of that case, human rights defense has achieved a greater, more global importance at the end of the 20th Century. The days of privilege for the agents and architects of Guatemala's state violence may also be coming to an end. Says Farfán, "The fact that [Pinochet] is being accused all over the world as an assassin, that gives us in Guatemala great comfort and inspires us to continue our struggle."

Part VI

Appendices

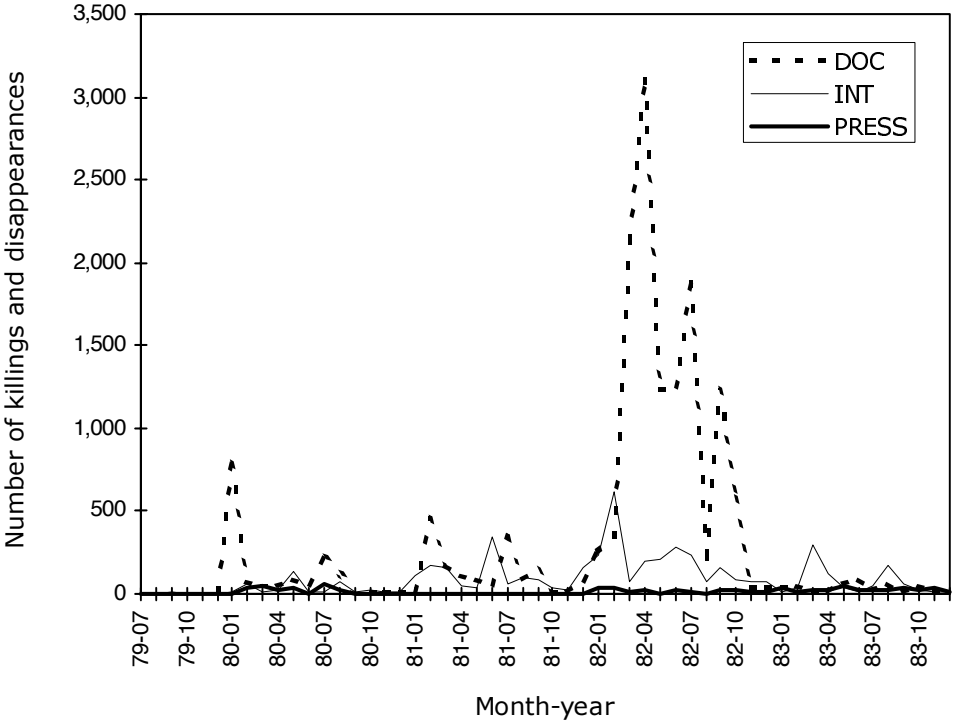
Appendix A1

Number of Killings and Disappearances by Year, 1959-1995

Year	Total (including guerrilla violations)	State violations only	Identified victims only
1959	1	1	1
1960	4	4	3
1961	133	133	103
1962	143	143	90
1963	64	61	49
1964	69	67	56
1965	161	155	121
1966	164	164	109
1967	314	312	211
1968	319	319	217
1969	136	136	95
1970	305	301	214
1971	411	410	263
1972	357	355	266
1973	286	286	197
1974	139	139	79
1975	64	63	49
1976	176	173	110
1977	229	227	155
1978	203	203	27
1979	182	181	70
1980	2,365	2,349	804
1981	3,786	3,736	866
1982	18,167	17,953	2,265
1983	1,904	1,890	734
1984	879	869	420
1985	501	501	224
1986	297	296	176
1987	395	392	224
1988	352	352	247
1989	410	409	290
1990	598	598	345
1991	357	354	248
1992	327	326	179
1993	160	160	122
1994	250	250	135
1995	95	95	45
Subtotal	34,703	34,363	9,809
Without year	2,552	2,543	265
Total	37,255	36,906	10,074

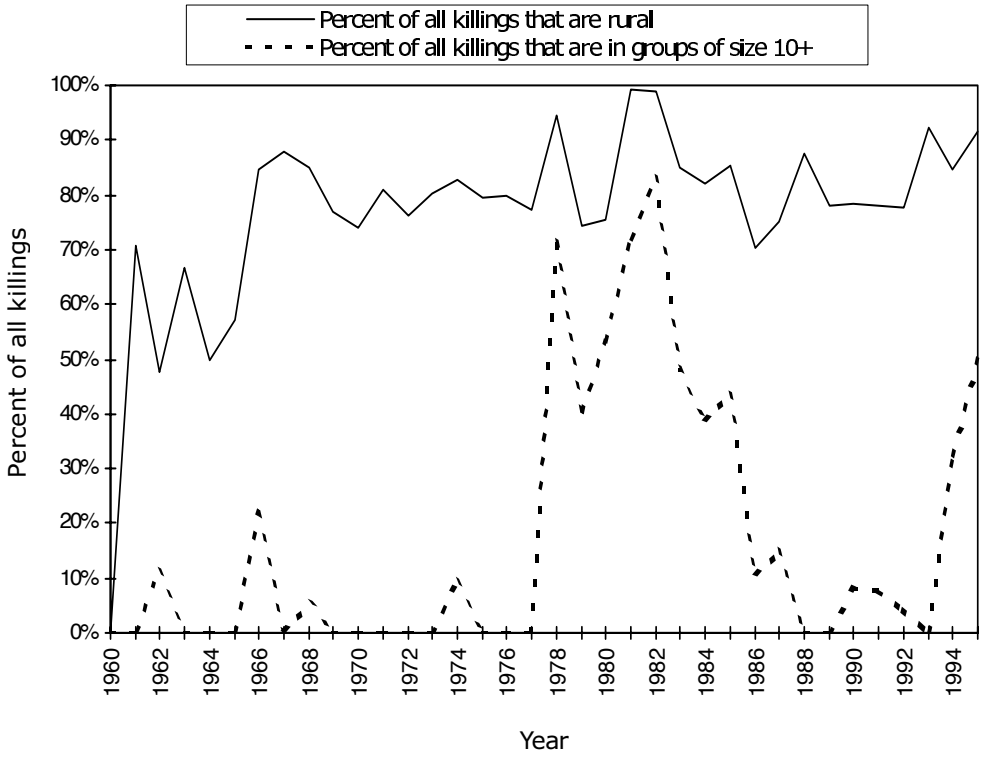
Appendix A2

Number of Killings and Disappearances by Source, by Month and Year, July 1979 to December 1983



Appendix A3

Percent of All Killings that are Rural and Percent of All Killings in Groups of Size 10+, by Year



Appendix A4
Top Five Years for Killings by Rural and Urban Areas

oank in number of killings and disappearances	oural	r rban	oural % of total	r rban % of total
1	1982	1980	58%	21%
2	1981	1983	12%	10%
3	1980	1982	6%	8%
4	1983	1984	5%	5%
5	1984	1990	1%	5%
Percentage of total killings represented by top five			82%	50%

Appendix A5
Monthly Seasonal Variation Analysis

Visual inspection of the seasonal monthly patterns of killings and disappearances in urban (Figure 12.1) and rural (Figure 12.2) areas shows a declining level of violations throughout the year in both areas, with a pronounced rise in numbers of violations from December to January (month 12 to month 13 on the horizontal axis).

The purpose of this analysis is to determine the probability that this pattern could have occurred by chance, if the numbers of violations were obtained from random samples. To make this comparison, we will first remove some of the extreme variability in the monthly values and then set up a time series model from which we can test the hypothesis of non-randomness in the monthly pattern.

We remove a known source of high variability in the means shown in Figures 12.1 and 12.2. The 37 annual killings and disappearances have the means, standard deviations, and ranges shown in Figure A5.1 below.

Figure A5.1. Mean, standard deviation, and range of the annual number of killings and disappearances in rural and urban areas, 1959 to 1995 by year (n=37)

Series	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Urban	94	113	603
Rural	689	2,398	14,544

This high level of variability is due to the extremely high numbers of violations reported during the years 1980-1985. Extremely high values, even if few in number, have a high influence on a parametric measure such as the mean. For that reason, we measure the monthly fluctuations in these violations by finding the ratios f of the monthly value to the annual total, following the conventional time series analysis approach.[1]

[1] See, for example, Bowerman (1987: 245).

The monthly data are arrayed in a two-way table of 444 values:

y_{ij}, where i = 1959, …, 1995, and j = 1, …, 12.

The monthly ratios are:

$f_{ij} = y_{ij}/y_{.j}$, for j=1959 to 1995

where y_{ij} is the monthly value, and "." indicates a summation over the variable replaced by ".".

The values plotted in Figure A5.2 are the means:

$m_j = f_{.j}/37$, for j = 1, …, 12.

Figure A5.2. Means of ratio of monthly number of killings and disappearances to the total annual number occurring in rural and urban areas, 1959 to 1995 by year (n=37)

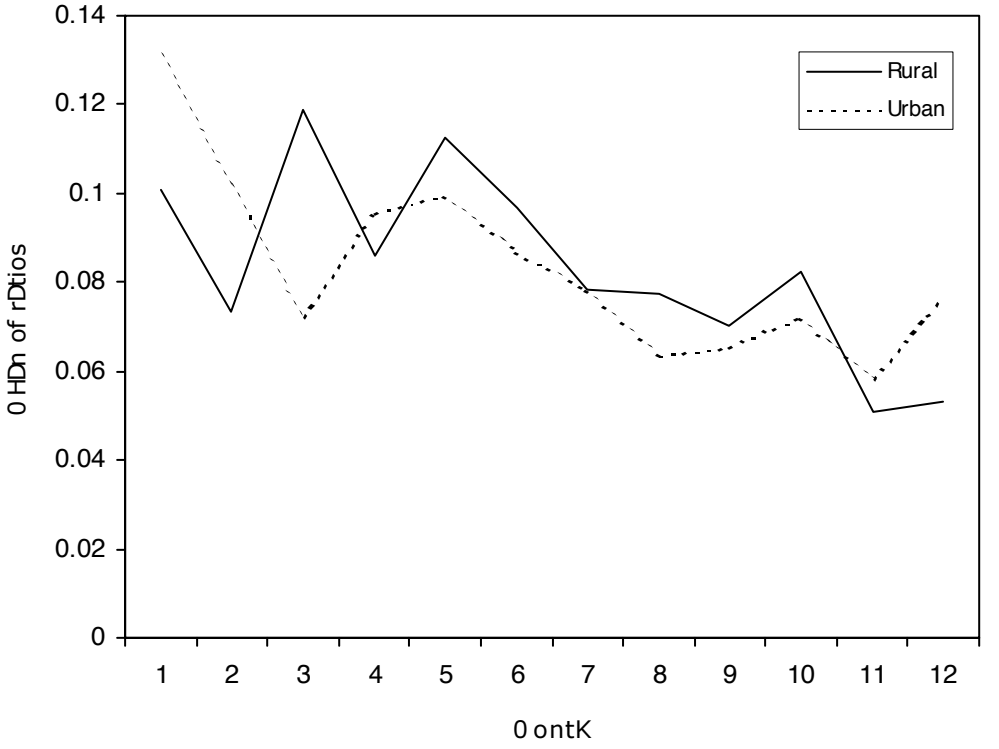
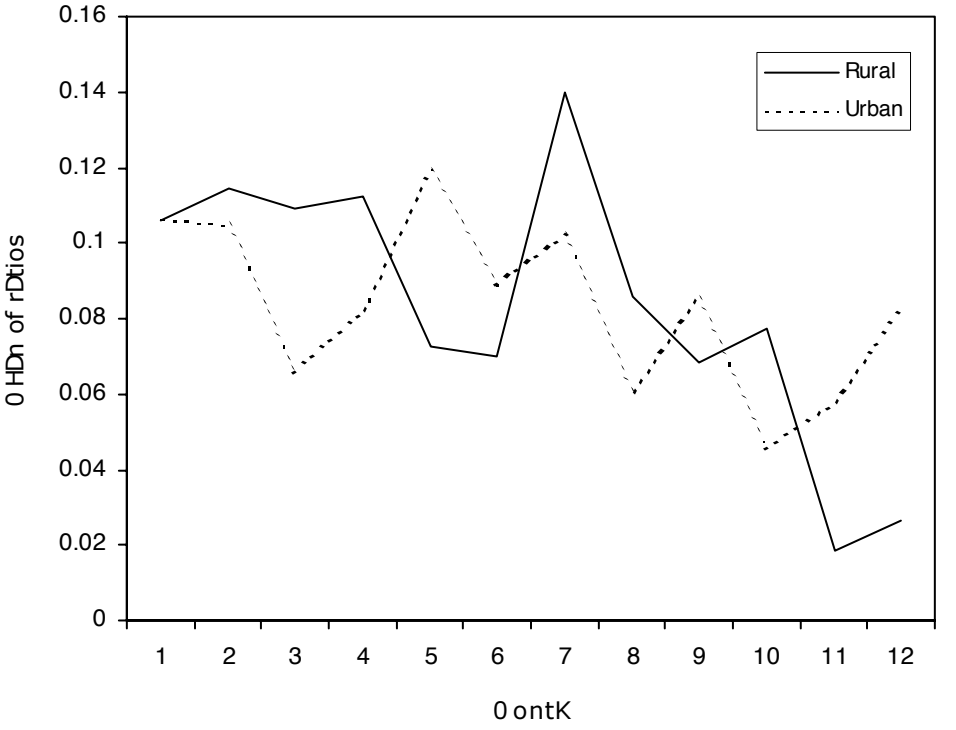


Figure A5.2 shows the revised plot of the monthly seasonal pattern, expressed in the m_j, the mean of the ratios of monthly value to the annual total.

Figure A5.3. Means of ratio of monthly number of killings and disappearances to the total annual number occurring in rural and urban areas, 1980 to 1985 by year (n=6)



The essential element of these urban and rural series—the apparent decline through the year—is similar in Figures 12.1, 12.2, and A5.2.

We also separately analyze the time series for the period of the most extreme violations, 1980-1985. Figure A5.3 shows the time series plots for this period.

If the values y_{ij} were random selections, the $m_{.j}$ would be a time series of m=12 independent values of a random variable. Under these conditions, there would be zero autocorrelation. Because of the small number (m-12) of points in this series, the usual tests for autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson, or autocorrelation function) will have little statistical power. Controlling α, the probability of Type I error at the usual levels would lead to an extremely low power (1-β, the probability of Type II error).

For that reason, we choose as our test statistic the duration of completed like-sign *runs* of the time-ordered residuals above and

below the mean of the ratios (Bowerman 1987, p. 470; Cowden 1957):

H_0: The series is homogeneous with respect to the distribution of completed runs of like sign.

H_1: The series is heterogeneous with respect to the distribution of completed runs of like sign.

The primary statistic is the d, the duration of completed runs of like sign. The observed frequencies of runs of given duration are compared to the expected frequencies and tested by with the χ^2-test.

To determine d, each value m_j is compared to 0.0833 (1/12), since by definition, $m_{\cdot} \equiv 1$. The expected numbers of completed runs x_d of like sign with a given duration d is (Wallis 1941):

$x_d = (n\text{-}d\text{-}1)/2^{d+1}$, d = 1, …, 11

We apply the method described above to the full series for urban and rural killings and disappearances (1959-1995) and then for the shortened urban and rural series covering the period of extreme numbers of violations (1980-1985). For the latter series, i = 1980, …, 1985, and $m_j = f_{ij}/6$.

Urban, 1959-1995

For the urban series, the signs of the deviations, retaining the original order is:

+ + - + + + - - - - - -

The number of completed runs of size d = 1 to 6 is:

d, duration of completed runs	x, number of runs of size d
1	1
2	1
3	1
4	0
5	0
6	1

The value of χ^2 is 25.37, the degrees of freedom are n = 5, and the probability of the occurrence of this value if H_0 is true is p = 0.00012.

Rural, 1959-1995

For the rural series, the signs of the deviations, retaining the original order is:

+ - + + + + - - - - - -

The number of completed runs of size d = 1 to 6 is:

d, duration of completed runs	x, number of runs of size d
1	1
2	0
3	0
4	1
5	0
6	1

The value of χ^2 is 29.05, the degrees of freedom are n = 5, and the probability of the occurrence of this value if H_0 is true is p = 0.000023.

Urban, 1980-1985

For the urban series, the signs of the deviations, retaining the original order is:

+ + - - + + + - + - - -

The number of completed runs of size d = 1 to 3 is:

d, duration of completed runs	x, number of runs of size d
1	2
2	2
3	2

The value of χ^2 is 5.28, the degrees of freedom are n = 5, and the probability of the occurrence of this value if H_0 is true is p = 0.07.

Rural, 1980-1985

For the rural series, the signs of the deviations, retaining the original order is:

+ + + + - - + + - - - -

The number of completed runs of size d = 1 to 4 is:

d, duration of completed runs	x, number of runs of size d
1	0
2	2
3	0
4	2

The value of χ^2 is 18.2, the degrees of freedom are n = 5, and the probability of the occurrence of this value if H0 is true is p = 0.0004.

The summary of results follows in Figure 5.4.

Figure A5.4. Summary of tests of hypothesis of homogeneity of series with respect to completed runs of like size.

Area	Years	χ^2	p
Urban	1959-1995	25.4	0.00012**
Rural	1959-1995	29.0	0.000023**
Urban	1980-1985	5.3	0.07
Rural	1980-1985	18.2	0.0004**

** denotes a high level of statistical signficance

The results of these hypothesis tests lead us to this conclusion. If the monthly numbers of violations were the result of random selection, the downward trend of Figures 12.1, 12.2, and A5.2 would be extremely unlikely to have occurred by chance in rural areas for 1959-1995 and 1980-1985, and for urban areas during the period 1959-1995.

Appendix A6
Number of Killings and Percent Overkill by Group Size and Department

	Department and group size			
	Guatemala		El Quiché	
	1	dreater than 1	1	dreater than 1
Percent overkill	10.7%	7.9%	10.3%	7.7%
Number of killings	2,545	608	2,198	10,885

Appendix A7
Identifying Perpetrators by Geographic Area and Source Type

Why do violations that happen in urban areas so rarely have identified perpetrators? This appendix considers this question in terms of the differences in the sources of the data for urban and rural areas.

Table A7.1. Percent of rural and urban killings and disappearances with and without identified perpetrators

	Rural	Urban
Killings **without** identified perpetrator	31%	82%
Killings **with** identified perpetrator	69%	18%
Total	100%	100%

From A7.1, note that about two-thirds of all rural killings have at least one identified perpetrator, whereas urban killings have no identified perpetrator for over 80% of killings and disappearances. The lack of data on perpetrators in urban areas results from the data source: most of the data on urban killings in the CIIDH database comes from the press (see Table A7.2), and the press rarely reports who the perpetrators are alleged to have been (see Table A7.3). In Table A7.2, note that data on killings in the rural areas comes mostly from documentary sources (61%), whereas data on urban killings comes mostly from press sources (77%).

Table A7.2. Percent of rural and urban killings and disappearances by source type

	Rural	Urban
Documentary	61%	23%
Interview	28%	1%
Press	11%	77%
Total	100%	100%

The closer the data are to the primary source, the more likely it is that the perpetrators of killings will be identified. However, it is also true that relative to rural killings, urban killings are more likely to be committed by paramilitary units, and are consequently more

difficult to identify. As discussed in the text, rural killings were most frequently committed by army units operating openly.

Table A7.3. Percent of killings and disappearances by source type, with and without identified perpetrators

	Documentary	Interview	Press
Killings **without** identified perpetrator	31%	9%	93%
Killings **with** identified perpetrator	69%	91%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Part VII

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