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University of Alberta

Lynch Mobs and Child Theft Rumours in the Guatemalan Highlands

by

Derek Douglas Honeyman 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Anthropology

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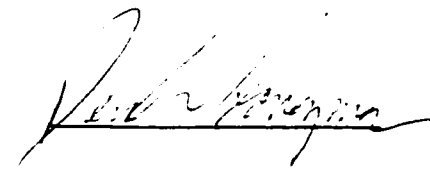

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Lynch Mobs and Child Theft Rumours in the Guatemalan Highlands submitted by Derek Douglas Honeyman in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Gregory Forth

Dr. Ruth Gruhn

Dr. Andriy Nahachewsky

June 3/99

This thesis is dedicated to those who suffered.

Abstract

Lynch mobs and rumours of child trafficking are two phenomena that are occurring in present day-Guatemala. The former is a reality, while the latter is an example of a type of urban legend that occurs and recurs throughout the world. However, rumours of child trafficking are based on a certain level of reality: during and since the crisis of the 1980s, in which thousands of Maya were massacred or forced to flee their communities, there has been an increase in international adoptions by foreigners. Allegations of child trafficking possess serious repercussions, such as the formation of lynch mobs whose intent is to execute the kidnapping suspect. I argue that the propagation of child trafficking rumours is a form of resistance, while the formation of lynch mobs represents a tangible expression of frustration with the existing law enforcement agencies and the state; both are expressions of the culture of fear that existed during the recent conflict.

Preface

There are three aspects of the following body of research that I am compelled to address: the preference of Spanish phrases over English, or English phrases over Spanish; the use of the word 'ladino' in a field that tends to employ 'mestizo' to describe the non-Indian population; and the processes that I, as the writer, undertook during the writing and research of the present body of work.

As the reader will notice, I have taken an inconsistent approach to the translation of certain Spanish phrases, sentences, and words, employing different presentations of the English translation. In instances of a Spanish sentence taken from either a newspaper or an academic source, I have placed the English translation into the main text and presented the Spanish source as a footnote. I have found that this procedure makes the reading free of repeated eye movements for the non-Spanish reader, while at the same time allows the Spanish reader to critique my translation. Secondly, some words have a clear translation: and I have opted to place the English in brackets next to the Spanish. However, some words have a 'literal translation' that, when compared to the Spanish, look unpleasant when placed next to it. One word that readily comes to mind is *mestizaje* which is translated into 'genetic breeding: genetic mixing.' I have chosen to 'bury' examples like these in footnotes.

Throughout the text, I have repeatedly employed the terms 'Indian' and 'ladino' to designate the differing ethnicities in Guatemala; and an explanation is in order. This discussion will also help the reader to remove a certain dichotomy that one may perceive, a notion that I held when I first began working in this field; the assumed dichotomy between the indigenous population and the ladino population. This dichotomy is false for a number of reasons; the primary reason is that any notion of 'race' is highly ambiguous, especially in a post-colonial context. The second reason, one that may not be readily apparent, is that there exists a poor and exploited ladino sector in Guatemala, as well as the majority of the population, the Maya. As always, there is a small elite sector, comprising of wealthy ladinos.

In the sixteenth century, the ladinos were the Spanish-speaking Indians, "who

contrasted most sharply with those of European backgrounds, the Spaniards and their New World offspring, the Creoles" (Warren 1998: 10). As colonialism progressed in Guatemala, ladinos were hispanicized Indians, living outside of their communities; or those of mixed parentage, mestizos. Community was, and remains, a fundamental marker of identity; therefore, those Indians who moved into an urban centre became hispanicized and became ladinos. By the eighteenth century, the term ladino replaced the term mestizo (Warren 1998: 10; Smith 1990c: 86); and in the present, ladino can be simply defined as non-indigenous, with the Creoles being the elite of Guatemalan society. In the rest of Central America, the term 'ladino' disappeared (to be replaced by 'mestizo'); but in Guatemala and Chiapas it remained.

The third aspect of this thesis that I will address are the problems I faced while writing. The fall of 1997 found me in the second largest city of Guatemala; Quezaltenango. I had just finished the course work for my degree, and had spent the summer working fulltime. I went to Guatemala for three reasons: in order to learn Spanish: because everyone told me it was a cheap country to visit for an extended period of time; and because I needed a topic for my upcoming thesis. I wanted to do fieldwork; but more importantly, I wanted to write about something that I understood and had experienced. Up to that point, much of my academic research had dealt with Amazonian societies; but, economically, M.A. fieldwork in the Amazon was out of the question. So I went to Guatemala, knowing very little about her history, on the advice of a friend who had recently returned.

It was the first time I had ventured outside of Canada and the United States, and perhaps one day I will write reflexively on the experiences I had; but being in Guatemala and writing about it had a profound effect on the entire thesis. When I returned home and began the lengthy task of researching the literature on Guatemala, particularly about the recent civil war, I was able to 'put faces' to the people I was reading about. Of the utmost importance, I believe that I became more sensitive to the issue than I would have having *not* been in Guatemala. Knowing that those I became close to, those who offered their friendship to me, and those who invited me into their homes, had, in all likelihood, been affected by the civil war, in turn affected my writing. This sentiment played an important

role in my writing. When it is a library research project, it is easy to treat the victims as objects in a book.

Acknowledgements

During the course of my graduate degree there were many individuals who provided me with both emotional and academic support. I am deeply indebted to those in Guatemala; primarily, the families I lived with and the people I spoke with. Through them, I was able to see a different side of the country that the literature could not allow. I would also like to thank the staff of the Centro Maya de Idiomas who always provided me with a place of companionship. Particulary, I would like to thank Pablo for his insight, advice, and instruction.

Back at home, I am indebted to my advisors: Dr. Greg Forth and Dr. Ruth Gruhn for their patience and support. More importantly, I greatly appreciate the guidance I received throughout the years that I have known them.

I am also indebted to Dr. David Anderson for always taking time and giving advice on the many aspects of anthropology; fieldwork, theory, teaching, and writing. I would like to thank Dr. Andriy Nahachewsky for his invaluable comments. I would also like to thank Darlene, Marlys, Gail, and Pam, for their support and friendship over the years. Furthermore, I would like to thank the Department of Anthropology for the financial support over the last three years.

I would like to thank those individuals who provided support over email; Ben Radford, Lisa Phillips Valentine, and Gavin Smith. All these individuals took the time either to explain something or give a few words of support which was always greatly appreciated. There were two individuals who took particular interest in my research and provided much help; Dr. Jan Brunvand and Andrew Sanders.

I am indebted to my many friends who helped me over the years. Some hopefully forgave my negligence for not calling when I was busy, some always had their doors open for advice, and others were willing to go for coffee. In no particular order, I would like to thank; Shauna McGarvey, Steve Kelly, Rob Wishart, Jaime MacKenzie, Leanne Romanchuck, Jason Tavner, Sarah Walshaw, Danica Clark, Suriaya Rampuri, Marc Pinkoski, Claudio Aporto, "Dr. J" Snodgrass, Carol and Charles, and of course, Franca Boag.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Hugh McKenzie for the technical support, advice and constant friendship.

I would like to thank my other 'family'; David and Margaret Tavner and Evelyn who have constantly been a source of moral support.

I would like to thank Les for her support and love over the last three years and, particularly, patience this last year.

Last but not least, I am, and always will be, deeply indebted to my family who have provided me with so much support. Whether I was in the field, struggling over a particularly difficult chapter, or just needed someone to talk to, my parents and sister have always been there for me helping in any way they could.

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List of Abbreviations

ALMG - Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (Academy for Maya Languages of Guatemala)
CA - Acción Católica (Catholic Action)
CIA - Central Intelligence Agency
CONAVIGUA - Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala (National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows)
CNUS - Comité Nacional de Unidad de Síndicos (National Committee for Trade Union Unity)
CUC - Comité de Unidad Campesina (Committee for Peasant Unity)
EGP - Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (Guerrilla Army of the Poor)
FAR - Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Rebel Armed Forces)
FDNG - Frente Democrático para una Nueva Guatemala (New Guatemala Democratic Front)
FRG - Frente Republicano Guatemalteco (Guatemalan Republican Front)
GAM - Grupo de Apoyo Mútuo (Mutual Support Group)
MINUGUA - Misión de las Naciones Unidas en Guatemala (United Nations Verification Commission in Guatemala)
MLN - Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (Movement for National Liberation)
ORPA - Organización Revolucionaria del Pueblo en Armas (Revolutionary Organization of People in Arms)
PAN - Partido de Avanzada Nacional (National Advancement Party)
RCMP - Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SIL - Summer Institute of Linguistics
URNG - Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity)
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
UNOS - United Network for Organ Sharing

Chapter 1

Illegal Adoptions, Organ Theft, and "Social Cleansing": The Role of the Mass Media in Guatemala

I thought I knew what he was doing now: he'd become not a lawyer but a Guatemala City newspaperman. And though I'd never read anything of his and didn't even know which paper he was working for, my experience of the newspapers there in general, which have to be read to be believed, made it impossible for it even to occur to me that anyone from that background could get into any kind of program at Harvard.

- Francisco Goldman, *The Long Night of White Chickens* (1992: 7).

"Magic realism on acid."

- Reuter correspondent Fiona Neill, on the beating of June Weinstock (*Washington Post*, May 17, 1994).

Guatemalan children, it would appear, are a valued commodity in the international adoption market (see Plate 1). According to the *Prensa Libre*, Guatemala's premier newspaper, Guatemalan children are regularly bought for anywhere between $10,000 to $15,000 US in Canada, the United States, Italy, and France (June 29, 1998). Why is this adoption process occurring? If we are to believe the stories, can we assume that there exists a tendency of Western nations to assume a moral responsibility for perceived wrongdoings to children in a country emerging from a civil war? Or perhaps our own legislations regarding adoption are making it more and more difficult for parents legally to adopt locally; and consequently, they are forced to buy a child abroad? Finally, perhaps this story is simply a continuation of a curious story that originated in Central America and is now present, or at least some variant of it, in almost every country? Child trafficking rumours and their counterpart, organ theft rumours, are closely related; and occur in many countries, including our own.[1]

At present, illegal adoptions are not the only concern of the people in Guatemala. Amidst ill-founded rumours of organ theft and child trafficking are the chilling realities, such

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[1] This chapter will deal specifically with organ and child trafficking rumours in Central America, with emphasis on Guatemalan rumours. However, these stories do occur in Canada and the United States; and this situation will be explored in Chapter 5.

as the failure to prosecute soldiers involved in the massacres that took place during the civil war that plagued Guatemala in the early 1980s. Monseñor Juan Gerardi Conedera, the one person who was successful in bringing to trial three of these soldiers after the presentation of his report on human rights violations to the Archbishop's Human Rights Office, was murdered in the spring of 1998. Who was the first 'official' suspect? At first, the Guatemalan government asserted that he was one of the many homeless people who live in the neighbouring park, who somehow, despite his lame arm, was able to bludgeon repeatedly the skull of the victim with a cinder block. Dr. Robert Kirschner, forensic specialist with Physicians for Human Rights, stated "I can't imagine him (the suspect) picking up an eight-pound slab of concrete and bashing someone repeatedly over the head with it" (*Edmonton Journal*, May 1, 1998). Furthermore, the Guatemalan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduardo Stein, stated that the murder was planned. His "statement contradicted the official version, which has thus far refused to discard the possibility that the murder was a mere crime" (*The Siglo News*, week beginning June 24, 1988, 2). Stein further suggested that the murder was highly professional. As well, Oscar Recinos, founder of the Neighborhood Watch anti-crime organization, stated "The government is determined to demonstrate that this was not a political crime" (*Edmonton Journal*, May 1, 1998).[2]

Nevertheless, as stated above, rumours of child trafficking abound in Guatemala; at times, these rumours are responsible for the formation of lynch mobs. Guatemala has recently surfaced from a tragic period of genocide in which the government and military are still hesitant, as demonstrated with the murder of the Monseñor, to be held responsible for human rights violations. During the period of the Guatemalan crisis, countless atrocities were committed; in many communities, people were unable to trust their neighbors for fear of being accused as an 'insurgent' or a government supporter. In San Andrés Semetabaj for

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[2] I have recently learned from a colleague in Guatemala that there were two other "suspects"; a priest and a German Shepherd. The priest has been since released from prison, after eight months, due to lack of evidence. As for the dog; it would seem that the government had hired a Spanish forensic anthropologist who testified that there were dog bites on the body of the Monseñor. However, an American anthropologist hired by the Office of Human Rights of the Archbishop has refuted that testimony.

example, many inhabitants experienced financial hardship because they feared that working in their fields would be construed as sneaking off to a clandestine meeting (Warren 1998: 96). I will argue that this period played a fundamental role in the phenomena that are present in Guatemala now.

1.1 *Introduction*

This thesis will examine both the events leading up to the recent Guatemalan crisis, and the crisis itself, in an effort to demonstrate why occurrences such as the 'lynch mobs,' or social cleansings, and the mob beating of an American woman, June Weinstock, took place. It will examine a phenomenon that is not solely restricted to Guatemala. Tales of children being kidnapped, either for the sale of body parts or for some other reason, are rampant throughout the world, especially in countries in which the largest part of the population consists of an indigenous section exploited by a smaller elite. More importantly, these children are claimed to be sold to members of the industrialized nations, not to the rich within their own country. After centuries of exploitation and a civil war in which thousands were massacred by Guatemalan government forces and guerrillas, why are the United States, Canada, Italy, and France the chosen scapegoats for the adoption trade?

This thesis will attempt to illuminate one of the facts that produce fiction, the creation of a type of folklore that is directed towards the industrial nations, those that cast an ill light upon the *gringo/a*. Why some people are indicated and not others will be a problem which this thesis will attempt to solve. The fundamental problem is *why* lynch mobs and the propagation of child trafficking rumours occur at all. What is it about this particular country that both phenomena present themselves? Stories of the child market are popular in the Guatemalan press; and, as will be demonstrated, these 'news stories' have a tendency to create strong reactions among the general populace. Yet the portrayal of child trafficking rumours in the Guatemalan media is only an example; within the communities, there is still distrust, of residents and foreigners, that leads to the occurrences of lynch mobs and rumour propagation.

While child trafficking rumours are well-documented in both the media and academic texts, there is a scarcity of information on lynch mobs, specifically in Guatemala. Yet, as I

will demonstrate, the presence of lynch mobs and the propagation of child trafficking rumours are similar in both intent and origin. Both phenomena are expressions of the frustration felt towards the government and military for their unwillingness to confess the crimes committed during the Guatemalan crisis. Within this sentiment there is a remnant of resistance. The crisis instructed those involved that to speak openly was to perish; while child trafficking rumours subtly accused, lynch mobs acted upon those accusations. The important aspect to note is that these occurrences occurred *after* the crisis, when violent reprisal from government or guerrilla forces was no longer a deterrent.

As child trafficking rumours occur elsewhere, mainly in countries that have experienced a similar history of repression and terror, there exists documentation and analyses as to their occurrences. While detailed discussion of these analyses appear below, there are two aspects that I would call attention to. For one, it is critical to note that these rumours are very real to those who are perceived to be the victims; and two, as mentioned above, both phenomena are a unique form of resistance. Scheper-Hughes (1996: 5) adheres to the former explanation, and maintains that these rumours are repeated because they are true "at that indeterminate level between fact and metaphor." Her statements are derived from fieldwork in the shantytowns of Brazil, where rumours of enforcers of the state stealing children and adults alike for the purposes of medical transplants for the rich, run rampant. In this particular instance, however, the repeated appearances of mutilated bodies of the disappeared add to the fear of organ theft. This fear of organ theft is supplemented with a fear of the medical establishment (Campion-Vincent 1997: 7-8), and ever-present suspicion that the rich are receiving organs transplants with greater ease than the poor (Scheper-Hughes 1992, 1996). However, the appearance of mutilated bodies is not necessarily a prerequisite for such rumours.

In a metaphorical sense, child trafficking rumours remain true, particularly to those who are associated with the targets of alleged traffickers. This interpretation is especially true in countries like Guatemala, in which high birth rates exist hand in hand with the inaccessibility of birth control. Coupled with a national tragedy, the end result is a "plethora of unwanted children, especially among the poor" (Campion-Vincent 1997: 13). Legal

international adoptions do exist. Such adoptions cost quite a bit of money to remove the child from the country, further magnifying the allegations that these children are being bought by rich foreigners.

> The judgement is often different in countries of origin where it is seen as a plunder of human resources and as a remnant of yesterday's colonial exploitation. Against this background, the readiness of the nations that supply children for adoption to believe the accounts of organ-theft, trafficking in body parts, and murder is certainly not surprising (Campion-Vincent 1997: 13).

As I will describe below, colonial exploitation is still occurring, under the guise of industrialization. The connection between industrialization and fears of organ theft is demonstrated by the rumours of the need for human fat in Lima to lubricate airplanes (Oliver-Smith 1969: 367), and the rumours of need for human heads to remedy faulty oil drilling equipment in Indonesia (Tsing 1996: 200). As I discuss in greater detail below, these two examples involve the appearance of supernatural beings that are thought to prey on children and adults; the *pishtaco* and the headhunter respectively. Oliver-Smith (1969: 366) prefers a Kardinerian approach to explain why such supernatural beings as the *pishtaco* figure so prominently in the Andes: "it is possible that folklore is used as a channel for displaced aggression." Kardiner (1956: 474), basing his theory on Ralph Linton's work in Tanala (1933), discussed what ensued when private property was introduced into a society that was used to communal land ownership.

> This resulted in a great increase in crime, homosexuality, magic, and hysterical illness. These social phenomena indicated quite clearly that when the personality, as shaped by the customs suited to the old method of economy, encountered, in the new economy, psychological tasks it was in no way to prepared to meet, the result was an enormous outbreak of anxiety with various manifestations.

If one were to adhere to this line of thought, how would one explain the wealth of 'various manifestations' in our society; UFO abductions, Satanic cult activity, and cattle

mutilations to name just a few.[3] One needs only to read the newspaper to note the rising number of cults preparing for the coming of the millennium. In comparison to the Tanala and the change to private property, what causes the rise of manifestations within our society? Obviously this is a topic for another article, but it directs us to the thesis question: what causes rumours of child theft and the presence of lynch mobs in Guatemala?

According to Scheper-Hughes (1996: 11), rumours of body and organ trafficking are the only response which the "most vulnerable people" possess under the compromised situations that exist within those locales where such rumours exist. Scott (1985, 1986) would describe this type of resistance as one of the 'weapons of the weak;' those methods of subtle and covert resistance where overt resistance is not tolerated. How the Guatemalan state reacted to the last attempt of overt resistance, the subject of the fourth chapter, is fresh in many memories.

Rumours as resistance is a particularly valid point, considering that similar rumours from Argentina and Brazil surfaced soon after the democratization process began (Scheper-Hughes 1996: 9). Considering that the poor are rarely called upon to speak in the truth commissions that are inevitably established after a crisis, Scheper-Hughes (ibid) states that one could interpret the presence of rumours as a "surrogate form of political witnessing." Lynch mobs occur after the crisis as well. Granted, there exists a sense of immunity from the state after the crisis has passed; the fear of massive and violent reprisal from the military or the guerrillas that existed before the passing of the Peace Agreements is lacking. Furthermore, lynch mobs are remarkably similar to the propagation of rumours, in that there is no single person that is responsible for the instigation. As well, once a rumour begins, much like a lynch mob, it is very difficult to put a halt to it. A lynch mob is an expression of the collective, while an effective rumour is highly dependent upon the collective.

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[3] Scheper-Hughes (1996: 4) draws the first link that I am aware of between rumours of child and organ trafficking and the Satanic cult child abuse allegations that occurred in the United States and Great Britain (La Fontaine 1994; Bromley 1991; Nathan 1991). Both are forms of exploitation aimed at the child, and the reported incidents became epidemics. Scheper-Hughes (1996: 4) further points out the similarities between the Satanic cult stories and those of UFO abductions that were popular in the early 1990s, and to some extent in the present. These, unlike the former two stories, are not specific to children; rather, those abducted are both children and adults.

However, unlike the passivity of rumours, lynch mobs are violent expressions. I believe that in Guatemala, the presence of lynch mobs are believed to be a result of the deep frustration held against the government and the police agencies.

1.2 *Methodology*

This thesis will argue that the presence of lynch mobs and the propagation of child trafficking rumours act as vehicles of resistance. Scheper-Hughes (1992, 1996) and Campion-Vincent (1997) argue, quite effectively, that rumours of this type are one of the only means of expression for groups of individuals who have experienced acts of atrocity and forced silence. According to Campion-Vincent (1997: 32), such rumours "reactivate the immemorial fable of the massacre of the innocents thus appealing to our emblematic mode of thinking while functioning at a metaphoric and emotional level."

The 'culture of terror' that was created during the recent crisis has a direct hand in the events transpiring in Guatemala now. The constant trepidation, the atrocities that were enacted by both guerrilla forces and the military, and the growing frustration with the Guatemalan state have in their wake, an effective method of resistance: child trafficking rumours. They subtly point an accusatory finger at those who are guilty. More importantly, and as will be demonstrated, who can state without a doubt *who* started the process of rumour propagation?

To understand truly why this method of resistance, and the occurrence of lynch mobs, appear and why they are so effective, one must understand what brought these actions to the front. Therefore, a substantial section of the thesis is an analysis of the history of the relations between the Maya and the state in Guatemala. Emphasis will be upon the recent crisis; but the events of the Conquest and the colonial period should not be underestimated, for it was these periods that marked the beginning of the disparate relationship that exists in the present between the Maya and the state. Specifically, at the heart of the problem was the growing awareness among the Maya of the benefits of cooperatives and land reforms, and participation in the political and economic spheres of the national society. Coinciding with this growing political awareness was a growing fear among the ladinos of an Indian uprising. This is why I must emphasize the historical relationship between the Maya and the ladino.

However, before I undertake these tasks, I am compelled to explain how the occurrences of lynch mobs and child trafficking rumours caught my attention; through the Guatemalan media.

1.3 *The Role of the Media*

In the following pages I will present a critique of the Guatemalan media, particularly the *Prensa Libre*, and its role in the propagation of this type of rumour. In the face of this critique, it may appear ironic that I rely heavily on news print media and their portrayal of Guatemalan lynch mobs. As the existence of lynch mobs in post-crisis Guatemala is a recent phenomenon, there is a clear lack of ethnographic literature on the topic; and thus I am forced to resort to employing news reports. These articles have appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Prensa Libre*, and the *Siglo News* (and perhaps more); and I feel that the diversity of sources has provided the phenomenon with a sense of credibility. My forthcoming critique will be of the Guatemalan media, specifically the *Prensa Libre*; and its subtle allegations that Americans, Canadians, and high-ranking Guatemalans are involved in an illicit commodification of children. As I will demonstrate, such allegations have serious repercussions.

According to Leventhal (1994: 6), the author of "The Child Organ Trafficking Rumour: A Modern 'Urban Legend'," the origins of child snatching myths have been traced to the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* in 1986. Through what has often been called the "Soviet disinformation apparatus," *Pravda* carried the following three month-old story from Honduras, the story that Leventhal notes as the 'watershed event" of the child trafficking rumours (ibid). In January 1987, Leonardo Villeda Bermudez, the former Secretary General of the Honduran Committee for Social Welfare, mentioned during an interview that he had heard a child trafficking rumour. Immediately, he issued a clarification stating he had heard only unconfirmed rumours. This was followed by similar clarifications by top officials, including the wife of the president of Honduras.

Nevertheless the damage was done, for the Reuters wire service had already circulated the story. "The transformation from word-to-mouth urban legend to mass media misinformation had begun" (Leventhal 1994: 6). According to the same author, *Pravda*

began a conscious effort to spread the story, reproaching Americans for this activity in April 1987, without printing the clarifications issued by Villeda Bermudez and other officials. And while Leventhal states that political motivations play a large role in the circulation of these rumours, they are not solely responsible. Many people spread the story simply because they believe it to be true. In the following discussion of 'urban tales,' this point will be made more clear.

William Booth (*Washington Post*, May 17, 1994) stated that while child trafficking rumours have been around Guatemala for years leading up to the Weinstock incident, they exploded in 1994. According to him, Western diplomats and humans rights observers "suspect that right-wing elements in the military are behind the baby-parts stories--that these forces want to destabilize the country and further weaken President Ramiride Leon Carpio." The government under Carpio was involved in the peace negotiations with guerrilla forces. Considering that 'informed sources' reported that two military officers were in the crowd that broke into the house in which Weinstock was hiding and beat her up, (stopping only when the police convinced them that she was dead), this allegation seems plausible.

The organ and child trafficking rumours have several variations, "and they've become quite popular in countries where the civil unrest they foster tends to favour one political or military faction" ("The Latin American baby snatching myth": www.urbanlegends.com). Originally, as demonstrated by the *Pravda* story, government agencies are the suspects; and in the present they are as well, especially in countries in Latin America, where American political and military interference has been well documented.[4]

The phenomenon of interest here is not the trafficking of the babies but the role the Guatemalan media plays in propagating these stories. What these articles have in common is the seeming lack of convincing evidence. For example, the *Prensa Libre* alleges that the United States, Canadian, Italian, and French embassies are passing out entry visas to these 'kidnapped' children without a legitimate search into their origins. These facts, the paper

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[4] During my last visit, I was discussing this interference with a teacher from Germany, who told me he had heard on the radio that the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) was being accused of supporting the Evangelical movement in Guatemala. It would appear that the CIA is a common scapegoat for accusations of not only disrupting the country politically, but spiritually as well.

claims, comes from a United Nations document, "New forms of violence against the child." It would appear that this is not the first time that the *Prensa Libre* has published such groundless statements. On March 13, 1994, after American Melissa Larson was suspected of kidnapping a child in Santa Lucia Cotzumalaguapa, the paper ran a story with the headline "Children are frequently purchased to mutilate them." Once again, Europeans, Canadians, and Americans are accused of posing as tourists in order to kidnap Guatemalan children and harvest their organs.

Leventhal (1994: 7) states that this article was posted in the town square of San Cristobal Verapaz, where June Weinstock was beaten on March 29, 1994. Unlike Larson, who was not physically harmed, Weinstock was severely beaten; and as of November 1994, has been unable to speak, walk, or do anything for herself.

1.4 *Systems of Propaganda*

As a way of introduction, before undertaking the description of the major news stories in Guatemala during the summer of 1998, I will examine the methods and aims of propaganda models implemented by the state.[5] The *Prensa Libre* alleged that foreign embassies and high-ranking Guatemalan officials were involved in the adoption market early in the summer of 1998; and this assertion leads us to ask what types of motivations are in play in this situation.

As a means of communication, mass media is highly effective in disseminating key information to the populace. It is accessible by all in one form or another. In Latin America radio and television are more prevalent than the press, which has a greater audience in urban, middle class sections (Fox 1988: viii). Enjoying such access, mass media is in a very powerful position of spreading propaganda. Herman and Chomsky (1988: 1) state that mass media serves

> to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the large society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest,

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[5] I have concentrated on two newspapers; the *Prensa Libre* and the *Siglo News*. The latter is an English paper.

to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda.

Above all, mass media should be both honest and objective in their reporting. Yet, this is not always the situation. Sometimes, the media will neglect to mention key facts, as was demonstrated above; and this neglect could be attributed to censorship. Censorship, as Herman and Chomsky (1988: 1) demonstrate, is often supplemented with a monopolistic control, which indicates that "the media serve the ends of a dominant elite." Latin America, in the words of Fox (1988: 1), remains one of the few areas of the world "where privately controlled, commercially operated mass media predominate over any other form of media organization." As Herman and Chomsky further state (1988: 1), it is difficult to see a system of propaganda when the media is privately owned and censorship is absent.

This statement would seem to indicate that the newspapers in Latin America, such as *Prensa Libre*, which enjoy this sense of private ownership, also lack official censorship. If we adhere to Herman and Chomsky (1988), we can begin to sense what motivates these papers to publish the types of stories I encountered in the summer of 1998.

> This is especially true where the media actively compete, periodically attack and expose corporate and governmental malfeasance, and aggressively portray themselves as spokesmen for free speech and the general community interest (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 1).

The articles that will be reviewed demonstrate this 'aggressiveness' (some may even label it 'sensationalism'), and the apparent need to appeal to the public and its "general community interest." One aspect that will be very clear is the attack on the malfeasance of both the Guatemalan government and the nations allegedly involved in the marketing of children. But what happens when these stories, this need to "portray themselves as spokesmen," goes too far, when, as mentioned above and in more detail below, these stories incite the populace to act?

1.5 *"Millones en adopciones"*[6]

This was the headline on the cover of the June 29, 1998, edition of the *Prensa Libre;* and the story inside described how 94.5 million quetzales (US$ 15 million) entered the country annually from the sale of Guatemalan children. At a price of 10 to 15 thousand quetzales each, approximately 1000 to 1500 babies a year are being sold to people in foreign countries. The newspaper article further claims that the United States, Canada, Italy, and France are the principal receivers of the children; and in a way that further outlines the *impunidad* of the State, that high Guatemalan functionaries are receiving a large profit from the sales. Furthermore, the newspaper claims that the embassies of the countries described issued the entry visas even though the origin of the child was in doubt. While the article made it clear that there was debate as to whether or not this was a legal problem, as there is no existing legislation prohibiting it, the activity definitely posed moral and ethical dilemmas. More disturbing to the Guatemalan public is the allegation that the children are being used as *mulas de la droga*, drug carriers into El Salvador and Mexico; and being sent to Taiwan and Japan for child prostitution rings.

Accompanying the article entitled "*El gran negocio de las adopciones*" ("The great business of adoptions") is a picture of a policeman fixing the blanket of one of two babies lying on a bed (see Plate 2). The text below this picture states:

> Police agents acted against nurseries, whose legality was questioned.[7]

Researching material for his book *The Long Night of White Chickens,* the subject of which was *casas cunas* ("cradle houses" or nurseries) in Guatemala, Francisco Goldman and a friend visited a prominent attorney in Guatemala, under the pretense of being desperate parents looking for a child to adopt. This attorney sent them to a nursery where Goldman recalled seeing only a few babies, but a lot of toys. One of the nannies told them to come back in 13 days, "like, in 13 days they'd be getting another batch" (*Washington Post*, May

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[6] "Thousands of adoptions."

[7] "*Agentes de la Policia han actuado contra casas cunas, cuya legalidad era cuestionada.*"

17, 1994). The character in his book, Flor de Mayo, reportedly the employer of the nursemaids in the house, is found dead in an orphanage.

> And the very next day the two major Guatemala City dailies came out saying that just two days previous the National Police had uncovered a clandestine safe house for hiding babies - -also called a *casa de engordes*, or fattening house - many of them not even orphans but illegally purchased and even stolen babies, and that they were being kept there until their alleged adoptions could be arranged. That is, until they could be sold to childless couples in Europe and the United States, this apparently being a highly profitable and widespread business in Guatemala and elsewhere in Central America - "a business angle to civil war and violent repression" (Goldman 1992: 4).

The actual news articles demonstrate two facets of the socio-political situation in Guatemala. One, they testify how the public perceives, or will perceive, the nation-state. Another example of this perception will appear below in the discussion of the 'lynch mobs,' as angry groups of villagers have taken the law into their own hands, incensed, I will argue, in part by the press. The accusation that there are high functionaries involved displays why the people are frustrated. Even more interesting is the allegation that two high ranking officers and their wives were involved. As Nineth Montenegro, the deputy/member of the FDNG (New Guatemala Democratic Front), states (*Prensa Libre*, June 29, 1998):

> Because we have knowledge that, aided by the influence of high functionaries, civilian and high ranking military have participated in illegal adoptions, for which they
> collected great quantities of money for the buying and selling of children.[8]

The second facet of this situation is the involvement of countries such as Canada, the United States, Italy, and France; and the allegations that their embassies still issue entry visas when the origin of the baby is in doubt. The reader is to believe that the common thread that holds both these facets together is the reek of corruption that appears to pervade both the foreign embassies and the high offices of the Guatemalan nation-state, all at the expense of

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[8] *"Porque tenemos conocimiento de que, apoyados en las influencias de altos funcionarios, personas civiles y militares de alto rango han participado en adopciones ilegales, para lo cual cobran grandes cantidades de dinero por la compraventa."*

the Guatemalan child.

According to Montenegro (interview in *Prensa Libre*, June 29, 1998), this adoption market is occurring with Guatemalan children for three reasons: one, irresponsible paternity; two, family disintegration; and third (and most importantly), lack of family planning (obvious in a primarily Catholic country). By this statement, we are left to conclude that these illegal adoptions are a result of 'irresponsible' parents selling their children to the highest American, Canadian, Italian, or French bidder; but why in the July 1 edition was there the following list of sources for traffickers of babies?

1) Snatched from the mother's arms.
2) *Alquiler de vientres*[9]. Medical centres, markets, and nurseries are primarily the places frequented by baby traffickers.
3) The hospitals and brothels are, regularly, the places buyers of babies visit.

Therefore, we are left to conclude that Guatemalan children are acquired for sale by both kidnapping and buying children from mothers in hospitals, brothels, clinics, and nurseries. Is there a market for Guatemalan children? According to the *Prensa Libre* (July 1, 1998), UNICEF reports that the United States government annually approves 400 to 500 adoptions; Canada 100; and Italy, France, and other European countries, 70 to 100. The same article states that national adoptions have decreased more and more, due to the lack of demand within the country. Yet, if this international adoption market does exist to the extent that the *Prensa Libre* says it does, it is the portrayal of it that has caused problems in the past and will cause problems in the future. For one, it implicates Americans, Canadians, and Europeans as the buyers of Guatemalan children. It would not take too grand a leap to suspect these same persons as thieves, as, I will demonstrate below, occurred in the case of June Weinstock. Secondly, it casts the Guatemalan government in a poor light. For example, a June 29, 1998, article stated:

> With this, the State, far from providing children true protection, "facilitated their abandonment and permitted the violation of the principal contents in the Convention

[9] "Hiring of the stomach."

of the Rights of the Child".[10]

Not only does an article like this portray the Americans, Canadians, and Europeans as buyers of the Guatemalan child, but it also depicts the Guatemalan government as one that does not protect its children.

Guatemalan children do go missing, as children do in every country; up to six a day, states the Guatemalan Public Ministry. However, Carlos Aldana of the Archbishop's Human Rights Committee does not know if that particular figure is correct; but "does not believe the children are used as organ donors, or that they end up in Brazilian snuff films or as sex slaves in the Middle East" (*Washington Post*, May 17, 1994). Rather, he believes that children in Guatemala go missing for the same reasons they do in the United States; they run away or are kidnapped by an estranged parent.

Furthermore, as one of the few editorials that followed these stories stated (*Prensa Libre*, July 2, 1998), adoptions, both international and national, acted as a means of a '*acción salvadora*' (rescuing action) in that adoption offers possibilities to a child who may be dead in a few months or a few years.

> It is a service in the sense that it prevents children from growing up in the street or in conditions which absolutely hinder their development.[11]

Yet, as the author states, adoption can be a negative practice as well. He outlines two instances when adoption practices become not services of goodwill, but acts of crime and violation: first, when they are performed forcefully or violently; for example, kidnapping, or when the mother is deceived somehow to give up her child; and second, when this service becomes transformed into a 'lucrative' deal that 'calls to diverse professional services.' In conclusion, he urged the passing of a law that controls adoptions without exploitation.

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[10] *"Con ello, el Estado, lejos de dar una verdadera protección a la niñez, "facilita su desamparo y permite la violación de los principios contenidos en la Convención sobre Derechos del Niño."*

[11] *"Es un servicio en el sentido que evita que pequeños(as) crezcan en la calle o en condiciones absolutemente negatorias de su desarrolla."*

Therefore, it would appear that international adoptions do take place; and, if they are performed without the intent of making money and without any form of exploitation of the mother or the child, they are legitimate.[12] It is known that the adoption of a child may well protect that child from growing up in the street, giving him/her access to such services as health and education, that may not be available in his/her country. What is not accepted, however, is the possibility of the children being kidnapped; and high officials, Guatemalan and foreign, making money from this transaction. What makes a seemingly honest and moral service bastardized into a foul practice that implicates honest tourists? As I have previously noted, tales of the marketing of the children are rampant throughout the world; and, as I will further demonstrate, it is the practices of the media that promote these tales. I have demonstrated that there exists some kernel of truth to the descriptions of international adoptions, but the media has magnified both this kernel and a pre-existing urban tale into something that does not exist in the proportions it says it does. The fact that money is involved in international adoptions has led to the allegation of the commodification of Guatemalan children. These stories have ramifications, as I will outline below; but for the present, I will demonstrate other 'newsworthy' items that portray the Guatemalan government and, to an extent, other nations as immoral. This review will serve as a return to my previous argument: the people of Guatemala are expressing frustration with the Guatemalan government and increasingly fearful of the 'outsider.'

1.6 *"Los linchados"*

Accompanying a story that outlines the progress of the trial of five men responsible for the 'lynching,' of two boys in Almolonga is a graphic photograph (Plate 3) of one of the boy's feet (*Prensa Libre*, July 1, 1998). In stark contrast, the Guatemalan English paper, *The Siglo News*, in its coverage of the same problem simply portrays a photograph of a rather pensive Jean Arnault, the Director of the United Nations Mission (week beginning, June 24, 1998, Plates 5) who asserts that the rise in 'lynchings' are a result of the frustration with the

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[12] They may be legitimate, but not always accepted, as what occurred to Janice Wogel of Philadelphia in Guatemala City illustrates. She was attacked on a bus in March, 1994, by a mob who thought her recently-adopted Guatemalan child had been kidnapped. The United States embassy sent security guards to protect her (*Washington Post*, May 17, 1994).

Guatemalan security forces. This disparity between *The Siglo News* and the *Prensa Libre* is typical. *The Siglo News*, it seems to me, appears to be directed towards the many Spanish students, tourists, and Peace Corps members that comprise a large minority sector of Guatemala. Its content is primarily a brief review of recent global news, tourist events, (subtitled) movie reviews, and the like. In effect, it is remarkably similar to North American newspapers in that it lacks the photographs of dead bodies that appear in the *Prensa Libre*.

120 'lynchings' have occurred since 1996, 85% of which occurred in departments with the lowest rate of homicides (with the exception of Guatemala City), according to the United Nations Mission's statistics. Furthermore, only 12% of these 'lynchings' were because of murder or sexual assault. Those crimes one would think would motivate such punishment; yet in reality, 75% of the 'lynchings' were due to disputes over property. Why these 'lynchings' are occurring will be explored; but first, as in the Weinstock incident, there is the same allegation that members of the State are involved:

> According to MINUGUA (United Nations Verification Commission in Guatemala), different groups are responsible for the "social cleansings", but several incidents demonstrated planned and coordinated actions, as well as "the direct or indirect participation of members of the State." The report cited a "total lack of activity on the part of the institutions in charge of administering justice in the investigation and sanction of such acts" (*The Siglo News*, week beginning June 24, 1998).

Ultimately, the responsibility of the 'lynchings' are upon those who perpetuate the act; yet there is the subtle inference that in its *inaction* to uphold the law, the State is still actively involved.

More graphic than the aforementioned picture (*Prensa Libre*, July 1, 1998) is the one accompanying the October 23, 1997, article in the same paper (see Plate 4). In this picture, we see two women standing behind a window looking into a room. This room contains the remains of five charred bodies; four on the floor and one on a table. These were the victims of a lynch mob in Comitancillo, department of San Marcos. It would appear the reasoning behind this 'lynching' was a dispute over two animals, and five auxiliary mayors are being held by the police.

According to MINUGUA, many of the lynchings take place after a decision is handed

down by a tribunal composed of community members; and "these popular tribunals are not authorized by official legislation or by indigenous law" (*The Siglo News*, Week beginning June 24, 1998). The fact that a 'death sentence' is handed down by a tribunal indicates that this is not a quick, irrational decision; rather, the presence of a popular tribunal indicates that there is thought behind this action. Members of the community, we are led to believe, decide the fate of the persons being held. Unlike the Weinstock incident, some of these 'lynchings' are carried out after some consideration of the community members. This consideration indicates an even more drastic situation than the Weinstock incident. The members of the tribunal have time to deliberate and execute the persons suspected of the crime. These crimes, as Arnault states, are not usually homicides or cases of sexual assault; they concern property, which indicates a real frustration with the police and existing judicial system in the departments of Guatemala.

The Weinstock incident came as a result of the typical 'mob' behaviour that we associate with tragic outcomes. I will focus on this incident next in order to draw a contrast between the two types of 'social cleansing,' for Weinstock was not killed; however, the mob stopped beating her, as we will see, only after the policemen present said she was dead.

1.7 *The Weinstock Incident*

June Weinstock, a 51-year-old environmentalist from Alaska, had been visiting San Cristobal during Holy Week in 1994. According to a friend of hers, Weinstock had been walking throughout the plaza, taking pictures of little children. A small boy wandered off and his mother panicked. The *gringa* taking pictures of the children had to be responsible.

Weinstock was pulled from a departing bus by the mob, who shouted accusations, and kicked and pushed her. One man interceded and told the crowd that she must be taken to the judge's office; and on the way there, they stopped at the house of an American missionary, Michael Lewis, for they needed a translator. Could this be a tribunal? Obviously they intended for a judge to examine her case, replete with a translator. Yet, the story that ran in the *Washington Post* stated that the boy whom the mother and the mob thought was kidnapped was found an hour after his 'disappearance.' For four hours, Lewis, the judge, and the police kept the angry mob away from Weinstock, who was hiding in the

office. Reportedly, the entire episode was filmed by two cameramen; and one of the videos, states the *Washington Post*, shows the office completely surrounded by people, mostly men. After trying first to break the windows, they attempted to set the building on fire.

"I came to see if I could mediate. But the people are in such a strange state," said Monsignor Geraldo Flores, who arrived from Cobán. Finally, the crowd used a bench to break down the doors. Lewis escaped through the back doors into the custody of the police, but Weinstock was not so fortunate. The crowd entered the bathroom where she was hiding, and they beat her repeatedly until the police convinced them she was dead.

There are a few important points to be made at this juncture. To begin with, as was mentioned above, the *Washington Post* states that two military officers were in the crowd, seemingly to investigate whether or not the army should intercede, which it eventually did.[13] Therefore, we have the first indication that the Guatemalan military was involved. A. Adams (1997: 598) states that there is a consensus between the activists and reporters that the *Ejercito*[14] was behind the attacks; and furthermore, "observers noted that June Weinstock was attacked the same day, March 29, that the Guatemalan government signed the first of three important agreements with the guerilla insurgency."[15] The author of the *Washington Post* article, William Booth, stated the same allegation; the motivation behind such attacks was to undermine the peace negotiations with the guerrilla forces (May 17, 1994).

The second point I wish to discuss relates to the idea of a tribunal that allegedly deliberates over instances of 'lynchings.' As I demonstrated above, the idea of a tribunal indicates some form of rationalization and forethought, as contrasted with the rapid execution that almost occurred with June Weinstock. Judging from the article in the *Washington Post*, she would have been killed after she was dragged from the bus, had not

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[13] The United States embassy tried to send in a helicopter but the skies were too overcast.

[14] Translated literally as "the Exercise"; Guatemala's armed forces.

[15] "*observadores notaron que June Weinstock fue atacada el mismo dia, 29 de marzo, en que el gobierno civil guatemalteco firmó el primero de tres acuerdos importantes con la insurgencia guerrillera.*" In this article, Adams analyses the role of the Guatemalan media in their portrayal of the *gringa*, particularly June Weinstock and Jennifer Harbury.

one man said that she must be taken to the office of the presiding judge. As Arnault would have us believe, the majority of 'lynchings' take place with the accompaniment of a tribunal.

My final point is the association of witchcraft with the June Weinstock incident. Indeed, the headline of the article in the *Washington Post* was entitled "Witch Hunt"; and the opening paragraph states:[16]

> Before she was dragged from her bus and beset by the mob that demanded her blood, the blood of the American accused of stealing children to harvest their organs, before she was called a witch and almost beaten with sticks...

This was not the only occurrence that week in Guatemala. I already mentioned what happened to Janice Wogel in the capital. In Malacatan, a medical examiner was preparing to unearth the body of a woman. According to police, she was killed by men who suspected her of abducting children.[17]

Furthermore, the article states that on one of the video tapes, one of the men in the mob tells the cameraman that they are after a woman. Another man says no, they are after a man. Finally, another man says, "It is a man who turned into a woman." The ability to shift shapes, though usually into an animal according to the ethnographic literature, is commonly attributed to witches. It is worth noting the 'mental state,' as it were, of the mob involved. They believed she was a witch. Throughout Latin America, the witch, specifically the fat/blood sucking witch, preys on children.

A further tenuous example is the fact that the people wanted to burn both Weinstock and Lewis. I say 'tenuous,' for, noting the traditional means of executing witches in Europe,

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[16] A case could be made regarding the subtitle "Babies are Disappearing. Ugly Rumours Abound, and a Tourist's Life is at Stake," with emphasis on the "stake."

[17] In a gruesome parallel, Nutini (Nutini and Roberts 1993: 74) was led to the site where the body of a blood-sucking witch was located. She was completely naked; most of the bones broken. "Her eyes had been plucked from the sockets, her ears, nose, tongue, and lips had been totally severed, and her ten fingers had been cut clean." Though it was not stated, we assume that this 'witch' had been killed. This and other aspects of blood/fat sucking witchcraft will be explored below. Darling (1998) offers similar evidence of inhumations of possible witches in Anasazi sites.

it would be rather easy to state that this is another example of a belief in witchcraft. However, it is not. As been mentioned above, some of the 'lynchings' are executed with the use of gasoline and fire; and, as I will describe later, one of the many devices of execution by the Guatemalan army was burning. Therefore, it would appear that by the plethora of burnings that occur in political torture and 'social cleansing' in Guatemala, any link to European witchcraft is highly tenuous.

In reviewing the *Washington Post* article, a case could be made that the newspapers in the United States and Canada share a similar strategy as the *Prensa Libre*, though on a more subtle level. They both printed the reports of 'informants' that state military officers were in the crowd, indicating the military's involvement in both the Wienstock incident and other 'social cleansings.' While the *Prensa Libre* tends to be more 'sensational' than we prefer to think our newspapers are, we still place more faith in the 'truth value' of our mass media. Even when confronted with the allegation of 'propaganda systems,' we still believe, as it were, in what we read.[18]

1.8 *Concluding Remarks*

I have neglected an adequate critique of mass media, particularly Central American media; but there is an ample reason for this omission. My purpose for this section was to describe what I encountered in the Guatemalan newspapers, to set the scene for the remainder of the thesis. This section provides a backdrop for what is occurring in Guatemala. The civil war is finished, yet it is not forgotten. The memories of the *Ejercito's* crimes during the war, the disappearances, the massacres, the tortures, still linger. Traditional beliefs of witchcraft have

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[18] 1998 in particular saw many examples of organ-related stories around the world; specifically in China ('Shot to order for organ transplants,' *Edmonton Journal*, March 8, 1998), Brazil ('Federal attorney rules all Brazilians are organ donors,' *Vancouver Sun*, January 12, 1998), and London ('British pair convicted of stealing body parts for use in sculptures,' *Edmonton Journal*). Concerning what could be an example of organ theft, or simply perhaps an administrative foul-up (it would still be theft), is the story of a native girl in the British Columbia who was buried without her eyes ('Family still upset girl was buried without her eye,' *Edmonton Journal*, December 13, 1997). The family found out after the funeral director asked if they donated her eyes. It took three months for the family to get her eyes back, but it was too late for her to be buried whole. "In First Nations culture, the body is to go to the spirit world as a whole person, the way it came into the world". See Appendix III for recent media reports on organ theft.

taken on a new guise. The witches who once preyed on *borrachos* ("drunks") returning home late at night possess a new victim and a new appearance. Now they are after little children, particularly for their organs; and now they look like Americans, Canadians, and Europeans. This suspicion is loosely based on fact. As demonstrated, legal international adoptions do take place. But, stories have emerged, mostly through the manipulation of the newspapers, that some international adoptions are illegal. Babies are being kidnapped or sold by their parents to rich tourists. An example of what results from such ill-founded stories is what occurred to June Weinstock in 1994. The *impunidad* of the Guatemalan government and police have further resulted in another chilling aspect of rural life, lynchings or 'social cleansings.'

This is not a society that has enjoyed a tranquil existence. A thirty-year civil war was only one episode of violence in the history of Guatemala. After the Conquest, the people of Guatemala were faced with centuries of exploitation by a smaller elite, an elite who saw themselves as superior in every way to the Maya. The next chapter will briefly plot the course of history in Guatemala; from the actions of the conquistadores during the Conquest to the civil war that only recently ended.

This section described *what* is occurring. Chapters Two, Three, and Four will outline the history of Guatemala, and the 'culture of terror' that was established during the war, to demonstrate *why* these acts are occurring.

Chapter 2

Los Conquistadores y Encomenderos: Early Historical Exploitation of the Maya

They asked the gods to grant them their favors and the victory against the Spaniards and their other enemies. But it must have been too late, for they had no further answer from their oracles; they regarded the gods as mute or as dead.

- Durán, *The Aztecs, The History of the Indies of New Spain*, III, 77.

An historical analysis is similar to looking into a house with many windows. Each window will allow a glimpse into one area of the house, whereas another window will allow another, perhaps completely different view, of the house. Looking into all the windows will hopefully allow one to see the inside of the house in its entirety. When dealing with the history of a particular country, we are faced with a similar problem. There are many, many historical aspects that one could study; the political economy, the history of one specific religion, the history of armed conflict, the history of one group of people, to name a few. As one could imagine, studying the entire history of one country would be quite the burden, akin to looking into all the windows of a mansion and taking careful notes of all that you see. Another problem encountered is the eventual determination of what constitutes 'truth;' how do we, the readers, know if the recorded history is true, if this is what really occurred?

Quite simply, we do not. But, as Todorov states (1984: 54): "...the notion of 'false' is irrelevant here." What is important is not the truth of an event; rather it is how the event is stated, how the chronicler "could have counted on its acceptance by the contemporary public"; and that this "reception of the statements is more revealing for the history of ideologies than their production" (ibid).

In Chapter One, I presented the allegations that the mass media produced in Guatemala, allegations that implicated Europeans, Americans, Canadians, and high Guatemalan functionaries in an illegal adoption trade. Intertwined with these allegations are the beliefs, and subsequent accusations, of witchcraft. Accusations of witchcraft mirrored the 'lynch mobs' that are occurring within the rural communities. These 'lynch mobs'

represent what occurs when the police agencies and government are ineffective, especially when it comes to protection of the indigenous people. As briefly indicated in the previous chapter, the crimes committed by both the Guatemalan army and the guerrilla forces during the civil war have largely been unanswered for. The assassination of Monseñor Juan Gerardi is only one act that has been played out since the cessation of the civil war that claimed thousands of lives. The tactics employed by the Guatemalan army, the *Ejercito*, included mass disappearances, executions, and rape. Though the civil war has been concluded, the memories still remain. As in any similar context, the effects of the war will be present for many years to follow. Why is this violence occurring?

To answer this question, we must look at the history of Guatemala. This chapter will be an historical analysis of one aspect; earliest interethnic relations. In the present, in the main it is in interethnic relations that this conflict exists; therefore to understand why, we must explore what occurred in the past to set the precedent for it.[1] Therefore, this chapter will briefly analyse the history of the Spanish conquest and the subsequent colonial policies. This presentation may seem to be too grand in scope; therefore I will deal specifically with one aspect of this history, the earliest treatment and exploitation of the Maya by people of European ancestry.

2.1 *The Conquest of Guatemala*

The discovery of America, as Todorov states (1984: 4-5), reflects two important points; one, the discovery was "the most astonishing encounter of our history," in that to this point Europeans were at least slightly aware of other countries and its peoples (China, India, and Africa), but America and its discovery was completely unexpected. No one expected Columbus to find a western route to China; indeed they expected him literally to sail off the surface of the earth (ibid: 4-5). The second point Todorov stresses is that this encounter

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[1] In Guatemala, 'lynch mobs' tend to involve members of the same ethnicity. With the exception of the accusations of child theft directed towards *gringas*, these 'lynch mobs' are executing people from their own 'class' and ethnicity. However, the root of this problem is the pre-existing conflict between the ladino and the Indian. These 'lynch mobs,' as I outlined, are a result of an increasing frustration with the Guatemalan judiciary system which is controlled by the ladinos.

"perpetuated the greatest genocide in human history" (ibid: 5). This genocide was not employed through the same means we have seen performed in this century; the primary 'tool' of the sixteenth century genocide was the introduction of disease. Along with muskets, cannon, and horses, the conquistadors possessed another weapon in their already deadly arsenal: new diseases which they spread to the defenceless inhabitants of the New World. The Indians could run from horses, build fortifications for protection from cannon, carry shields for the onslaught of crossbow bolts; yet they could not escape from the viruses that spread from warrior to warrior, husband to wife, village to village.

I will focus on the 'conventional' warfare in this chapter. Through the exploits of the conquistadores, the seed of the 'culture of terror' was planted. The massacres, the rapes, the tortures were actions that the Indian could see and feel. These actions precipitated what will be the focus for the remainder of the thesis: the propagation of folklore associating the ladino, and subsequently, the European and American, with child traffickers; furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the beginning of exploitation; economic and physical, which has continued for centuries, and has resulted in frustration with the actions of the government concerning its role in the recent crisis. This frustration has violently expressed itself through the presence and actions of 'lynch mobs.'

Just before the Spanish Conquest of Guatemala in 1524, Guatemala was divided into numerous warring factions, mainly between the K'iche' and their allies and the Kaqchikel[2] and their allies (Recinos and Goetz 1953). The K'iche' had reportedly enjoyed diplomatic relations with the northern Aztec empire; and, as a result, Montezuma sent a messenger to the K'iche' informing them of the arrival of Cortés (Recinos 1957). According to Bricker (1981: 29), this alert gave the K'iche' ample time to prepare for the arrival of Cortés' lieutenant, Pedro de Alvarado. However, the Kaqchikel, not perceiving a direct threat to themselves, sought to ally themselves with the Spaniards against the K'iche'. "Thus, in

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[2] According to the new orthography of the ALMG (Academy for Mayan Languages of Guatemala), the names of the linguistic groups have been changed: Cakchiquel has become Kaqchikel, Quiché has become K'iche', Kanjobal has become Q'anjob'al, Tzutujil has become Tz'utujil, Kekchi' has become Q'eqchi', and Aquacatec has become Akateko (Stoll 1993: 361, fn.10).

Guatemala, as in other parts of Mesoamerica, local political conflicts undermined the position of the Indians and gave the Spaniards the advantage, in spite of their much smaller numbers" (ibid). A similar alliance occurred during the Conquest of Mexico in which certain groups, tired of the oppression of the Aztecs (most notably, the Tlaxcalans), sought to ally themselves with the Spaniards (Díaz del Castillo 1963).

Upon hearing word of 'uprisings' to the south, Cortés sent Alvarado with 300 foot soldiers, 120 horsemen, 200 Tlaxcalans, and 100 other Mexican Indians[3] (King 1974, Mackie 1924); hardly a large contingent compared to the mighty K'iche'. Alvarado was known as *Tonatiuh*, meaning "sun" among the Aztec, "(supposedly given for his fair complexion and cheerful disposition) implied awe more than affection; indeed, the Indians feared him..." (Plate 6, Sherman 1979: 9).[4]

Alvarado roughly followed the west coast of what is now Guatemala, and his first battle with Indians occurred near the town of Zapotitlán (Bricker 1981: 31). He sent three

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[3] Without the aid of the Tlaxcalans, Cortés would have been forced to relinquish his march on Mexico due to rising pressure from his top leaders (Díaz del Castillo 1963). Accompanying Montezuma's belief regarding Cortés' possible deification, Todorov states (1984: 56) that the Spanish accounts partly allude to a national guilt complex on the part of Montezuma; as the Aztecs represented themselves as the legitimate successors (but in reality, usurpers) to the Toltecs, Montezuma may have believed that the Spaniards were the direct descendants and returned to "reclaim what was rightfully theirs." A similar argument is found in Arata and his discussion on 'reverse colonisation' (1990). For a detailed analysis of Mexican *indigenes* and the Conquest and colonization of Chihuahua, see Ana María Alonso (1995).

[4] Bernal Díaz del Castillo, "the last survivor of the Conquerors of Mexico," mentions Alvarado in his description of the excursions to Mexico; first accompanying Juan de Grijalva, then with Cortés (1963: 7). According to Díaz del Castillo, Grijalva sent Alvarado back to Cuba with the ship *San Sebastian* to carry a message to Diego Velazquez, governor of Cuba, requesting aid. Alvarado was chosen for this task because he had previously taken his ship up the Rio Papaloapan without the permission of Grijalva (ibid: 39). That incident demonstrates his impetuousness; yet in May of 1520, Alvarado performed another act that critically demonstrated his cruel tendencies. Under the pretext that a group of unarmed Aztec dancers were planning to attack him and his men, Alvarado brutally massacred all of them. This event occurred during the absence of Cortés, who had returned to the coast to meet Panfilo de Narvaez and the largest army ever amassed in the Indies under the command to punish Cortés for leaving Cuba without the permission of the governor (ibid: 282-282).

captured Indians back to Zapotitlán with instructions for the leaders to surrender and pledge allegiance to the king of Spain. No one came to do so, and Alvarado decided to march on the town. The Spanish were met with resistance; and in order to avoid ambush by pushing their way into the heart of the town, they made camp on its outskirts.

After defeating the inhabitants of Zapotitlán, the Spanish contingent marched on Xelahu (present day Quezaltenango). They found the city to be deserted, made camp within, and explored the region for six days (Bricker 1981: 31). At this time, an army that included 12,000 Indians from Xelahu completely surrounded the city and advanced. On a plain outside the city, Alvarado and the Spaniards drove the Indians away; yet instead of surrendering, the Indians of Xelahu convinced the rulers of the other towns to forget their differences and help them to defeat the Spanish. Furthermore, they pretended to be friendly with the Spaniards and told them to go to the city of Utatlán (near present day Santa Cruz del Quiché). Here the Indians planned on luring Alvarado into the city, seal the exits, and set fire to it. Alvarado realized the plan and led his men to safety (ibid: 32).

Within days, the remaining K'iche' surrendered and Alvarado moved on into new territory, namely for the purpose of pacifying the Kaqchikel, though Bricker (1981: 32) states that it is "somewhat misleading to speak of the 'conquest' of the Cakchiquel," as they had already offered their service to the Spaniards. Alvarado described a warm welcome in the Kaqchikel capital of Iximche (Mackie 1924). With the aid of the Kaqchikel, Alvarado moved on to the capital of the Tz'utujil, Tzikinhay, on the shoreline of Lake Atitlán. After the rout of these reported enemies of both the K'iche' and the Kaqchikel, there was a "steady stream" of rulers from all the towns between Lake Atitlán and the south coast, swearing fidelity to the king of Spain (Bricker 1981: 32). However, the province of Escuintla, populated by the Pipil, not only refused allegiance to Spain, but attempted to convince other provinces not to surrender. This resistance did not last long, for Alvarado soon conquered the Pipil (Mackie 1924).

Bricker (1981) offers two historical accounts of the Conquest of Guatemala; one from the Spaniards and the second from K'iche' documents. This presentation offers a surprising glimpse of the Conquest; most notably, how the K'iche' saw and noted the Conquest and the

invaders. One example Bricker offers is the battle at Xelahu and the tragic death of a young Maya captain, Tecún-Tecum (Tecum Umam), and how the K'iche' documents discuss this event. Alvarado, it would seem, took advantage of a spiritual aspect with which the Maya armies entered armed conflict, albeit unconsciously.

According to the K'iche' document outlining the battle of Xelahu, Captain Tecum became an eagle and attacked Alvarado (Adelantado Tunadiú in the text). Tecum was impaled after he mistakenly cut off the head of Alvarado's mount and fell to the ground. Furthermore, the texts state:

> Immediately two dogs ran up, they did not have a single hair, they were hairless, those dogs seized this Indian in order to tear him into pieces, and as the Adelantado saw that this Indian was very gallant and that he wore these crowns of gold, silver, diamonds and emeralds and of pearls, he came to defend him from the dogs, and he stood looking at him very deliberately. He appeared covered with quetzal (feathers) and very beautiful plumes, for which this reason this town of Quetzaltenango [Quezaltenango] was given its name, because here is where the death of Captain Tecum came to pass (Recinos 1957: 86-91).

These accounts are interesting, for the Maya describe maidens protecting the Spanish contingent: in one instance when they saw the maiden, they all fell and could not get up. According to Freidel et al (1993: 329), this 'maiden' may have been a litter of the Virgin carried into battle by the Spaniards.[5] To the K'iche' carrying battle standards which represented various Mayan deities (*way*), the sight of the Spaniards employing their own was an ominous sign.

Today, Tecum Umam is the cultural hero of the Guatemalan highland Indians; a giant statue of him stands in the middle of a traffic circle on the eastern outskirts of Quezaltenango, and he adorns the currency of Guatemala.[6] The death of Tecum Umam in the

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[5] See Webster (1992) for an analysis of sixteenth century processionals in Seville.

[6] The use of "Indian cultural heroes," on currency, for example, would be considered as an example of an assimilationist policy. Cojtí Cuxil (1996: 23) states "the paradigm of acculturation maintains that Ladino culture must be given to the Maya because the latter have no culture or have a barbarous one. Yet the Ladinos use the Maya culture to demonstrate the originality of Guatemalan identity to foreigners."

K'iche' narrative that Bricker relates holds further significance; it represents the defeat of indigenous religion by Christianity, the Virgin over the Maya *way*.

This was the conquest of the Guatemalan highlands. Alvarado remained as the first governor of Guatemala, and later conquered present-day El Salvador. He died in 1541 after an exhausted horse ridden by a frightened squire collapsed on top of him after a narrow retreat in Ecuador. Reportedly, he had given his own horse to a wounded soldier during the retreat (Kelly 1932: 213-215). According to Juarros (1823), the rest of Guatemala remained more difficult to conquer; the Chorti remained independent until 1530, and the Indians of Copán were the last to give up, effectively holding back the Spaniards twice. Two groups remained impossible to conquer; the Q'eqchi' and the Pokoman. At this point the Dominican involvement is introduced, for by this period, word had reached Europe, namely descriptions of the atrocities practised by the Spaniards; and key individuals became concerned.

2.2 *Bartolomé de Las Casas and the Conquest*

One cannot speak of the Conquest and the actions of the Spaniards in the New World without speaking of Bartolomé de Las Casas. At this juncture, it would be worthwhile to discuss the pivotal and historical role he actively played. This presentation will serve two purposes: one, it will illuminate in greater detail the mind set of the conquistadores; and two, it will illustrate the heated political scene in Europe in regard to the Conquest. More importantly, this analysis will demonstrate how the "Indian" was perceived in Europe.[7]

Upon his historic encounter with the inhabitants of the New World, Columbus wrote prolifically about his experiences. As Todorov (1984) demonstrates, the impressions of Columbus changed drastically . More importantly, these impressions contain within the seeds of how the Indian was perceived in Europe. In discussing trade with the Indians,

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[7] Reflecting on his encounter with the Indian, Columbus and "his allusions to the inhabitants of the islands always occur amid his notations concerning nature, somewhere between birds and trees," (Todorov 1984: 34); and furthermore their apparent lack of culture was demonstrated by the fact that they did not wear clothes. See Gow (1993) for a similar discussion on the relations between acculturated Amazonian Indians and the more traditional Indians of the lower Urubamba. The latter did not wear clothing or use salt; evidence of commerce, and consequently, civilization.

Columbus is surprised that they will readily accept glass beads in exchange for gold. For Columbus, "a different system of exchange is equivalent to the absence of system, from which he infers the bestial character of the Indians" (ibid: 38).[8] Further attributing to the clear lack of culture and the corresponding 'bestiality' was the ignorance of the Spanish language on the part of the Indian. Not understanding Spanish implied to Columbus not knowing any language. To Columbus, the fact that they did not wear clothes, could not understand Spanish, and put more worth into glass beads than gold indicated inferiority.[9] Furthermore, from their acceptance of glass beads and their willingness to trade for such 'simple' items, Columbus begins to believe that the Indian is very generous. This belief is strengthened by the observation of 'common property,' in which the comrades of Columbus witnessed Indians borrowing and using the items of other Indians without asking, and this practice was tolerated. "On the basis of these observations and these exchanges, Columbus will declare the Indians the most generous people in the world, thereby making an important contribution to the myth of the noble savage" (ibid: 39). However, as one might imagine, when the notion of common property was transferred to include that of the Spaniards, the Indians were considered 'thieves,' and thus punished as they would be if in Spain. These punishments included cutting off the ears and nose.

More representative of the actions that occurred during the Conquest of Mexico, Bernal Díaz del Castillo (1963) discusses some truly horrific actions that were performed on the part of Cortés and his men; yet this description illustrates, in general, how the conquistadores felt their actions were justified. For the supposed "treachery" in the town of

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[8] Another aspect of exchange that Todorov notes is that of the Word of God for gold. While the Indians were generous with gold, the Spaniards were generous with religion. "Columbus behaves as if certain equilibrium were established between the two actions: the Spaniards give religion and take gold" (1984: 45).

[9] As Todorov states, this 'assumption' that if one cannot speak the given language and therefore cannot speak at all, is not solely restricted to Columbus. European Slavs call their German neighbours *nemec* (mutes), Yucatec Maya call the Toltec invaders *nunob* (mutes), and Cakchiquel Maya call Mam Maya "stammerers," or "mutes" (1984: 76).

Cholula, when the inhabitants decided to attack the Spaniards on the advice of Montezuma. Cortés ordered the subsequent massacre when the plans were discovered:

> Then Cortés told them that the King's laws decreed such treachery should not go unpunished, and that they must die for their crime. Then he ordered a musket to be fired, which was the signal we had agreed on; and they received a blow they will remember forever, for we killed many of them, and the promises of their false idols were of no avail (Díaz del Castillo 1963: 199).

In defence of these actions, Díaz del Castillo evokes the name of Las Casas; and in this we can get glimpse of the discord between the Franciscans and the Dominicans, and subsequently, the two historians:

> He (Las Casas) insisted that we punished the Cholulans for no reason at all, or just to amuse ourselves and because we had a fancy to. He writes so persuasively that he would convince anyone who had not witnessed the event, or had no knowledge of it, that these and other cruelties of which he writes took place as he says, whereas the reverse is true. Let the Dominicans be beware of this book of his, because they will find it contradicts the facts. I should like to say also that some good Franciscans, who were the first friars His Majesty sent to New Spain after the capture of Mexico, went to Cholula to inquire into the details of this punishment, and the reason for it, and examined the actual *papas* and elders of the city. After questioning them thoroughly they found the facts to conform exactly with the account I have written, and not with the bishop's (Díaz del Castillo 1963: 203).

In addition, Díaz del Castillo describes the feelings of horror that he and his comrades experienced when confronted with acts of cannibalism. Ironically, the conquistadores felt justified in using fat from Indians to tend to the wounds of injured horses (1963: 76). However, Bricker (1981: 33-34) states that there is good reason to suspect exaggeration on the part of Las Casas "in order to gain his own political ends," specifically the establishment of Verapaz, where he wanted to demonstrate that the Conquest could be done peacefully with friars rather than violently with soldiers; and that, "in order to convince Charles V and his councillors that the conquest of the rest of the Guatemala should be turned over to the friars, he found it necessary to portray Alvarado's expedition in the most unfavourable light

possible."[10] Yet his writing throughout this period enlightens us as to what was occurring, and how it was the subject of many debates in Europe; specifically on how the Indian should be treated. Who was Bishop Bartolomé de Las Casas, and why did Díaz del Castillo feel justified to defend his actions and those of his comrades in Cholula?

Las Casas was born in Seville in 1474, and it is generally accepted that he studied at Salamanca and received a degree of Licentiate in law. I say "generally accepted," for Wagner (1967: 4) has found no mention by Las Casas of any stay in Salamanca, yet he has "no doubt he had a university education, as his later erudition testifies." His skill at law, particularly ecclesiastical law, is evident in his writings. For example, throughout his life he insisted that the Indians had legitimate *dominium* (Latin: rule, ownership); "and that the Spaniards did not have the right to usurp the Indians' just title" (Pennington 1970: 151). His erudition appears in the fact that he did not repeat the arguments of the canonists; rather, "he skilfully adapted them to a novel situation." (ibid: 156). Up to this point in history, the canonists were concerned with the legitimacy of European leaders ruling over a hostile enemy, namely the Saracens. According to Pennington (ibid: 157), Christians were now the exploiters; and this turn of events raised a moral question of whether it was right to conquer "pacific non-Christians." Las Casas attempted to demonstrate, through his adaptation of canon law, that the pope could not give jurisdiction of the Indian to the Spanish Crown.

> The pope could not, after all, grant letters which prejudiced a third party, and the privilege of one party could not usurp the right of another. Concessions and privileges are to be made without the injury of another party. He (Las Casas) observed that it would be absurd if the pope had actually taken the Indians' *dominium* away; all he gave to the Spanish was the right to preach the faith (Pennington 1970: 159).

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[10] Yet Bricker demonstrates Alvarado was called back to Spain twice to answer to charges of malfeasance and graft, and embezzlement and dereliction of duty respectively. Both these charges occurred before Las Casas became interested in Guatemala. Furthermore, the allies of Alvarado, the Kaqchikel, rose up against him because of his ill treatment. As Bricker states: "If the Cakchiquel, who were his allies, found Spanish rule unbearable, then it must have been even worse for the Indian groups, such as the Quiche and the Tzutujil, who had resisted the conquest" (1981: 34).

More importantly, Las Casas and other Dominicans were extremely influential in the passing of the New Laws that attempted to outlaw the *encomienda* system (grant of rights to tribute and labour from Indian communities). While this situation will be looked at in greater detail below, for now it is sufficient to state that the New Laws "revoked or limited the right of Spaniards to (receive) service and tribute from Indians" (Hanke 1949: 83). To demonstrate how the spheres of influence in Spain and in New Spain opposed each other, the New Laws caused a near revolt in Mexico and a rebellion in Peru (ibid).

Las Casas' father owned property on Española, and he went there in 1502. In 1503, he participated in "several Indian hunting expeditions," apparently for the purpose of an *encomienda*, the system he later spoke out against. Wagner (1967: 7) states that though Las Casas was an *encomendero*, his views were changing, as demonstrated in the following quotation:

> In travelling about Cuba he would go into the native villages asking how the Indians were, and always get the same answer, "Hungry, hungry, hungry!" All the able-bodied men were off working at the gold mines, and those he found would be hardly able to stand on their feet. The women with younger babies had so little to eat that their milk dried up and their infants died. In this way, Casas says, seven thousand children had died in three months; and all these facts, "a man of credit" (himself) investigated and [later] wrote to the King.

In 1511, Fray Antonio Montesino gave King Ferdinand of Spain a description of what was occurring in the Indies, specifically the effects of the *encomienda* system; and immediately the king called a junta. It consisted of several members; doctors, theologians, and jurists. Las Casas was one of these chosen to be a member. After much deliberation, the body formulated the following conclusions about Indians:

1. The Indians are free.
2. They should be instructed in the faith with all possible diligence.
3. The Indians can be obliged to work, but in such a manner as not to impede their religious instruction and to be useful to themselves, the republic, and the King; and this is by reason of the King's lordship and the service due him to maintain them in the faith and in justice.
4. This labour should be such as they can stand, with time to rest every day and all through the year at convenient times.

5. They should have houses and property of their own, such as seem fit to those who govern them now and henceforward, and they should be allowed time to farm and keep their property in their own manner.
6. It should be provided for them always to have contact with the settlers, so that they may be better and more rapidly instructed in the holy faith.
7. They should be given suitable wages, not in money but in clothing and other things for their houses (Wagner 1967: 8-9).

There was only one dissident in the junta: Fray Matías. There were other voices that protested the finer points of the conclusions, particularly on the basis of 'servitude.' The following suggestion, proposed by Fray Bernardo de Mesa, indicates the feelings about the Indian:

> The Indians are not slaves by war, purchase, or birth. The only reason for [their] servitude is a natural lack of understanding and capacity and perseverance in the faith and good customs, and perchance the nature of the country (there are some lands which the aspects of the heavens makes servile). They cannot be called slaves, but for their own sake must be ruled in some sort of servitude (Wagner 1967: 9).

Therefore, we see a representation emerging; one that may have been perceived at the time to lighten the situation of the Indian following the Conquest. The Indian, while relatively free from slavery, needed to be instructed by the Church. The purpose of this instruction was to demonstrate to the Indians the blasphemous nature, and consequently the ineffectiveness, of their religion. Furthermore, and more importantly, these initial discussions on the 'status' of the Indian served to demonstrate, and rationalize, the notion that the Indians must be kept busy, for their own spiritual and intellectual sake.

The Spanish Crown was faced with a series of problems; and subsequently, questions in regard to the original inhabitants of the New World. As demonstrated, the Conquest of the Americas was not fully supported by all in Europe. This doubt can be traced to Columbus' first return; and how he paraded natives through the streets of Seville and Barcelona, later sending Indians to be sold as slaves after his second voyage. The Spanish monarchy ordered the bishop to sell the slaves, "but on the following day another despatch instructed him to hold the money received from the sale until theologians could satisfy the

royal conscience concerning the morality of the act" (Hanke 1949: 18-19). As Hanke states, the main area of concern involved the treatment of the Indian; and whether or not he enjoyed the rights that all Europeans enjoyed, regardless of religious beliefs; and furthermore, that "all men are equal before God, and that a Christian has a responsibility for the welfare of his brothers no matter alien or lowly they may be" (ibid: 1). This policy was not applicable when the 'non-believers' in question were hostile to the Christians, as demonstrated with Spain's struggle with the Moors;[11] but it was relevant when the Indians were seen by some to be living in impoverished conditions such as famine and disease, conditions precipitated by such systems as the *encomienda*. Therefore, questions that the Crown faced were whether or not it was possible to colonize the lands with peaceful Spanish farmers; could the Indians convert to Christianity peacefully;[12] and more importantly, could the *encomienda* system be abolished? (ibid: 2). Here is the view of Fray Antonio de Montesino:

> "I have ascended here to cause you to know those sins, I who am the voice of Christ in the desert of this island. Therefore it is fitting that you listen to this voice, not with careless attention but with all your heart and senses. For this voice will be the strangest you ever heard, the harshest and hardest, most fearful and most dangerous you ever thought to hear...Tell me, by what right or justice do hold these Indians in such a cruel and horrible servitude? On what authority have you waged such detestable wars against these peoples, who dwelt quietly and peacefully on their own land? Why do you keep them so oppressed and exhausted, without giving them enough to eat or curing them of the sicknesses they incur from the excessive labour you give them, and they die, or rather, you kill them, in order to extract and acquire gold every day?" (quoted in Las Casas 1957-1958: 356-369).

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[11] War was not a foreign concept to Spain at the time of the Conquest. After 700 years of war with the Moors, Spain had become "a warrior culture filled with loathing and contempt for other ways of life...the *reconquista* of Iberia, which ended in 1492, would be the model for the *conquista*" (Wright 1992: 12). Furthermore, the wars with the Moors had created a large class of fighting men who possessed a deep disdain for both manual labour and commerce (Keen 1991: 31).

[12] An example of peaceful conversion is the establishment of Verapaz. Originally named Tuzulutlan by the Spaniards, or "land of war," because the inhabitants resisted so fiercely, this area became the first region to be peacefully pacified through Dominican friars with the support of the Spanish crown (Bricker 1981: 34; Remesal 1932: 182).

This diatribe of Father Fray Antonio de Montesinos profoundly influenced the works of Las Casas. It was received with much horror; for it was deemed as scandalous, and very close to treachery. After all, the Spaniards had overcome many obstacles in order to secure this land for the king. To the Conquistadores, the Indians were not rational beings. According to Díaz del Castillo, they practised cannibalism and sacrifice in order to appease their 'pagan gods.'[13] Las Casas' *Apologetic History* was an attempt to demonstrate that the Indian was a rational being; that he "is the equal, or in some things the superior, of the ancient Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Spaniards, etc.; therefore his human dignity and capacity for good should be respected" (Sanderlin 1971: 110). While bearing an uncanny, and subsequently dangerous, resemblance to early anthropological models of social evolution, it was a brave voice in the colonial wilderness, for Las Casas sought to demonstrate that the subjugation and exploitation of the Indian was not acceptable to the Christian dogma; and more importantly, he sought to demonstrate that the Indian was a human being, not an animal, who deserved the same rights as a Christian. However, this point of view was contradicted by action; the Spaniards had established a relationship between the Indians and the colonists. This relationship was that of slave and master; and to justify it legally, an institution was established, the *encomienda*.

2.3 *The Encomienda System*

One of the more blatant examples of the exploitation suffered at the hands of the colonizers was the *encomienda* system. By discussing this institution at this particular juncture, I do not mean to exclude other examples and incidents of exploitation that occurred. The purpose of its inclusion here is to offer one more historical example of exploitation, for if the Conquest sought to conquer the lands and the religious beliefs of the Maya, the *encomienda* system

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[13] It has been argued by many scholars of religion that Catholics commit their own form of 'cannibalism' and 'sacrifice.' In Africa, "Catholic priests do announce they drink blood daily and frequently tried to impress that idea on their converts" (White 1993b: 757); furthermore, among the Africans, "ran the dreadful suspicion that Europeans who would eat the flesh and drink the blood of their revered leader would feel no compunction about eating Africans if they thought it would benefit them" (Fox-Pitt 1952-53). I will address the association of colonial and postcolonial authority to supernatural beings in the rumours of the oppressed in Chapter 4.

sought to complete this conquest by further establishing the Spaniards as the dominant class by using a native workforce with the purpose of building the economy of the new colony.

The *encomienda* served to establish the Maya as a 'peasant class,' though there are many problems with this classification, as will become clear throughout this thesis. Wolf (1966: 10) has pointed out that the primary characteristic of peasants was the relationship to non-peasants, in that they were rural cultivators who worked for economic superiors.[14] As Smith (1990a: 24) states, this model has advanced theoretical discussion; and this relational definition "has become the accepted definition for peasants in North American scholarship." On the other hand, she states that Guatemalan scholars differ in this analysis: for one, they define class on a national basis rather than a localized basis, and:

> Indians are considered the most exploited group within this formation, their exploitation explained in terms of dependency theory: surplus value which is transferred from Indians through non-Indians (ladinos) to international capitalists through unequal exchange and mechanisms of monopoly control (Smith 1990a: 24-25).

The *encomienda* was the grant of rights to tribute and labour from specified Indian communities to individual Spaniards or the Royal Treasury by the Crown. According to Smith (1990a: 14), the state organized *encomiendas* around territorial units that were already present, an asset to the Indians in maintaining their identity. From the outset, the *encomienda* "had nothing to do with land or landholding - it was designed to function as a fiscal not a territorial element of empire" (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 50, fn. 4). However, in actual practice, people lived, worked, and raised their families in these designations and moved back and forth from highland *encomiendas* to lowland *encomiendas* to meet Spanish demands; therefore, "*encomiendas* became real places, not just pensions or rewards scribbled on pieces

[14] See Lutz and Lovell (1990: 47-48) for a discussion on applying Wolf's model of the closed corporate community in their dichotomy of *periphery* and *core* in Guatemala.

of parchment" (ibid). The Indian communities would provide tribute and/or labour for the *encomendero*; and in return, were provided with religious instruction.[15]

At the time of the military conquest, Cortés proclaimed "that all the Indian men and women whom he had captured in our expeditions must within two days be brought for branding to a place specified for the purpose" (Díaz del Castillo 1963: 352). The purpose of branding was for subsequent auctions. The captured Indians were to become slaves, intended to be used on the plantations and estates that were later to be awarded to soldiers for bravery in battle; but this plan was superseded by imposition of the *encomienda* system. The original idea of imposed slavery on the Indians can be traced back to Columbus:

> In order to remain consistent, Columbus establishes subtle distinctions between innocent, potentially Christian Indians and idolatrous Indians, practising cannibalism; and between pacific Indians (submitting to his power) and bellicose Indians who thereby deserve to be punished: but the important thing is that those who are not already Christians can only be slaves: there is no middle path (Todorov 1984: 46-47).

Forced native labour in Central America was, according to Sherman (1979: ix), the "base upon which Spanish colonial society rested, and without it the empire would have been but a pale imitation of the vast and rich complex it became." Furthermore, the first colonists from Spain did not come to the New World to "plow the land." This view was especially true if they had been peasants in Spain, as many had been. The New World was a frontier, filled with potential wealth, into which the lower classes of Europe came to fulfill a dream of acquisition. The fact that they refused to engage in arduous manual labour was inconsequential; for not only did the New World possess potential wealth, it also possessed an abundance of conquered natives who would do the work for them, albeit unwillingly. According to Sherman (ibid: 4), the wealth in Central America lay in "the extreme of nature...silver in the mountains so difficult to access, and cacao in the wilting humidity of the lowlands".

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[15] *Encomiendas*, at this time, were also known as *repartimientos* (allocations, sharings), though later they became two different institutions (Hanke 1949: 19).

As demonstrated above, there was much activism in Europe, mostly on the part of the Dominicans, protesting forced native labour. Poor communication and equally poor administration played a large part in the propagation of slavery, as Queen Isabella was reportedly bothered by the fact that her 'vassals' were enslaved by the conquistadors in the Antilles; yet nothing could be done about it. King Ferdinand, her successor, was apparently unaffected that the Indians were treated thus (Sherman 1979: 20). Furthermore, the men in power in the colonies ultimately controlled the existence of slavery. An example of this control lies with Pedro de Alvarado, "master of Guatemala from 1524-1541," who allowed the use of Indians for labour, much to the happiness of his comrades (ibid: 9). Slavery, in the sense of one individual becoming the personal property of another individual, had already existed among various Indian groups prior to the Spanish occupation, with enslaved individuals captured in battle or criminals within the society; and according to Sherman (ibid: 19), this practice "served to reinforce the justification for its continuance under Spanish rule". As well, pre-Conquest native states required labour drafts from each community for projects, such as the construction of temples.

Most of the forced native labour, up to the mid 16th century, was considered 'legal slavery,' or 'personal service', as specific communities under the *encomienda* system "were obligated to contribute labour without compensation, along with the payment of tributes" (Sherman 1979: 85). Exploited for all types of labour, the Indian was not solely answerable to the *encomendero;* but, once working on a Spanish project, an overseer as well. As mentioned, slavery and labour drafts existed before Spanish occupation; and one of the variants of labour drafts carried through into the colonial system was its organization by the *calpixque*: the local native designated to be the tribute collector (ibid: 85-86).

Not only did the *encomienda* system provide incredibly cheap labour, but it served to keep the "conquered peoples busy" (Sherman 1979: 87). Non-idle Indians did not create revolts; did not rebel; and more importantly, did not lapse into lives of 'sloth and vice' (ibid). Overall, a busy Indian was a good Christian. This policy of paternalism, subscribed by the Church, allowed many abuses to occur. Yet if it were restricted to the *encomendero*, it could

be positive; as he could be a powerful advocate in offering counsel and/or speaking with the governor if Indians approached him with a problem (Farriss 1984: 88).

The passing of the New Laws in 1542, abolishing the private *encomienda* system (it was replaced by a system in which a Crown official, the *corregidor*, collected the tribute and labour drafts from each Indian community), was met with both a feeling of triumph on the part of those who were disgusted with the treatment of the Indians, and feelings of anger by those whose wealth lay in the labour of the Indians. As mentioned above, the New Laws "led to a near revolt in Mexico, a serious rebellion in Peru in which the Viceroy was killed, and provoked grave unrest throughout the empire" (Hanke 1949: 83). As Hanke (ibid) states, a crucial question is, why did Charles V allow the passing of the New Laws?

Once again, the erudition of Las Casas plays a fundamental role in this question. Las Casas demonstrated that "the existence of the *encomienda* made invalid the just title of the king of Spain to the Indies, and stigmatized him as a tyrant instead of a true lord" (Hanke 1949: 83). The New Laws were ideal; so in favour of the Indians "that Las Casas himself might well have drafted them"(ibid: 91). Those individuals who held Indians without proper authority had to let them free; those who mistreated "their Indians" lost them immediately; and more importantly, Indians were taken away from royal officials, with no future grants forthcoming. Furthermore, new discoveries of land had to follow a code of rigid rules, one of which outlawed the taking of captured Indians. In short, the Indian was not a slave, but a vassal of the Crown of Castile and should be treated as such (ibid: 91-92).

As one could imagine, this change caused a tremendous uproar among the conquistadores in New Spain, those who depended on the ready supply of tributes and services. As stated earlier, many of the colonizers had come to America to secure fortune that was not available in Spain, a fortune that depended upon the Indian.

> It was particularly galling to the colonial Spaniards who, as *encomenderos*, had developed secure and honored positions in the New World, that the Spaniards at home should have contrived these laws which, if enforced, would reduce the position and security of the very men who, in their own opinion, had contributed most to Spain's glory in the New World (Hanke 1949: 92).

Did Las Casas' dream of the free and unimpoverished Indian remain true? No, the New Laws were met with extreme opposition; supporters of the *encomienda* argued that revolts would ensue, "for the Indians no longer feared horses" (Hanke 1949: 98). Royal officials, conquistadores, and ecclesiastical dignitaries alike pushed for the revocation of the New Laws; land holders stated that they could not exist without Indians, and therefore would have to return home. Furthermore, a similar situation was being contested in Spain, for there existed a struggle between the feudalists and the regalists, the former favouring the *encomienda* because it organized and maintained society as in the Old World. At last, barely three years after passing the New Laws, Charles V revoked Law 35, the prohibition of granting of *encomiendas*. Las Casas wrote a scathing letter to the Crown from Mexico "in which he recommended that those who urged the revocation of the laws be drawn and quartered" (ibid: 102).

The beginning of the phasing out of private *encomiendas* came within a few decades of the Conquest; yet in the nineteenth century the system of debt-peonage replaced it (Farriss 1984: 358). I will focus on this system briefly to demonstrate that the economic exploitation of the Maya was hardly concluded; while the colonial *encomienda* was a legal institution that overtly exploited the Maya, the debt-peonage of the Republican era was one that subtlely exploited the Maya. Bunzel (1952: 10-12) vividly described this social problem as it was sixty years ago. Plantations employed an *obligadore*, a seemingly kind-hearted man and always willing to listen to the problems of the Indians over a few drinks. He willingly loaned money to one who needed to hold a fiesta, build a house, tend a sick child, and so on. In return, the one who borrowed the money promised to work on the plantation from mid-October to mid-January, depending on the locale of the plantation. Once there, the worker was encouraged to drink, for "it is his one diversion and necessary to his physical and mental health" (ibid: 11). Furthermore, credit was easily given in the local store to the worker; and, once again, he was encouraged to buy anything he needed. In 1930, at the time of Bunzel's study, the daily wage was 10 pesos, yet "so effectual are the familiar devices of colonial exploitation, alcoholism, easy credit, debt indenture, and liability for debts to the third generation, that once caught in the system, escape is difficult" (ibid).

Illness plays a crucial role in this trap, as many of the plantations are on the coast where malaria is prevalent; and those born and raised in the cooler highlands had difficulty adapting. Sources of labour, it would seem, have always been readily available in the highlands. During the epidemics in the 1550s, which had wiped out many of the coastal peoples, the importation of highland Indians kept the colonies from collapsing (MacLeod 1973:204).[16] Ironically, even though it would seem that the greatest exploitation existed in the highlands, throughout the longest time, it was only in the 1980s that we see the first serious armed uprisings in this area (Smith 1990a: 11). This, and related events from the nineteenth century, will be the focus of the next chapter.

2.4 *Concluding Remarks*

This chapter sought to demonstrate the roots of exploitation of the Maya in Guatemala, from the Conquest of Guatemala through the early colonial period. Such a demonstration serves to provide historically a description of the earliest relations between the non-Indian elite and the oppressed Maya. I have illustrated the cruelties imposed on the indigenous population: slavery, outright and then the *encomienda*.[17] Granted, slavery existed prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, but it was only a small selection of the population: the criminals and captives from battle. Even after enforced slavery was made illegal, the Spaniards enforced a large scale institution of forced labour, involving nobles and commoners alike. Further attesting to the physical abuse and death inflicted by the Spaniards, Friar Motolinía stated that "that service in the mines of Oaxyecac was so destructive that for half a league around it Spaniards could not walk except on the dead men or bones, and that so many birds came to scavenge that they darkened the sky" (Hanke 1949: 89). By way of summary, I have mentioned the use of "fat Indians," to heal the wounds of horses and Spaniards injured in the New World.

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[16] An unsuitable temperament to a different environment went both ways, as MacLeod describes coastal Maya working in the highlands: "Attempts to make them live in villages often failed, either because they ran off at the first opportunity or because they died of the cultural or microbial shock of meeting the Western world for the first time" (1973: 299).

[17] One may note that I have neglected a detailed analysis of the effects of disease, smallpox in particular, which drastically reduced the indigenous population. The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate the effects of exploitation through forced labor, physical abuse, and tribute.

While these actions were stated by a chronicler of the Conquest, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, it should be taken as relatively factual. Yet there were other incidents attributed to the Spaniards; for example, in 1522, a wood cut appeared in German depicting three men in the Yucatán chopping up babies. Another grisly example is that the "cosmography of Sebastian Münster has an American scene depicting a man and a woman dismembering a human being on a table" (ibid: 90).

Thus a 'culture of terror' was begun when Alvarado first began his historical push south through the highlands of Guatemala. The later part of the twentieth century saw the realization of this 'culture of terror,' throughout the highland villages in Guatemala. In the next chapter, I will review developments of the later colonial period and the Republican era which led up to these events.

Chapter 3

The Late Colonial Era and the Republican Period

The previous chapter outlined the history of Guatemala from the Conquest to the early colonial period. I described the exploitation suffered at the hands of the Conquistadores and the *encomenderos;* and concluded the chapter with the statement that while the seeds of a 'culture of terror' were planted in this tumultuous period, it truly took root and was fully realized in the late twentieth century, when the actions of both extreme right wing and left wing groups were responsible for a reign of terror throughout the country. This chapter will explore the final half of the colonial period, and the later developments that eventually precipitated the civil war. This presentation will conclude the historical analysis of Guatemala of the events leading to the crisis.

It is important at this juncture to stress the fact that while the Crown, with the persistent urging of the Dominicans playing a tremendous role, promoted the peaceful pacification of the Indian and attempted to outlaw forced labour, those who truly held power in the colonies did the opposite. The colonies in New Spain held vast wealth: and, to those who came, an Indian labour force was the most attractive and viable means of acquiring this wealth. Spain was across the sea, and its legal hold in the colonies was truly very weak.

The Spaniards "preferred, as much as possible, to settle and live in parts that resembled, more than were dissimilar to, their places of origin" (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 36). This preference had much to do with the wealth that lay within these areas, and formed what the authors define as the 'periphery' and 'core' of colonial Guatemala. This definition, they state, accommodates MacLeod's dichotomy of 'highland' and 'lowland' (ibid).

> Thus defined, the core includes the colonial capital and its surrounding jurisdiction (the Corregimiento del Valle, largely coterminous with the present-day Departments of Sacatepéquez, Chimaltenango, and Guatemala) as well as the eastern highlands (present-day Jalapa and Chiquimula), the eastern lowlands (El Progreso and Zacapa), and the southern lowlands all along the Pacific coast from Soconusco (in present-day Mexico) to Sonsonate (in present-day El Salvador). The periphery incorporates a

> vast expanse that stretches from the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes (in present-day Huehuetenango and El Quiché) past the Sierra de Chamá (in present-day Alta Verapaz) to the Sierra de Santa Cruz (in present-day Izabal) as well as the northern lowlands drained by the Río Ixcán, the Río Xaclbal, the Río Chixoy, and the upper tributaries of the Río de la Pasión (ibid: 36-37).

This definition attempts to explain why the Spaniards primarily stayed in the 'core' from the outset; for here wheat could be grown and cattle raised, "white bread and red meat, to the conqueror, were infinitely more palatable than Indian corn and the strange fowl we know today as turkeys" (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 37). From here, they spread east and south where tobacco, indigo, cacao, and sugercane could be cultivated. After the eruption of Agua volcano in 1541 and the subsequent destruction of the old capital (present day Cuidad Vieja), the capital was moved and became known as Santiago de Guatemala. The distance was not great, and therefore landholding patterns stayed relatively the same (ibid: 38).

As the Spanish population grew, it expanded into other areas of the 'core'; namely, around Comalapa, Chimaltenango, and Amatitlán. Sugar and wheat farms grew with rapidity, and encroached on Indian lands; but, "with the native population in precipitous decline throughout the sixteenth century, a decreasing amount of land was necessary to support dwindling Amerindian numbers" (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 38-39). Yet, as the authors demonstrate, these holdings did not necessarily mean a complete Spanish settlement; rather, the landowners stayed in the capital and hired other Spaniards and *castas* ("lineages, breeds")[1] to run the estates. This settlement pattern promoted an elite group living in the city, with a working class living in the rural areas.

As the Indian population stabilized and, subsequently, grew larger, there was increased pressure on landholdings, specifically Indian landholdings. "The end result, especially in some communities close to Santiago, was Indian landlessness and loss of Indian identity, or ladinoization" (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 39). Comparatively, the communities in the lowlands were faced with more Indian depopulation; and, consequently, more vacant

[1] In this context, a *casta* was of mixed Maya, European, and African descent (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 39)..

land. However, "the use of it...tended to be more extensive than intensive" (ibid). Cattle, for example, tended to revert to a feral state.

Indian land in the periphery was not faced with relentless Spanish acquisition for a number of reasons: lack of exploitative resources; the nearby presence of hostile and unconquered tribes, such as the Chol Manché and Lacondón; and primarily, the almost constant habitation and working of the area by indigenous communities (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 41). The two main Spanish activities that were important in the periphery were mining and ranching (ibid: 44). Nevertheless, land in the periphery was not exploited to the degree it is was in the core, but these communities were considered scattered; and this dispersion made the task of Christian conversion exceedingly difficult. Therefore, forced native resettlement, *congregación*, was implemented by Dominican, Franciscan, and Mercedarian friars (ibid: 41). However, this program was not entirely successful.

> For various reasons - to flee from an outbreak of disease, to escape the demands of officialdom, or to cultivate ancestral land - Indians resisted the nucleation imposed on them by steady repopulation of distant places they or their predecessors were moved from. Again, the hand of the conqueror left its mark, but not always in the manner envisioned by imperial design (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 42).

While certain factors caused individuals to leave for previous locales, other factors, such debt-peonage and other forms of coercion, forced individuals to leave their communities to work on Spanish estates (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 44). According to MacLeod (1983: 193-194), this movement "promoted further ladinoization among an already diminished indigenous population." Overall, Indians living in the periphery dealt with the Spanish indirectly, mostly as participants in a tribute economy. "Indian tribute in Guatemala always amounted to a significant portion of total Crown revenue" (Lutz and Lovell 1990: 45). During the first half of the 18th century, tribute represented more than 80% of revenues collected by the Audiencia de Guatemala (Wortman 1982: 145).

The Spanish Bourbon Reforms were a response to the industrial revolution in northern Europe, and were similar in respect to Bourbon France in that "it included...appointment of intendants in the colonies with broad powers over financial and

military affairs" (Woodward 1990: 52-53). A primary characteristic of the Bourbon Reforms was an attempt to expand the export of commodities from New Spain into the European market; cacao, then later indigo. Between 1580 and 1620, there were indications that indigo was to be the key export (MacLeod 1973: 176). However, the production of indigo required high labour, within a short period of time (one to two months), and a high land demand, which in turn put increased pressure on Indian communities (Woodward 1990: 54; MacLeod 1973: 181). By the end of the eighteenth century, the indigo supply had stagnated. The reasons for its demise were natural phenomena (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, locusts, and poor or too much rain), piracy on the coast, high tax, and the inability of Spain to send equipment and supplies to the *obrajes* (indigo dye houses) (ibid: 193-203). The demise of the indigo supply was a reflection of the dire straits that were being faced in Spain at this time.

Before the Bourbon Reforms, intercolonial trade was discouraged to maintain the economic monopolies of Seville, Lima, and Mexico. However, the Bourbons revised this policy, producing an increased movement of merchants, clergy, and intellectuals between the colonies, with Guatemala City as the hub of this activity. Furthermore, this change was accompanied by a higher rate of immigration from northern Spain, and marriages into established families (Woodward 1990: 55).

"There is nothing more common than to hear Spain compared to a sieve, which, whatever it receives is never the fuller" (Campbell 1747: 291). This statement represented the European consensus of Spain and her involvement in New Spain; "the Spanish commercial policy in the colonies was a dismal failure from the point of view of Spain's general interests" (Keen 1991: 99). According to Campbell (loc.cit), a series of wars with Flanders, Germany, Italy, and Ireland left Spain with a phenomenal debt that wealth from the West Indies attempted to remove. Furthermore, the individuals who were reduced by the expense of serving in the army sought to seek new fortunes in the colonies.

Most importantly, the Bourbon Reforms were responsible for the introduction of the Liberal parties in Guatemala. "Among the elites, the emerging capitalist structure was at the root of the of the Liberal parties that would dominate much of the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries in Central America" (Woodward 1990: 55). Opposing the Liberals, and clinging to more traditional, non-feudal ideas, were the Conservative parties. One of the first issues that divided these parties dealt with the annexation to Mexico; the primary families that would later become active Conservatives endorsed annexation, while the Liberals opposed it (Woodward 1993: 23). These factions would be at odds with each other until a Liberal triumph after 1860.

> The growing demand for land and labour to produce the exports crops strained the relationship among the Creoles, ladinos, and Indians, inevitably creating doubts over the wisdom of the capitalist policies and contributing to tensions among the lower classes (Woodward 1990: 55).

This tension was further increased with the removal of the tribute system under the Cadíz constitution of 1812; while the Indians were protected from the tribute system, they were not exempt from paying the same taxes as everybody else. By the time of independence, this exemption was a "factor in the rising Indian restlessness" (Woodward 1990: 56). This 'restlessness', in turn, was a factor in the increasing fear of an Indian revolt.

Synonymous with this fear of an Indian uprising was the fear of the indigenous man taking on the rights over the ladina through the process of *mestizaje* ("genetic mixing"). This practice, as demonstrated by Díaz del Castillo (1963), was established by the conquistadores: it was not only land that was awarded to the soldiers, but indigenous women as well, normally the daughters of nobles. At this juncture, I would offer the suggestion that this practice was not fuelled solely by wanton desire; rather it served to establish the Spaniards as legitimate members of the families from whom they took the daughters. "For you are so good and brave that we wish to be your brothers" (Díaz del Castillo 1963: 175), says Xicotenga the Elder, as he gives his young daughter to Cortés. When this practice began, as compared to the topic at hand, it was beneficial for both parties. To the Indian, it offered some sense of protection; and for the Spaniard, it provided a legitimate wife and a kinship tie to the oppressed, an oppressed who at this time of the Conquest was thought to be wealthy. This ideology is further reflected in the importance of *compadrazgo*, godparent relationships, in which an Indian typically asks a ladino to be the godparent of his child. As

Stoll (1993: 38) demonstrates, the other side of this relationship is the presentation of Indian women to ladino *patrónes* (patrons), the legacy of which were dozens of children; and in the context of Ixil country, "there were enough of them to visibly affect the gene pool".[2] In contrast, as Nelson (1997: 337) states, the fear of the Indian man taking his rights over the ladina is the "all-too-common white male terror".[3]

The Cádiz constitution became the model for the remainder of the constitutions that would be adopted after independence, specifically its pro-Liberal stand (Woodward 1990: 56). This was evident in the constitution of 1824 that "blended elements of the Spanish Constitution of 1812 with the United States Constitution of 1789, but it was widely recognized as a pro-Liberal constitution" (ibid: 59).

While recognizing the legal equality of all citizens, outlawing slavery, and preserving Roman Catholicism as the state religion, the Cádiz constitution gave the Indian no special protective status (Woodward 1990: 59). However, the radical Liberal reforms under Gálvez, governor from 1831-1837, attempted to modernize Guatemala.

> The Liberal reforms theoretically favored Indians by granting them equality before the law and access to more land and opportunity. In practice, however, most Indians had neither the resources nor education to take advantage of the opportunity. Liberalism simply exposed them to greater exploitation. At the heart of the liberal state was a desire for economic growth through the expansion of agroexports. Thus, the process begun under the Bourbon Reforms was again pushed forward and contributed to growing resistance from the indigenous peoples, especially in El Salvador and Guatemala (Woodward 1990: 60).

Gálvez was also responsible for removing much of the power of the Roman Catholic church through the cessation of religious holidays, the confiscation of church property, and

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[2] An acquaintance of Taussig in Colombia was convinced that the Indian serfs who worked on his land were ensorcelling him. This man was also their godfather (Taussig 1980: 256).

[3] It would seem that this fear is still present. I recall a particularly memorable discussion with a close friend in Quezaltenango over a cup of coffee. She told me that while it was completely acceptable for a ladino to marry an Indian woman, it was not acceptable for an Indian man to marry a ladina.

removing education from the supervision of the church (Woodward 1990: 60). Other acts that marked Liberal power was the abolishment of all titles of distinction and royalty, including that of *Don*. After the French Revolution model, this title was replaced by *Citizen* (Woodward 1993: 27). Clerical titles were also affected; *Padre* became the sole title allowed (ibid: 27-28). Furthermore, the native weaving industry was affected by Liberal trade policy, providing the strongest and loudest voice of opposition to come from the middle and lower classes (ibid: 49). In summary, the reforms that produced the most unrest among the middle and lower strata were: the establishment of a head tax; forced labour to build the roads and ports to accommodate increased export; a new land policy that allowed private acquisition of public land; land grants to foreigners; and the removal of the clergy from the economy, education, and politics (ibid: 49-53). The collapse of the Gálvez government in 1838, mostly a result of rural uprisings and popular reaction against Liberal radicalism, allowed Guatemala to be governed by the Conservatives. The reforms under Gálvez had caused much unrest among the poorer sector of Guatemala, the Indians in particular; and the result was uprisings around the countryside. However, as Woodward states (ibid: 62), organized Indian revolts were rare, primarily because of village feuds over land and water. Since the independence of 1821, Guatemala had been Liberal, creating a detrimental atmosphere for both Indians and poor ladinos. From 1823-1840, Honduran General Francisco Morazán was the president of the United Provinces of Central America; but was removed by Rafael Carrera (Woodward 1993: xiii). The Conservative party attempted to restore and revive what the Spanish colonial system offered; stability. For almost three decades, this party controlled the state, under the rulership of Carrera.

3.1 *The Early Republic of Guatemala*

Under Carrera, one of the more important changes made was the restoration of the Roman Catholic Church. This was "the first priority in the effort to return to the security and tranquility of the Hispanic era" (Woodward 1990: 63). Accompanying this 'revival' of the Spanish colonial system was a return to the traditional attitude towards the Indian. In 1839, the Constituent Assembly, recognizing that Indians were a majority of the state's population and that it was in the public interest not only "to protect this numerous class of the society,

but also to develop and improve its customs and civilization," decreed a code for dealing with this class" (ibid: 67). This 'new' attitude protected the Indian in land claims as well. More importantly, it reversed the Liberal aim of assimilating the Indian into western civilization; it recognized that Indians were different from the ladino and should be treated as such, and that while "enlightenment of the Indians by Western standards might be a desirable goal, it would take a long time" (ibid).

However, the rising importance of coffee in the international market in the 1850s established the *finquero* (plantation owner) as the dominant class; and as was demonstrated during the indigo boom, produced a rising demand for both Indian land and labour (Woodward 1990: 68). However, as Woodward (1990: 68, 1993) demonstrates, the Conservatives encouraged coffee production in Indian communities, as compared to the individual plantations that the Liberals favored.

As I discuss below, the primary centre of conflict in Guatemala, both historically and in the present, is land; it is a source of wealth for the elite, while at the same time, a source of subsistence for the Indian. This conflict becomes increasingly clear when we examine the "coffee-fueled neo-Liberal Reforma" that occurred after the 1871 Liberal Revolution (McCreery 1990: 96). A series of poor cochineal harvests in Guatemala during the 1850s in combination with the economic success of coffee in Costa Rica ushered in a new era for Guatemala; "the result was the most fundamental change in the nation's economic, social, and political structures since the conquest" (ibid: 104). This new era was the rise of importance of coffee. By 1871 coffee made up half of the country's exports; but the ladino planters were sure that coffee had yet to reach its full potential (ibid: 105; Smith 1990c: 83). The planters felt that this retardation was a result of the Conservative government's unwillingness to allow them to maximize their land acquisitions; there was still much promising land that was owned by Mayan communities (McCreery 1990: 105). And while Conservative leaders Carrera (1839-1865) and Cerna (1865-1871) promoted coffee, they "failed to carry forward such schemes as single-mindedly as the planters wished" (ibid: 105).

The Liberal Revolution of 1871 placed General Justo Rufina Barrios, himself a coffee planter from the San Marcos/Mexico border, into power. Barrios "was not a philosopher but a major landowner, member of the Creole elite, and man of action" (Smith 1990c: 83). Within a decade, Guatemala became a major coffee producer. However, in some locales the Liberal Reforma maintained community lands because indigenous villages produced most of the country's food; and, more importantly, also produced the seasonal labour for coffee estates (McCreery 1990: 106-107).

In Momostenango, for example, the Indians were "hit hard with labour obligations on the coffee plantations, always backed with force, though increasingly debt peonage was used to fulfill the obligations" (Carmack 1990: 120). This situation resulted in a rebellion that allied Momostecan guerrillas with a conservative rebel force, but they were defeated by the Liberal military (ibid: 120-121). According to Carmack (ibid: 121), the eventual peace that settled in Momostenango was not solely due to the quick defeat of the rebel forces; but in addition, the Liberals, under Barrios, began to make concessions to the Indians. Reminiscent of the earlier Conservative ways, Barrios "hinted that 'these poor naturals' should be treated with more understanding" (Carmack 1983: 243).

However, as Carmack (1990: 124-128) poignantly demonstrates, the rule of Barrios had other effects, mostly negative, in other areas of Guatemala. For example, in Santiago Atitlán the Indians were forced to register their lands; and, as a consequence, lost some of the most productive land to ladinos and fell into debt peonage to plantations. Furthermore, in Santa Cruz del Quiché the reforms fractionated the community, dividing traditional Indians from those who joined the militia service. In conclusion, Carmack (ibid: 133) adds, the rule of Barrios ushered in the beginnings of "capitalist development and [a] transition to modern society". At the same time, however, Barrios and his Liberal reforms weakened Indian communities; but did not destroy them.

> As we saw in the Momostenango case, significant portions of community lands were lost, but not enough to separate completely the majority of Indians from their means of subsistence...In most Indian communities of Guatemala, only a minority was significantly proletarianized, while the majority remained tied to the land and maintained community cohesion (Carmack 1990: 133).

Banana and coffee plantations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century pushed the Indians out of their communities and forced them to participate in the national economy (Carmack 1983: 220). Furthermore, the increase of Guatemalan exports attracted a large number of Europeans, mostly German, who brought with them "skills, small amounts of capital, and their highly valued culture" (Smith 1990c: 83). The wealth that the coffee planters accumulated was used to build opera houses, parks, and schools, "transforming Guatemala City into a pseudo-European capital" (ibid). However, for the remaining majority of Guatemala, these accomplishments meant a number of features: forced labour, debt peonage, rising foreign debt, and declining food production for local consumption (Burns 1980: 106). According to Smith (1990c: 85), the coffee era was notable because it was the emergence of agrarian capitalism, which served to differentiate further Indians and non-Indians in the coffee zones of Guatemala.

In the twentieth century, debt peonage was still a presence in Indian labour practices; by the 1930s, there was a lack of available Indian labour for expanding coffee plantations, producing the passing of a vagrancy law specific to Indians. Labour cards had to be carried by Indians at all times in order to verify their 'non-vagrant' status (Carmack 1983: 226-227). The actions of the Liberal leader, Jorge Ubico, before the 1944 revolution further marked the relations between the Indian and the ladino. In 1927, a law was passed stating that all mayors (*alcaldes primeros*) and deputy mayors (*síndicos primeros*) had to be ladino; in 1933, obligatory labour for two weeks was established; and, as mentioned above, a vagrancy law was established in 1934 (ibid: 234-235). These laws served to exploit further Indian land and labour for the continued wealth and prosperity of the ladino.

According to Carmack (ibid: 244), the exploitation of the Liberal years "was perhaps greater than any since the Conquest. The ladinos ruled by an elaborate mix of terror and paternalism." This 'elaborate mix' needs further elaboration; while Indians could be shot or jailed for failing to work for ladinos, paternalistic acts were beneficial to both parties. For example, traditional social groups were respected; "the Vico caciques were allowed to form an equestrian military squadron" (ibid). According to the author (ibid), military organization

was the most important institution for binding Indians to ladino in the patron-client relationship.

Jorge Ubico, while a good administrator who was able to eliminate graft from government activities, "followed in the tradition of antecedent Guatemalan dictators by tyrannizing the political opposition and subjecting everyone to various personal whims" (Adams 1990: 142). He nationalized control of the Indian labour force, but at the same time guaranteed its presence for the cultivation of coffee (ibid). Upon his resignation in 1944, one of his generals, Federico Ponce Valdes, took power; but was ousted in October of 1944. However, he suggested to the Indians that if they wanted their lands, perhaps they should take action (ibid: 142-143). Previously, in an effort to acquire votes, Ponce Valdes had promised that he would divide among the Indians the coffee lands that the government had taken during the Second World War. However, what followed were a series of Indian revolts (Adams 1990; Handy 1989).

The policies between the years of 1944 and 1954, known as the Revolution, but "more appropriately termed the reform period, especially the reform law from 1952 to 1954, have often been depicted as an attempt to confront the economic and political power of large landowners" (Handy 1990: 163). Most notable was the passing of the Agrarian Reform Law by Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in 1952. Primarily, the law was designed to expropriate unused or underused land from large estates and to give it to rural workers; however, such expropriations had to result from local initiative (ibid: 168-169). It was successful because rural workers confronted landowners, producing a violent reaction (ibid: 169-170).

> After its first national congress in 1951 attracted only 275 delegates, the campesino league claimed to represent 215,000 members in 1,600 local affiliates by October 1952. In 1954, the communist newspaper claimed there were 2,500 locals. While some of these claims have been disputed, it is clear that by 1954 there was a functioning campesino union in every major village and in many smaller aldeas in Guatemala. It was the largest organization in the country (Handy 1990: 170).

What resulted was a competition between the campesinos league and the worker's federation; ensuring "for the first time in national history the rural poor had a number of powerful institutions prepared to champion their cause" (Handy 1990: 170; Handy 1985).

Concluding Remarks

After 1944, there was a series of remarkable changes; the unions were organized, the Maya were given the right to vote; and more importantly, land was distributed to the poor. However, these changes infringed upon economic interests, particularly foreign interests. With the aid of the Central Intelligence Agency, Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas invaded from Honduras and overthrew Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, Guatemala's democratically elected president (Carmack 1988: ix; Davis 1988: 14; Falla 1994: 5). Before undertaking an analysis of the most recent crisis, I will briefly outline the events that occurred after 1954.

The U.S. owned United Fruit Company (UFCo) owned large portions of Guatemalan land and dominated both the transportation and communications infrastructure, and was nicknamed "*El Pulpo*" ("The Octopus") for its stranglehold on the Guatemalan economy (McClintock 1985: 25). The Agrarian Reform Law, passed by Arbenz Guzman, threatened the United Fruit Company; for while coffee remained Guatemala's largest export, banana production was its second largest export. The Agrarian Reform Law threatened United States' economic interests:

> It is no longer possible to challenge attribution of the major role to armed forces of the United States - directed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) - Dwight D. Eisenhower's proud boasts, in his 1963 memoirs, of having ordered the successful operation contradicted earlier, pious denials by US officials. In a speech to the American Booksellers Association, Eisenhower even explained his decision to authorize the CIA to supplement its B-26 bombers and P-47 fighters (which began bombing and strafing Guatemala City on June 18) with US Air Force planes flying out of Nicaragua, until Arbenz resigned on 27 June. All recent accounts are in agreement that it was the army's refusal to defend the Arbenz government - and its withdrawal to barracks - and United States air power that forced Arbenz to resign, and the contingent led by Colonel Castillo Armas (McClintock 1985: 28).

The official motive of the United States for its intervention was that Arbenz was a Communist (ibid: 28-29).

These are the events that led up to the recent crisis in Guatemala. One aspect that is clearly presented is the conflict over land; the source of wealth for the ladino elite, but at the same time, the source of subsistence for the Indian. In the following chapter, I will describe the events that occurred up to 1975 and through the 1980s.

Chapter 4

"La Violencia"

The head of the National Police was named Chupina. One joke going around was, Did you hear Chupina had a twin brother in the womb? - Yes, stillborn, showing signs of torture and a *tira de gracia*, a coup de grace, in the head.
And in another Chupina and General Lucas are fishing, and Lucas catches a tiny fish and he's about to toss it back but Chupina says, Wait, give it to me, and he takes the fish in one hand and starts pummeling its head with the other, saying, OK, talk, where are the big ones?
- Goldman, *The Long Night of White Chickens* (1992: 19).

Guatemala has been described as one of the most anthropologically studied countries in the world; and, one could argue, since the cessation of the civil war, its 'most-studied' status has not changed.[1] Since the conclusion of the war, mirroring earlier research, a wealth of information has emerged; ethnographies, news reports, and travel guides. Much has changed since the earliest ethnographies documented village life, the religious processions, agricultural practices, and the famous markets. Yet much has remained constant. When one compares the early twentieth century literature to that of the present, one discerns that one factor has remained the same; the unequal relationship of the indigenous peoples to the dominant group, the ladino. In the late twentieth century, when indigenous peoples and poor ladinos attempted economic equality in the form of agrarian reforms, the former were brutally suppressed.

When word of what had occurred in Guatemala throughout the 1980s finally reached the rest of the world, the public cry of outrage was clearly audible, providing the impetus for the United Nations to act. However, the Guatemalan crisis also provided confirmation for a deep suspicion that many had harbored; the role of the United States government in covert military actions in an effort to eradicate the threat of communism. Throughout the rest of the world, and indeed among the major urban centre populations in Guatemala, there existed an

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[1] As Farriss states: "Modern scholars, like the sixteenth-century colonists, have found the Maya Indians to be Yucatan's chief exploitable resource" (1983: 2).

obliviousness to what was occurring in the highlands and its northern lowland peripheries. The massacres, the disappearances, the political tortures, and the voices of those afflicted were politically mute. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the setting for what is occurring in the present: the actions of lynch mobs, and rumours of child theft.

Before I proceed with this discussion, it would be worthwhile to note that while the peace treaties may be signed between the guerilla forces and the army, forensic anthropologists are presently excavating graves of the disappeared, and Mayan nationalist movements are speaking out, there is still exists the fear of reprisal. As mentioned in the first chapter, the violent death of Monseñor Juan Gerardi Conedera demonstrates that certain individuals are fearful of being named and prosecuted. This fear pervades the United States Congress as well. After Congressman Torrecelli revealed CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) secrets about its involvement in Guatemala, many Congress members were angry about the disclosure. According to Earle (1995: 792), a military officer who oversaw the death of an American and the husband of an American was in fact a CIA "asset"; and furthermore, this information was kept from the President of the United States. Earle compares the Torrecelli disclosure to the subject of his book review; *Massacres in the Jungle; Ixcan, Guatemala 1975-1982*, a book by the Jesuit scholar Ricardo Falla, in an attempt to demonstrate the rising awareness, and subsequently, the possible protection through international awareness in regards to the Guatemalan crisis. Falla is one of a handful of Guatemalan anthropologists who have spoken out against the human rights violations committed by the Guatemalan army. Another anthropologist, Myrna Mack, was murdered in 1991; seven years later, the prosecution of her suspected killers is still at hand (*Quién conocerá el caso Mack? Prensa Libre* July 2 1998). Victor Montejo (1987) is an anthropologist who wrote about state violence while he was a refugee living in the Guadalupe Victoria camp on the Mexico-Chiapas border (Warren 1998: 118). Montejo's writing is an example of the *testimonio* (testimony) genre; it is a powerful genre, and one that I will describe below. However, for the present, I will briefly discuss the history of Montejo, the refugee-turned-anthropologist.[2]

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[2] Below I pay closer attention to the actions that occurred in the town where Montejo was a schoolteacher; for the present, I am describing his personal history.

After hearing that his name appeared on a death list, Montejo fled to a refugee camp in Chiapas, Mexico; and collected similar narratives to his own. Once he reached the United States, he worked at Bucknell University; and earned a masters degree at the State University of New York at Albany (SUNY), and a doctorate at the University of Connecticut. Presently, he is associate professor of Native American Studies at the University of California at Davis (Warren 1998: 114). According to Warren (ibid: 115), Montejo's writings "ignore the ethnographic conventions of anthropology that call on authors, sooner or later, to establish professional authority through abstraction, generalization, depersonalized narrative voices, and the theoretical justification of worthy research." However, she makes clear that he is fluent in these works, as his other research demonstrates (ibid: 236, fn.5); and furthermore, as a writer of the 'refugee experience,' he has had a very different experience from other fleeing Guatemalan Mayans once he reached the United States.

As Earle states (1995: 792), annunciations lead to denunciations. In Falla's words (1994: 3): "It unleashes social forces that demand that the crimes be investigated and that the material and intellectual authors of the crimes and their counterinsurgency theories and practices be brought out into the open." Therefore, while public disclosure, national and international, is sought by many, especially the human rights activists, it can lead to negative results. The death of Monseñor Juan Gerardi Conedera is one such event, and one can hardly describe him as a low profile actor; after all, his report on human rights abuses had already been handed in. His execution was not designed to silence; rather, it acted as a warning to those who may follow in his brave footsteps.

> As I see it, in assassinating people and causing others to disappear and then denying and enshrouding the disappearance in a cloud of confusion, the state (or rather its armed and policing forces) does not aim at destroying memory. Far from it. What the state aims at is *the relocation and refunctioning of collective memory.* This point is of fundamental importance. The state's interest is in keeping alive memory of public political protest and memory of sadistic and cruel violence unleashed against it (Taussig 1992: 48).

The proclamation of truth is still dangerous. But as Taussig notes (1992), a point which I will address further in the present chapter, groups such as the 'Mothers of the

Disappeared' play upon the state's manipulation of the collective memory in a highly effective manner. Nevertheless, the crisis in Guatemala is still fresh in many memories; those of the victims and those who committed the crimes.

In the past decade a wealth of literature has been published describing, often in chilling details, what occurred in Guatemala. Entire villages, classified as 'Red' communities by the Guatemalan military, were completely massacred. 'Red' represented those communities that had fallen into enemy hands and all who lived within were considered the enemy, subversives; 'Green' communities were those that were 'clear' of enemy contact but were watched nevertheless; and 'Pink' or 'Yellow' communities were ambiguous and subject to subtle terror tactics by the military (Carmack 1988: xv-xvi).

What precipitated these massacres and the terror tactics employed by the military? As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the poorest sector in Guatemalan society, the majority Maya, has been subject to economic and physical exploitation since the Conquest. Since the independence of Guatemala, political parties have made attempts to recognize the 'special' status of the Maya population; most notably in the Liberal reforms under Carrera. Yet, as I have demonstrated, historically this attempt has not been entirely successful. In the past two decades, we have seen much of the same pattern. Guatemala was affected by a series of events that occurred throughout Central America, including the Cuban Revolution and the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua.

After the 1959 Cuban Revolution, guerrilla forces were formed in Guatemala after a failed uprising of army officers. The Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) was established in 1962, but effectively dismantled by 1966 by Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio (Falla 1994: 6). Throughout this period, several non-violent groups were established; for example, the rural cooperative movements. However, as Falla states (ibid), "these movements prepared the ground for future guerrilla movements."

Davis (1988: 14-16) describes two phenomena that essentially marked the beginning of the crisis in Guatemala: population growth coupled with unchanging land distribution; and the 'sociological awakening' of the Indian, evidenced by the formation of unions, political parties, and peasant leagues between 1945 and 1954 during a period of social reformism and

popular democracy. This mobilization was fuelled by the Catholic Action movement which was formed in 1945 (ibid: 16). Within the first phenomenon, we see traces of the colonial past: decreasing land among an increasing Mayan population. Between 1950 and 1970, farm families, predominantly Mayan, increased from 308,070 to 421,000 in comparison to the average size of land per family, which decreased from 20 acres to 14 acres (ibid: 14-15). In the western and central highlands, land unit per person dropped from 3.2 acres to 2 acres (ibid: 15). Furthermore, as the export value of coffee, cotton, sugar, and meat increased, so did the amount of seasonal migration to the coastal and piedmont plantations.[3] On appearance, seasonal migration may seem positive; but as I described in an earlier chapter, the system of migrant labour, particularly as described from Chichicastenango (Bunzel 1952: 10-12), was negative. The migrant labourer leaves his home, usually in the cooler highlands, to the warmer, humid coast, where he is subject to low salaries, malaria, debt peonage, and lack of schooling for his children if they accompany him.[4]

Land issues tend to be the source of many problems in countries in which the dominant source of labour for agricultural export is derived from a peasant class. Wolf (1966: 3-4) defines peasants as "rural cultivators whose surpluses are transferred to a dominant group of rulers that uses the surpluses to underwrite its own standard of living and to distribute the remainder to groups in society that do not farm but must be fed...." Furthermore, the peasant has social obligations, as well as the obvious necessity to provide for himself and his family, the 'caloric minima'(ibid). These social obligations may include the sponsorship of a religious ceremony, or the provision of bridewealth. However, as demonstrated previously, one of the tools of attracting migrant labourers is a loan to cover these rather expensive obligations, which in return, leads to debt-peonage. Furthermore, another important aspect in the relationship between the peasant and the powerholder is the

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[3] The export value of coffee increased from $75 million to $173 million; cotton increased from $6 million to $71 million; sugar increased from $0.1 million to $50 million; and meat increased $0.2 million to $22 million (Davis 1988: 15).

[4] Upon returning from a guided tour of a coffee plantation, one friend solemnly declared to me that he would never drink coffee again, so deplorable are the conditions. According to him, many of the labourers used the trees that were grown to provide shade to hang themselves.

payment of rent (ibid: 10). In summary, the primary characteristic of peasant society is an unequal economic relationship to the dominant group.

According to Wolf (1966: 15-17), there are two methods of recourse for the peasant facing economic strain; increased production and/or curtailed consumption. However, there exists another strategy; one that offers exactly what the name implies, a reversal of the preexisting social order, a revolution. This observation is especially true when the two strategies offered by Wolf are inaccessible, as in Guatemala between 1950 and 1970. There was an increased land shortage with an increasing population. How can a family, usually a large one, increase production and, at the same time minimize caloric intake, when farm lands are slowly being reduced? As Davis (1988: 16) states, there was also a 'sociological awakening' which resulted in a rise of consciousness in the form of peasant leagues and trade unions.

Before I continue along this line, I must address a question that anthropologists and scholars of Guatemala have attempted to answer: Can the Maya be considered as peasants? Smith (1984a, 1984b, 1990a) maintains that nothing resembling peasantry exists in Guatemala; rather, only a few Indians "could be considered a rural proletariat...most married adult men engage in many different forms of production, but the occupations that predominate are those of petty production and commerce"(1990b: 206). Smith (1984b: 61) draws her assertion from the Maya of Totonicapan who are pre-dominantly non-agricultural commodity producers, who employ a particular form of wage labour, and who purchase most means of production in a competitive market. In Totonicapan

> the *value* of labour power (the cost of reproducing the worker) is relatively low, and the *price* of labour power (wages) is relatively high. Because the cost of entry into production is low and the income gained from wages is high, workers can accumulate sufficient capital to begin independent operations in three to five years (ibid: 61-62).

For example, in Totonicapan in 1977, 10.4% of the household male heads were the proprietors of an agricultural practice; in comparison to 27.4% who were the proprietors of an artisanal mode of production. The workers of said enterprises were 14% and 14.4% respectively (ibid: 70). Smith (ibid: 87) further states that capitalist production usually takes

two forms in large peasantries: plantation agriculture directed towards the global market (e.g., coffee) and an urban industry directed towards the same market; and she describes (1984b) how the Maya have played a substantial role in the latter. The author argues (ibid: 219) that in recent years a large number of Maya have been able to build up their local economies and achieve greater economic dependance. This development resulted in large enterprises being owned and run by Maya, producing resentment among the local ladinos. However, most anthropologists who have worked in Guatemala still characterize the Maya as peasants, notably Carmack (1979), Colby and van den Berghe (1969), and Warren (1978).

Skocpol (1982) offers an analysis of peasant revolutions in the aptly titled *What Makes Peasants Revolutionary?* In this article, she outlines the history of the literature on peasant revolutions; and attempts to answer three questions: 1) which peasants are most prone to revolution and why; 2) what roles do political and military organizations play in peasant-based revolutions; and 3) does capitalist imperialism create conditions for peasant-based revolutions? (ibid: 353). All of these questions are relevant to the study at hand; however, before I undertake any analysis, I must first briefly review developments in the recent crisis in Guatemala.

As mentioned, Davis outlines two important phenomena that precipitated the crisis; land shortage and a rising awareness that something could be done about a problem that has plagued the Maya for so long. After the CIA-backed coup in 1954, the group Catholic Action grew. Originally established to prevent the growth of Protestantism throughout Guatemala, Catholic Action became "the basis of a fairly strong ethnic revitalization and rural modernization movement" (Davis 1988: 16). Catholic Action was also responsible for teaching classes on social welfare and political consciousness (Carmack 1988: 49; Manz 1988a: 75). Up to this point, Protestantism had slowly begun to get a foothold among the Maya populations. One reason for its success was the escape from the burdens imposed by service in the civil-religious hierarchy found throughout Mesoamerica. In his analysis of the civil-religious hierarchy, Carrasco (1961: 493) states:

> A second change was the decline of communal property used in financing public functions. In early times the tribute surplus and the public lands or cattle of the

> A second change was the decline of communal property used in financing public functions. In early times the tribute surplus and the public lands or cattle of the towns and of religious brotherhoods provided a substantial amount of wealth consumed by the ceremonial organization. The loss of these public holdings increased the importance of the individual sponsorship of public functions.

The sponsorship of such ceremonies was an expensive affair, and becoming Protestant allowed one to remain free from such obligations. As Wolf discusses (1966: 16), many "Middle American Indians groups have abandoned their traditional Catholic folk rituals...and have turned to a sober Protestantism for which such expenditures are not required." As Wolf notes, Protestantism is 'sober.' This is not a metaphor; the "Catholic folk traditions" are widely renowned for the consumption of alcohol during the fiestas honouring the local saints. Another less obvious reason for the rise of Protestantism, particularly Evangelism, was the presidential role of General Ríos Montt. This effect will be discussed in further detail below.

Surprisingly instrumental in the rising political awareness among the Maya was a series of strikes by the National Teachers Union in Guatemala City in 1973. The strike 'spread' to the countryside "and began to mobilize other sectors of the population, including factory, agricultural, and public sector employees" (Davis 1988: 17). Davis (ibid) states that the events of the strike were followed closely by the inhabitants of relatively isolated villages in the department of Huehuetenango.

In May 1978, more than a hundred Q'eqchi' peasants were massacred by the military in Panzós, Alta Verapaz, as they marched towards the town hall to collect government-promised land titles. This event mobilized the National Committee for Trade Union Unity (CNUS), formed in 1976, to protest actively the ever-increasing presence of heavily-armed soldiers. According to Davis (1988: 17), the formation of this group was perhaps the main reason for the revitalization of the Guatemalan labour movement. "From its inception CNUS maintained close links with peasant and rural worker organizations, while at the same time guarding its independence from radical political parties and a nascent guerrilla movement" (ibid).

Another labour movement that was responsible for increased political awareness among peasants, Maya and ladinos, was the Committee for Campesino Unity (CUC); it was the first Indian-led organization that brought together both highland Maya and poor ladino farmers (Davis 1988: 20). The CUC organized a large strike in February 1980; 70,000 canecutters and 40,000 cotton pickers. Combined with a September 1980 strike of coffee pickers, the government was forced to raise the minimum wage of farm workers (ibid). The Catholic Action chapter from La Estancia, a hamlet near Santa Cruz del Quiché had helped organize the CUC; and, a key factor of its persecution by the military was establishing ties with the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) (Stoll 1993: 1987).

Another crucial event that marked the beginning of the crisis was the earthquake of 1976 in which more than 25,000 people were killed (Carmack 1988: 293). Following the earthquake, there was an increase of the aforementioned trade union formations; and the military feared a guerrilla threat (Davis 1988: 21). Accordingly, the military carried out counter-insurgency operations in the "Ixil Triangle"; so named for the location of the three heavily hit Ixil-speaking communities, Nebaj, Chajul, and Cotzal, in the department of El Quiché. The Ixil Triangle had, at this time, a strong rural cooperative movement; and therefore, was felt by the Guatemalan army to possess a considerable threat of insurgency. Following the earthquake, certain individuals throughout the Ixil Triangle were executed by the military, including the head of the local Catholic Action committee, four schoolteachers, and five sacristans of the Catholic Church (ibid: 22). In addition, Davis continues (ibid), between February 1976 and the end of 1977, 68 of the rural cooperative members were killed in the Ixcán region of El Quiché, 40 in Chajul, 28 in Cotzal, and 32 in Nebaj. In summary, the author concludes (ibid: 20), by the end of the 1970s Indian political activity was on the rise. However "the Guatemalan military and the wealthy agrarian and commercial elites who controlled the economy of the country...were not prepared to allow Indians to participate as independent actors in national politics" (ibid). This, and the fact that Guatemala now possessed four guerrilla groups unready "to accept a nonviolent path to change," placed this country on the brink of civil war (ibid).

4.1 *The Continuation of a Culture of Terror*

What was created through the systematic disappearances throughout the highlands, and as a consequence, the inability to trust others in the community, was a culture of terror. Under the cover of darkness, everyone in the community was in a state of constant trepidation that the sudden knock at the door, and the entry of armed masked men, would occur at their own home. The victims taken away in a speeding vehicle to a 'prison', their loved ones very rarely saw them alive again. "In one town in Huehuetenango I had noticed how the conversation would almost naturally stop when a truck went by on the road. One could almost hear the silent prayers that the truck not stop outside their home this night" (Handy 1984: 12). Often, the family remaining would recognize the voices of the masked kidnappers; and this identification increased the level of distrust.[5]

The most troubling aspects of the Guatemalan crisis are the repeated arguments by the United States State Department that the worst of the violence was performed by the guerrilla forces; these arguments were during the Reagan administration (Carmack 1988: xii). These arguments were repeated by the Guatemalan army, despite numerous claims by survivors that the majority of the atrocities were committed by the army. However, the role of the guerrilla forces should not be played down; they were responsible for many deaths. For example, guerrilla forces effectively held Santa Cruz del Quiché for a period of time by controlling the roads going into the town. Control of the roads involved planting land mines on the heavily trafficked roads; one blew up a bus, killing twelve Indian occupants (Carmack 1988: 58). Falla (1994: 20) states that the "bloodshed by the army is disproportionate to that of the shed by the rebel forces." In his particular context, it was a ratio of fifteen to one (thirty peasants to two landowners in Ixcán by 1975). It is the consensus of many that the guerrillas were selective in their killings, mostly suspected spies and members of the

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[5] The wife of one man, the chief commissioner who adamantly refused to support claims of subversiveness on the basis of no proof, recalled hearing her husband saying to one of his kidnappers, "Buenos noches, mi teniente Rolando." The army lieutenant he reported to in Sololá was named Rolando (Paul and Demarest 1988: 137-141). Other examples were hearing the voices of the kidnappers speak in the Mayan language of the region; due to the forced recruitment of Mayan men into the army, or the use of local men as kidnappers by the commissioners.

Guatemalan army; but in some areas guerrilla forces held an effective reign of terror among the Indians.

> Although there is little doubt that the scope of army violence against civilians was greater than that of the guerrillas, the local population views both institutions as creating a situation of generalized violence and making it impossible for them to carry out their traditional ways of life (Davis 1988: 26).

Many Indians felt caught between the two forces, as the following example will demonstrate. In Salquil, a village of Nebaj, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) planted revolutionary flags at night; if the flags remained when the army arrived, the town was suspected of guerrilla activity, but on the other hand, if the flags were removed, the town would be identified as a locale of government supporters, and summarily persecuted by the EGP (Stoll 1988: 104). Furthermore, according to the author, this tactic was called "provoked repression" by the evangelical missionaries; and, in time, backfired on the guerrilla forces (ibid). Another example of 'being caught in the middle' was the death of four people by the EGP in the hamlet Tu Jolom for filling in stake pits intended for the army (ibid: 108). According to the elders, they filled in the pits to avoid reprisal from the army; and furthermore, the booby traps "violated the biblical injunction to love thy neighbor" (ibid). As one can imagine, the majority of the Indians wished to remain free from the guerrilla forces, yet this was not possible; and while the guerrilla forces enjoyed the support of the local Indians at first, particularly after the first massacres, their popularity decreased as they began exercising a similar reign of terror.

At this juncture it is important to stress that there were differing levels of oppression and terror per locale, as I demonstrated above with the army's colour designation. As Warren (1998: 100) notes, there are many reasons for this variation:

> the military's classification of regions as more or less prone to subversion, guerrilla groups' decisions about their regional involvements, local histories of factionalism and conflict, the ability of corrupt power brokers to take advantage of the situation for their own benefit, and local tactics to resist the violence through a number of low profile strategies.

For obvious reasons, I will focus on the townships that were affected at the time by the violence of both the Guatemalan army and the various guerrilla forces.

According to Falla (1994: 18), when the army began terrorizing the town of Xalbal in Ixcán in 1975, they told the victims that they were being punished for being guerrillas. In 1969, the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) had been attempting to acquire support in the Ixcán area, but to no avail. In 1972, members of FAR reorganized themselves and formed the EGP; then in 1975, performed an action that triggered the reign of terror that followed. In Chajul, the EGP killed the "Tiger of Ixcán," plantation owner Luis Arenas, renowned for the cruel treatment of his workers (Falla 1994: 18; Stoll 1993: 72-74). Reportedly, the town of Ilom was so ecstatic upon hearing of his death that they threw a two day fiesta (Stoll 1993: 72). The reaction of the army was immediately to hit the Ixcán; the suspected hub of guerrilla activity. When Amnesty International published information on what occurred in Ixcán, President Kjell Eugenio Laugerud accused them of being communist (Falla 1994: 17).

During the years when the guerrilla forces held firm control in certain regions, through the actions of blowing up military installations and bridges only to disappear into the forests of the highlands, they came to adopt a persona of the 'primitive' that Taussig (1980: 225-228) discusses: the 'wildmen' of the forest. With a belief restricted to the mostly Indian footsoldiers, the people themselves had supernatural images of the rebel forces, as the following quotation from a community on Lake Atitlán demonstrates:

> They swept down into other towns, coming out of nowhere. They were great orators, speaking in Maya. They raised people's consciousness, talking about the high costs of everything and why are we working for the benefit of the monied. Then they disappeared. The guerrillas are like supernaturals; they are special people. It was exciting to actually see them (Warren 1998: 94).

The regime of Ríos Montt was supported by fellow evangelicals in the United States to weed out the threat of communism, and its companion, the idolatry of Catholic 'folk religion.' Though many of the soldiers recruited were Maya, the army officers tended to be from the Guatemalan elite; and their fears of the Indian, specifically of an Indian revolt,

mirrored the fears of the early colonizers and coffee estate owners of the early twentieth century. The fear of an Indian revolt was noted by some Mayas as an explanation for the genocide, as one resident of San Andrés Semetabaj noted:

> There have always been a clash of classes here in Guatemala. Many have thought that someday the Indian would rise up. But many people misconstrued this, and their fear caused panic. Of course they were up against the Indians, thinking one day they would rebel. They thought the Indians would exploit the existing opposition to the state. They believed Indians were participants or were in the leadership. This is why they tried to eliminate, to kill the indigenous leadership (Warren 1998: 93).

The 'magical' fear of the Indians is demonstrated in the subject of a paper I delivered at the 1998 CASCA meetings in Toronto; specifically the accusations of witchcraft directed against the Indian (Honeyman 1998). As Taussig (1980: 226) states: "In any country an isolated or outlying race, the lingering survivor of an older nationality, is liable to the reputation of sorcery."[6] The guerrillas, and later the large number of refugees, fled deep into the unknown wilderness of the highlands, where the army could attack only from the safety of helicopters.

As I briefly mention above, the radicalization which gave rise to guerrilla forces was closely associated with Catholic Action. In many Guatemalan communities today, religious factions are at odds with one other. In large part, this development had to do with the Evangelical movement in Guatemala, promoted by supporters in the United States, and the Guatemalan president Ríos Montt (1982-1983).

4.2 *Catholic Action and the Protestantism of General Ríos Montt*

In 1974, Christian Democrat leader Efraín Ríos Montt was elected the President of Guatemala, only to be removed by a military coup shortly thereafter. In Guatemala a president may be democratically elected, but the power ultimately lies with the Guatemalan military. After the 1974 coup, Ríos Montt was exiled; but he returned in 1977 to run again

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[6] I became interested in this belief after hearing the word *brujo* in Quezaltenango to describe Indians, particularly the Indians in the surrounding villages and those that lived on the volcano on Santa María.

for the presidency. With the suspected aid of the MLN (National Liberation Movement), another coup was staged on March 23, 1982; and Ríos Montt became the president yet again.[7]

The story of Ríos Montt and his short duration as President is one that reflects many facets of the discourse about and between the Americas, in that this event demonstrates that the discourse is not limited to the political arena; religion, particularly organized religion, plays a fundamental role. Protestants have tended to blame the Catholic Church, not the unequal class structure or foreign dependency, for the myriad of problems in Latin America (Stoll 1988: 90). Describing himself as God's chosen representative, General Ríos Montt announced that Guatemala was in need of moralization. The fear of communism was evident in this announcement; particularly, Ríos Montt was thinking of a 1936 novel written by a U.S. missionary describing the uprising of the Maya led by a Russian Bolshevik. In the novel, the revolution was foiled by a Maya evangelist. This concern, and the fact that guerrilla activity was on the rise due mostly to the corrupt actions of the previous presidents, made Ríos Montt fearful of an Indian uprising.

Guatemala was to become the 'buffer zone' between the United States and the Communist advance in Latin America: Ríos Montt was the soldier of God to prevent Guatemala from falling into Marxist hands:

> For a Latin America which these ideologues considered to be lost in the darkness of folk Catholic idolatry, and now stalked by Communist wolves in the sheep's clothing of liberation theology, Guatemala was to become a beacon of light. It would serve as a model of biblical righteousness for other countries threatened by the same satanic forces; it was to become a theological "New Israel" of the Americas (Stoll 1988: 91).

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[7] The MLN was put into place by the CIA in 1954 "and known as 'the party of conspiracy' for its reliance on strong-arm tactics, including death squads" (Stoll 1988: 96). Ironically, Ríos Montt had a strong distaste for the MLN, but his wife came from an important military family who had worked closely with the MLN and Mario Sandoval Alarcón, the other presidential candidate who had supported the coup of Ríos Montt in 1974 (Stoll 1988: 96).

We can see a dangerous combination being formed: the association of an activist Catholicism with the guerrilla forces (and naturally extended to Marxism), and the emergence of a Protestant president who had the support of the Evangelical movement in the United States. What resulted was mass conversion to Protestantism by the Indians to save their lives; particularly, as I demonstrated above, as orthodox Catholics were being executed for suspected affiliation with the guerrilla forces (Stoll 1988: 91).

In the United States, television evangelist Pat Robertson was encouraging the donation of money to the pacification program proposed by Ríos Montt. The Word, the Guatemalan branch of the Gospel Outreach, was being aided by the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). This support was intended to help the new policy of Ríos Montt, the 'bullets and beans' policy; the concentration of Indians into resettlement camps, and the conscription of Indians into the civil patrol (Stoll 1988: 91-92). Conscription into civil patrol was another example of forced labour; and more importantly, another example of a tactic designed to divide communities. This issue will be addressed in greater detail below.

On the night of his 1974 election, Ríos Montt was replaced by General Kjell Eugenio Laugerud as president. In 1978, Romeo Lucas García became president; and "anxious that the church and union organizing was fronting for small but growing guerrilla organizations...unleashed death squads" (Stoll 1988: 94). For example, one such death squad operated in San Pedro la Laguna, on the shore of Lake Atitlán (Paul and Demarest 1988). Suspected as subversives, individuals went missing almost every night, their bodies never located. Paul and Demarest (1988: 123-124) state that guerrilla forces never operated in San Pedro la Laguna; although ORPA (Revolutionary Organization of People in Arms) had its headquarters on the southern side of Atitlán volcano. Therefore, why were so many people in San Pedro suspected as subversive?

Some actions bordered on the preposterous. One baker, actually the first of the disappeared in this small community, was suspected because he used the early morning bus to travel with his bread to sell; consequently, the commissioners in the town thought he was feeding guerrilla forces in the forests. However, he was also a member of the local rural cooperative; and had cheered openly when guerrilla forces made a one-time speech in the

town. Spies, as in all locales experiencing a reign of terror, noted his enthusiasm during the brief speech. The people in the town knew the identity of the commissioners, those that organized the nightly visits to suspected subversives; yet very few were bold enough to speak out. When Ríos Montt came back to power in 1982, many of the people in San Pedro la Laguna were encouraged, but to no effect. He "reportedly has said that the country needed men with the strength to kill" (Paul and Demarest 1988: 129).

Just leaving town was often considered subversive. As I mentioned briefly above; Warren (1998: 96) was told that many Indians never went into their fields during the crisis for fear of being accused of attending a clandestine meeting. This suspicion was not restricted to the comings and goings of inhabitants, but also extended to the possession of Walkmans, cassette tapes, or the black-and-white knit bag (*morral*) carried by the men of the more politicized Chichicastenango (ibid: 95). Buses and trucks were usually stopped at a road block by the military and checked for the presence of such items.

Through 'moralizing' Guatemala, Ríos Montt was creating huge numbers of Indian refugees; refugees who possessed such tales of terrors, such as army helicopters dropping grenades on villages, gang rapes, beatings, that "their stories of army barbarism contradicted (his) claims to respect human rights" (Stoll 1988: 99). The Catholic Church was one of the targets of the Guatemalan 'soldier of God'. Many were confused by the reports by human rights advocates that Ríos Montt was responsible for thousands of deaths:

> Was it possible that Ríos Montt had no control over his troops? Perhaps, in spite of his best intentions and pronouncements, it was the same old government as before - only with a different face up front. Maybe Ríos Montt was just a powerless figurehead who, because he was an outspoken Christian, offered the perfect facade for a still corrupt military power group (Anfuso and Sczepanski 1983:132).[8]

The Catholic Church was the target of the army before the presidency of Ríos Montt. In November 1976, Father William Woods was in a plane that crashed near the town of Cotzal; and many Indians speculated that the army shot it down. The army denied this

[8] The authors are ordained ministers, and the book features a foreword by Pat Robertson.

allegation, stating that the weather was poor. This statement was contradicted by the pilot of another plane that had flown that same route on the same day and reported no clouds. The statement of the army was further contradicted by drunken soldiers, bragging about 'bringing down the plane' (Falla 1994: 25). Why did this occur? Father William Woods was instrumental in helping the Ixcán cooperatives obtain land, and used his plane to market products. After his death, the army took up its position in the cooperatives and used the landing strips for the army's plane, which was used to bring supplies to the army (ibid: 25-26).

The Catholic Church, traditionally firmly entrenched in Latin America, had become a staunch supporter of the many Indians and their quest for a heightened political awareness. The Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, established in 1955 after the CIA-supported overthrow of Arbenz, were against both communism and evangelical movements. However, by "implementing Catholic social doctrine, the Spanish priests launched development projects which upset the equilibrium of oppression" (Stoll 1988: 102). As the Guatemalan army began its counterinsurgency policy, the Catholic organizations helped the people fight back; and eventually, became linked to the guerrilla forces (ibid: 103).

For example, the beginnings of Catholic Action at La Estancia, a hamlet of Santa Cruz del Quiché, can be traced to a Spanish priest who went to Canada and learned about savings and loan cooperatives; and subsequently introduced one (Carmack 1988: 49). As a consequence, the ladinos in La Estancia resented this new movement; and branded the Indians as 'communists.' Within two years, the La Estancia chapter of Catholic Action declared that it was in favour of the CUC, producing a shift of many people from Catholic Action to the CUC. One prominent activist associated with the CUC at La Estancia was Vicente Menchú (the father of Nobel winner, Rigoberta Menchú - see Burgos-Debray 1984), who perished, along with twenty-two other Indians, in a fire bomb at the Spanish embassy in 1980 (Carmack 1988: 52-53). With its active support for the Indians during this time, coupled with an evangelical president, it is not difficult to imagine why the persecution against the Catholic church was so prominent.

4.3 *The Civil Patrol*

Forced labour, removed after the 1944 revolution, was re-established during and after the Guatemalan crisis, in the form of the civil patrol instituted by the military. Along with forced resettlement programs, the civil patrol program was the first half of Ríos Montt's 'bullets and beans' policy. It began in 1982; by 1985, it was estimated that one million rural Guatemalans were involved (Simon 1986: 26; Warren 1998: 89). Civil patrols were often organized by commissioners, many of whom had been coerced into the army for a two year period, then released, only to gather intelligence in their community (Smith 1990b: 272).[9] Davis (1988: 27-30) describes the civil patrol in northern Huehuetenango. The patrol, under the direction of the army, consisted of all able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and sixty. Each man was expected to spend at least one night out of every eight to fifteen on patrol duty (*la patrulla*); if they could not do so, they had to pay for a replacement. They were supplied with old shotguns, rifles, and pistols as they manned checkpoints. Some civil patrols were armed only with clubs, stones, and slingshots, as in San José Tzalalá; compared to the Israeli-made Galils used by the soldiers, which underscored "the hierarchy of human value implicit in the conflict" (Warren 1998: 118). At the checkpoints, the army would send agents to test how well the patrol would check papers, as there was a tendency to be quite lax when guerrilla activity had died down (Manz 1988a: 81). When they weren't inspecting the papers of travellers at the checkpoints, the army forced the patrol to go on *rastreos*, guerrilla hunts; during some of these hunts, the patrol was forced to stone or machete to death suspected subversives, often times fellow villagers (Davis 1988: 28). If one attempted to escape, or refused to participate, he was punished. In Santa Cruz del Quiché, fourteen members were killed when they failed to show up for duty (Carmack 1988: 64).

In Santa Cruz del Quiché, the civil patrol was used as 'shock troops' in army raids against guerrillas; and members were promised food and social services in exchange. In actuality, very little aid was given to the Indians; most of it was directed to the ladino sector of the town in the form of road repair, electricity, and water (Carmack 1988: 63). During

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[9] See Paul and Demarest 1988 for a detailed account of military commissioners.

military sweeps with the soldiers, the civil patrol would be used. They were placed between the soldiers; in the case of a guerrilla attack, fewer soldiers would be killed (Manz 1988a: 85). According to Davis (1988: 28), many of the people who participated in the civil patrols possessed mixed feelings about their experience. Some felt it was good; it provided the area with security. Others, however, felt it was a negative experience; for one, the time requirement was a burden, taking people away from their agricultural duties; and second, the members not only had to monitor their neighbours for suspected subversive activity, but were forced to kill when the army saw necessary, as this statement from a Quiché given to Carmack (1988: 63) represents:

> ...the civil patrol members who received these orders did not know what to do. When they arrived at their village they told the people what the army had ordered them to do. After many hours of reflection and community prayer, those who had been condemned by the army made a decision: "If we escape, the army will come and kill everyone. They have done this in other villages. It is better that you kill us." Then everyone went to the cemetery where they dug the graves. The executions were carried out amid the weeping and prayers of the community.

Victor Montejo (1987) gives another example. In Tzalalá (a pseudonym), the civil patrol mistook an army unit for a group of guerrillas, due to their different uniforms, and opened fire on them. As I have described the quality of arms given to the civil patrol, one can imagine how quickly the civil patrol was routed and captured. As Montejo attempted to explain why the civil patrol attacked the soldiers to the commander, he received this reply: "Don't come to me with these stories. These sons of bitches are guerrillas. That's why they attacked us, and I am going to execute every damn one of them" (Montejo 1987: 25). Afterwards, Montejo (ibid: 35-47) relates, he was accused as a guerrilla collaborator by one of the captured civil patrol members; but by staying calm and maintaining that it was a case of mistaken identity, he was released.

Roadbuilding and other projects related to rural development were expected of the civil patrol members; in total, an Indian man could expect to 'work' forty-five to fifty days a year, further "contributing to the undermining of Guatemala's rural peasant economy" (Davis 1988: 29). Officially, the army established the civil patrol to maintain "local peace

and security by ensuring that 'subversives' do not gain a foothold in the countryside"; and furthermore, the army maintained that it was a voluntary service (ibid: 27). Originally, the civil patrol system was established to combat guerrilla forces in the highlands; but it became a means of both surveillance and control of the Maya population.

The Catholic Church voiced strong oppositions to the civil patrol system, as these unpaid services encouraged actions against innocent people, developed a warlike spirit, and "severely limited freedom of movement and association of the rural population" (Davis 1988: 31).

4.4 *Model Villages*

The second half of Ríos Montt's 'guns and beans' policy was the forced resettlement of the Maya into model villages. Once again, this program 'officially' served a purpose; while the villages were peopled by refugees displaced by the massacres, the army controlled the villages. The intent was not "merely to eradicate the threat, but make repetition as difficult as possible" (Adams 1988: 288). "Technically, they are best described as nucleated resettlements to bring campesinos as close as possible to their fields while keeping the guerrillas at a distance" (Stoll 1993: 156). The government created thirty-three model villages (*polos de desarrollo*) (Warren 1998: 89; Manz 1988a). According to the Inter-American Commission, placement of refugees into model villages separated the Indians from their land; and, as a consequence, made them more dependent on the government (Carmack 1988: 10). At the same time, by the end of 1982, approximately 32,800 refugees were scattered in twenty-eight camps or zones along the Mexican border (ibid). Separated from their land, controlled and monitored by the government and the Guatemalan army, how could the peasants aspire to revolutionary furor again? It was impossible, as the army had suspected.

The original model villages, built between 1983-1985, were quadrangular in layout; and had electricity, water, schools, clinics, police services, and markets (Stoll 1993: 157). In Ixil country, many of the villages were built by the Nebaj civil patrol. By 1985, several of the model villages had been more integrated into a system of regional 'poles of development' by the army. The 'poles of development' "created a national system of

'interinstitutional coordinators' to coordinate and monitor all public sector and nongovernmental activities in rural areas," and organized the civil patrol systems (Carmack 1988: 32). Camp New Life was one such model village; "with occasional overflights by machine-gun-mounted helicopters" it looked "like a strategic hamlet in Vietnam" (Stoll 1988: 109). Furthermore, Camp New Life was subsidized by the United States Agency for International Development. However, in this particular group, many of the refugees spoke of the massacres and the forced removals from their homes into such camps. "If we obey, they don't kill us anymore," explained one refugee (ibid). In Camp New Life, it was not the physical coercion that kept the refugees here; it was the promise of a 'food for work' program. However, the billion dollars promised by Ríos Montt in evangelical aid did not appear (ibid).

During the civil war, the people of Ixil country had felt like they were living "between two fires:" the guerrilla forces and the army (Stoll 1993). Accordingly, the model villages served as a break from the dilemmas both these forces caused. While human rights groups protested the forced resettlement of the Maya, those that lived in the villages, especially the Ixil, knew that this program had occurred primarily because the army was trying to get at the EGP, which at this time, the Ixil resented (Stoll 1993: 157).

However, while the model villages offered a sense of respite, economically they were lacking; small scale loans were few, for example. The Indians were allowed to revive pre-crisis craft productions and agriculture within the model villages; but when they were allowed to return home to rebuild, they were faced with more hardship. Stoll (1993: 158-159) states that in the best of cases, agencies provided building materials while the villagers provided the labour; in the worst case scenario, villagers came home with a bit of maize to plant, an old M-1 rifle, and a piece of plastic.

> However poor these people had been before the war, they had always been able to return from the plantations to solid adobe-and-tile houses stocked with spare clothes, blankets, and tools, surrounded by domestic animals, and proximate to maize fields. Now they had lost everything down to their cooking utensils. At Sumal Grande, high in the mist of what had been, a year and a half before, an EGP stronghold, I found a settlement where roofing was so scarce that the people only thatched the hut serving

> as a Catholic chapel when clergy were expected. When the visit was over, they removed the thatch to cover their houses (Stoll 1993: 159).

The army demanded that the civil patrol operate at minimum strength in order to prevent many villagers from leaving for the plantations to subsidize their meagre income; and when the army decided to do a sweep, construction projects were halted, as civil patrol members were needed (Stoll 1993: 159). Furthermore, the villagers were allowed to return only if "no coyotes get in there with you," as one lieutenant stated (ibid: 160). Trading with guerrillas was dangerous, though potentially lucrative.

The reign of terror still existed. In discussing a stretch of road:

> "If you don't leave your load [with them], the guerrillas accuse you of being an army guide," a K'iche' merchant from Xix complained. "If you do leave the load, [the army] will say you are helping the guerrillas" (Stoll 1993: 161).

4.5 *Aftermath: The Collective Memory, Personal Narratives, and "Testimonio"*

As Earle (1995: 792) describes in his review of Falla's *Massacre in the Jungle: Ixcan, Guatemala 1975-1982*, 'truth telling,' for the purpose of a human rights testimony, is dangerous; especially for informants; but it also endangers the work of social scientists as well. Falla (1994) feels that truth telling should be left to the human rights activists, those who specialize in human rights advocacy. It is from under the imagined blanket of international recognition that the truth is spoken; yet we have seen what has transpired to those who have attempted to tell the truth, or rather, to one who has already spoken the truth specifically. Therefore, this section will briefly explore the social context of the 'aftermath' of the Guatemalan crisis; specifically, CONAVIGUA and the Pan-Mayan movement.

According to Schirmer (1993: 31), groups like the CoMadres of El Salvador and the National Coordinator of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA) have made a 'theoretical leap': "they have connected their experience and analysis of political violence (disappearance and torture) to personal violence against women (rape and battering)." As Taussig (1992: 49) aptly demonstrates, these groups are important in that they are *manipulating the state manipulation of collective memory*:

> As I understand this refunctioning with reference to the mothers of the disappeared and current state terror in Latin America, these women are wresting from the state its use of women to embody not only the nation and the people in a moment of intense political crisis but also memory itself at that precise moment when it is the aim of state to bury collective memory in the frightened fastness of the individual soul.

Groups such as these challenge the state's perception of feminism; particularly that of *campesina* ("peasant" fem.) and *indigena* ("indigenous" fem.). Like the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, these women challenge and protest the state perception of their roles as exclusively that of housewives and mothers; and at the same time, embark upon a unified search for their children (Fisher 1989: 32). While the interest of the state is to keep alive the personal memory of repression and violence, thus crippling public protest, the interest of groups such as CONAVIGUA, is to:

> contest this privatization of fearful memory, whose aim is to allow the tremendous moral and magical power of the unquiet dead to flow into the public sphere, empower individuals, and challenge the would-be guardians of the nation-state, of its dead as well as its living, of its meaning and its destiny (Taussig 1992: 48-49).

CONAVIGUA is comprised of not only women widowed by the massacres, by illness, and by the deplorable conditions on the *fincas*; but also those women who want to join in the struggle for women's rights in Guatemala (Schirmer 1993: 50). The Church played a role in the formation of CONAVIGUA, as many of the women originally met through Church activities. Furthermore, several of the directorate members had been active Catholic Action members (ibid: 52). One goal of CONAVIGUA was to prevent the further recruitment of their sons into the army, as one flyer passed out during a 1991 meeting demonstrates: *Ya Basta! No al reclutamiento forzoso para nuestros jovenes* (That's enough! No more forced recruitment of our boys) (ibid: 52-53).

Departing from the state-induced shadows into the public sphere is one of the goals of another movement that is receiving a large amount of recognition. The Maya revitalisation movement known as Pan-Mayanism, as Warren (1998: 10-11) sees it, is not "an ivory-tower enterprise, given that virtually all activists come from rural backgrounds;"

but the group is composed of those activists "for whom ethnic passing into the dominant mainstream to escape invidious racism and discrimination would be feasible, given that they are educated, fluent in Spanish, and economically mobile." Fluency in Spanish and dressing in 'Western' clothing has long indicated 'non-Indian', as Sam Colop (1996: 111) demonstrates in his criticism of colonial discourse. However, fluency in Spanish, post-secondary education, and economic mobility are crucial to Maya activists for letting their voice be heard. Instead of becoming 'ladino,' these activists have chosen to promote the resurgence of 'Maya culture' (Warren 1998: 11). The Pan-Mayan movement is ecletic; scholars and academics from various backgrounds are seeking the same goal. An important strategy of the Pan-Mayan movement, and one that is particularly crucial in anthropology, is challenging those who presume to speak for the Maya. This challenge involves questioning the ethics of North American researchers; Sam Colop (1990) has questioned the possible hidden agendas of foreign investigators.

The most important objective of the movement is the eradication of ladino racism: particularly in language, education, national history, the media, and the tourism industry. Furthermore, the movement seeks to "break the association of Maya identity with abject poverty.... and to make room for new combinations of ethnicity, work, religion, public culture, higher standards of living, and democratic political participation" (Warren 1998: 21). However, as Warren (1998: 180) illustrates, the movement is not without its problems, and criticisms as one of her informants demonstrate:

> I've talked to those who head this movement. To really recover Maya culture, we would have to return to the ways of our ancestors. To recover everything we would have to speak our indigenous language. Yet we are the guilty ones with our children. None of our children speaks our language. I'm not going to correct these people; they are very educated. But my view is: how are we going to recover our culture, how are our children to recover it if we are the ones who teach our children modern things, new things? To recover this, we would have to go back to the kitchen and cook on the floor over three stones, the *tenemastes*. But these intellectuals don't have hearth stones, they probably have something even better than my wood stove.

As Fischer and Brown (1996: 2) point out, Maya activism is the turning to social sciences by Maya students and professionals; and corresponds to what Watanabe (1995: 41) predicted:

> Maya anthropologists would bring to anthropology a personal, pragmatic, and passionate engagement that goes beyond scientific objectivity or literary self-reflection. The courage of their convictions would remind all anthropologists that anthropology sometimes does matter in the real world.

Warren (1998: 204) asserts that for Pan-Mayanism to succeed, its advocates must produce effective "cross-class and cross-generation connections at the very moment when stratification within Maya communities is growing." Most importantly, Mayanists must find ways to appeal to and attract restless youths, former soldiers, refugees, and urban migrants. Still, given the present social context, its advocates must be careful not to appear "political" in their activities, which currently focus upon the promotion of Mayan languages and culture in eduction.

As mentioned above, a powerful genre of 'crisis' narrative is the *testimonio* (testimony). According to Warren (1998: 114), *testimonio* gives authority to subaltern voices, "in order to describe the violence and existential dilemmas of living in Guatemala [and] have been widely used in Latin America to personalize the denunciation of state violence and to demonstrate subaltern resistance." The author (ibid) further states that *testimonio* gains its narrative power from the metaphor of witnessing. One of the more well-known examples of such narratives is *I Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1984). This narrative by the Nobel Peace prize winner is also one of the most controversial; Burgos-Debray spent little time with Menchú, and the text was edited by leaders in exile of the Committee for Campesino Unity (CUC) (Warren 1998: 116).

Testimonio, as I understand it, refers to a large body of text written (or narrated) by the eyewitness; however, the same effect is achieved by reading the accounts given to anthropologists, journalists, and investigators. It is not surprising, as Warren (1998: 92-93) notes, that *la violencia* came up in every conversation:

> Like the 1976 earthquake, which leveled the town [San Andrés Semetabaj], the intensity of the violence from 1978 to 1985 was used by many Mayas as a temporal marker - before *la violencia*, after *la violencia*, during *la violencia*. Yet, as one person put it, "the truth is that the violence always continues, is always part of our lives."

When one reads the narratives of violence, it is easy to discern how great the impact the crisis had on those who experienced it. As Falla (1988, 1994), Montejo (1987), and Manz (1988b) demonstrate, these narratives are particularly poignant when they come from the refugees who fled the terror. Falla (1994: 92) relates the narration of a Kaqchikel man returning to Cuarto Pueblo after the March 1982 massacre:

> We reached the large school and beneath it there was a pit. We went to it and saw it was covered with earth. There were bones in the pit. We dug around and saw that the bones had flesh. There were a load of bones that had not been burned. Most of the dead were thrown into that pit. It was in the school.
>
> And another place was the chapel. We reckon there were about a hundred people there. The Evangelicals were gathered together with their loudspeakers when the army arrived. The Charismatic Catholics had also gathered, but there were no remains of bones in the chapel. They burned down the Central American chapel. They burned down the loudspeakers. There we saw several freshly severed heads. We also found women's *trajes* [typical costumes] with ribbons in the chapel. They hadn't burned well. There were also the *cortes* [wraparound skirts] of dead women strewn around. There was a wooden fence around the chapel and in the town there were plenty of metal barrels filled with gasoline and kerosene. Maybe they used them to light the fire.

Those in San Andrés told Warren (1998: 91-92) that it was when bodies started to appear on the highways that the distant rumours they had been hearing about trouble became a reality: "during *la violencia*, bodies were dumped on the roadsides - those from another town here, those from here in another town. Now they bury them." The presence of bodies, from another locale near one's village, placed fear in the hearts of the inhabitants, especially those who had someone from their own family disappear. These were called *desaparecidos*

(those had been disappeared). In San Andrés, it was the sense of complete anxiety that accompanied all talk about *la violencia*:

> You didn't have security in anything. There was terror at night, great insecurity. You didn't know which group might come to get you. There was fear of both sides. No one had tranquility. We say, "He who owes nothing, fears nothing." We stayed in our homes (Warren 1998: 93).

Many of those interviewed expressed fear and frustration because of the uncertainty surrounding as to *why* people were disappearing; whether or not the army or the guerrillas took the pains to find out if the accusation of subversion, or siding with the government, was groundless. Many of those same people knew that it was usually someone in the village who told the army or the rebel forces an outright lie, or a false confession was tortured out of them, that was the cause for abduction (ibid: 99). A similar event occurred to Montejo (1987: 42-43) when he was falsely accused:

> "*Señores*," I said in a firm voice, "I am no criminal for you to be to assaulting me without reason. I ask to know what I am accused of, as I consider myself innocent."
>
> "As innocent as the great whore," the sergeant called out. "Here is your accuser. You are a guerrilla, the same as your companion."
>
> He addressed the tortured youth, shouting, "All right, you fucker - tell your companion what you confessed to us. Go on, wretch."
>
> As he said this the sergeant began to kick him in the face, the head and the stomach. I almost broke down seeing the blows he gave Manuel. I've never been able to tolerate the sight of a suffering fellow being. Whenever my mother slaughters a hen for dinner or a fiesta I always turn aside so I won't have to see its neck twisted. Now that I beheld a human being tortured and bloodied, I felt a great heaviness and fear.
>
> Despite his wretched state, Manuel turned his head toward me with difficulty and spoke with hatred, spitting out blood on the floor.
>
> "Look brother, I heard your voice one night when two men came to threaten me, calling me a loudmouth reactionary, and I am certain that you were one of them. I am sure I heard your voice."

This is an example of the *testimonio*, and it clearly demonstrates how easy it was for someone to be accused; Manuel, after being beaten, testifies that he is certain he recognized the voice of Montejo; and in turn, Montejo is picked up under suspicion of being a guerrilla. This example testifies to the extent of the trepidation one person felt. It is not difficult to imagine the entire community possessing similar fear. More importantly, the preceding narratives demonstrate the culture of terror that was created by both the army and rebel forces. One could argue that this state of affairs produced a beneficial state for both parties in that it was never difficult to procure an 'enemy' to torture and gain information from. The culture of terror that was manifest in Guatemala had two results: the activity of lynch mobs and the propagation of child trafficking rumours. These phenomena will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Rumour and Reality, Child Trafficking and Lynch Mobs: The Social Stress Markers from a Culture of Terror

Rumours which produce integration in terms of feeling without thought are the voice of the mob before the mob itself has gathered.

-Lienhardt, *The Interpretation of Rumour* (1975: 131).

We are all *nakaqs*.

-Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (1987: 241).

Before she was beaten, one of the men in the mob called June Weinstock a witch; he was at odds with another man about whether or not Weinstock was indeed a woman, or a man as others maintained. Finally they came to the conclusion that Weinstock was both; and therefore, a witch. The fact that those within the mob were not entirely clear on *who* or *what* they had trapped in the judge's office in San Cristobal on that fateful day in 1994 speaks for itself about the complexities of mob behaviour. This tragic incident is representative of three phenomena which I described earlier and will now analyse in this chapter: the incidence of lynch mobs, rumors of child trafficking, and accusations of witchcraft. I will conclude that these phenomena are associated in that they are products of the culture of terror that fully manifested itself during the recent social and political crisis in Guatemala.

5.1 *Child Trafficking Rumours*

Without a doubt, one of the more powerful phenomena, and subsequently holding the most consequences, are the pervasive rumours of child trafficking. Guatemala is not unique in this state of affairs. Rumours like these are international, and have been circulating for years; and, it would seem, are more prevalent in developing nations. Furthermore, child trafficking rumours are instances of folklore. By definition, 'folklore' is complex.[1] For the subject at

[1] See Ben-Amos (1973) for an analysis of the history of folklore, particularly its methodology and debates regarding its cross-disciplinary nature. William Fox (1980: 250) raises some interesting points about 'fakelore' and 'folklore' in regards to its challenge to the social order.

hand, I will adhere to the following criteria set by Dundes (1965: 1-3). Oral transmission is the most important criterion; but by itself is not sufficient to distinguish folklore from non-folklore, for folklore may exist in written form, provided it had once been in an oral tradition. Second, 'folklore' is not limited to peasant societies or rural groups. 'Folk' "can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor" (ibid: 2). The study of folklore (folkloristics) can be traced to early nineteenth century intellectual currents of romanticism and nationalism as exemplified by the brothers Grimm (Dundes 1965: 4; Ben-Amos 1973: 118).

> Folklore includes myths, legends, folktales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, tongue-twisters, and greeting and leave-taking taunts (e.g., See you later, alligator). It also includes folk costume, folk dance, folk drama (and mime), folk art, folk belief (or superstition), folk medicine, folk instrumental music (e.g., fiddle tunes), folksongs (e.g., lullabies, ballads), folk speech (e.g., slang), folk similes (e.g., as blind as a bat), folk metaphors (e.g., to paint the town red), and names (e.g., nicknames and place names) (Dundes 1965: 3).

Thus defined, why do I insist on referring to child trafficking rumours as instances of 'folklore'? For one, they are shared; they appear throughout the world; and secondly, they appear unrealistic by our standards. As Lienhardt (1975: 128) demonstrates:

> The rumour has its associations much less in the field of logical thought than in the field of metaphorical thought. It is not found by rational speculation. It is figurative. Hence the attitudes it expresses do not have to be consistent with each other. A bizarre set of 'facts' - and it has to be bizarre here for the rumour to work - is invented to fit in with the attitudes of the public.

This description is coherent with the stories of organ trafficking. Medical science teaches us the unreality of such tales; yet they are so 'bizarre', they are embraced, and shared, by the public. Dundes (1980: 7) reiterates his position about the 'folk' in 'folklore': it can refer to people who share a common factor (common occupation, common religion, or common language to name a few), and this group can be as small as two individuals. The lore within a group can range from slang expressions shared between two friends to jokes

about the different sects within a religious denomination (e.g., "There was a Jesuit and a Dominican on shipboard...") (ibid: 11). Thus stated, what is the common factor shared by those who embrace rumours about child trafficking?[2]

It is believed by many that the purpose of child traffickers is to sell the harvested organs of the child to the rich elite in industrial nations; it is in the context of this belief that I postulate a possible answer. Child trafficking is not to be confused with legitimate adoptions. The Guatemalan crisis left many orphans placed into orphanages whose clientele were from industrial nations. The processes accompanying these adoptions involve money: lawyer's fees, entry fees, visas for the intended country, etc. Yet, the common factor is the belief of intended organ harvesting; and it is at this point that we must begin.

The fear of organ thieves appears throughout the world. An example that has captured our attention are the tales of the 'Kidney Heist.' This is a remarkable story circulating throughout Canada and the United States, one that possesses all the classic archetypes of the "urban tale," including its being told by a FOAF (friend of a friend), as discussed by Brunvand (1993: 50). According to this story, men are being seduced by attractive women in bars while they are on business trips throughout the United States. After a few drinks, they retire to the man's hotel room where they may have sex, a few drinks, or both. He wakes the next morning to find himself in a bathtub, immersed in freezing water, with the telephone next to him. Attached to the phone is a note stating that he better not leave the bathtub, but call 911 immediately. He does and describes the situation to the operator, who knows exactly what has happened, due to its frequency in that particular city. She tells him to reach behind his back and feel. He does so and finds a series of stitches on his lower back. As it turns out, his kidneys have been removed; and, in some variations, it

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[2] As Dundes (1980: vii-xi) demonstrates, interpretation of folklore is difficult; and it would appear that emphasis is traditionally placed on the task of collection - "it is safe scholarship." White (1993a: 29) makes a similar statement on African oral histories; "the emphasis was on how to verify, not how to interpret."

has been done by a group of medical students who, frustrated with the rising cost of tuition, sell the kidneys on the black market.[3]

According to Emily Kelly (alt.folklore.urban), this story has taken new variations as of late. They range from the victim being a female, usually very rare, to the cryptic message "CALL 911 OR YOU WILL DIE" written in lipstick on the mirror. The latter is highly reflective of the "WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF AIDS" story that reflected the same motif. A man meets a girl at the bar, goes back to the hotel, engages in sexual relations, and he wakes up alone to find the message written in lipstick on the bathroom mirror. Newer versions of the 'kidney heist' also speak of a tube being found sticking out of the back, and the ice water being replaced with a saline solution.

Rumours of organ theft have become so prevalent that UNOS (United Network for Organ Sharing) has been working with the United States government to monitor allegations of Americans involved in the organ trade. This effort includes the appearance of UNOS officials on "World Net," the US satellite program that broadcasts to Latin America. Furthermore, in 1984, the National Organ Transplant Act was passed by the United States government, prohibiting the buying and selling of organs (UNOS paper on organ theft myths, alt.folklore.urban).

The 'kidney heist' story is interesting primarily because one of the redeeming qualities of organ theft rumours is the fact that upon removing an organ in a hospital, one has very little time to transplant it in the countries where this practice is alleged to occur! As Leventhal (1994: 2) states:

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[3] One of the best places to collect urban tales is the Internet: it is also a place of warnings against believing such tales (see Appendix I). An example of an urban tale on the Internet is similar to the 'Kidney Heist.' Lee Rudolph (alt.folklore.urban) writes "They're after testicles now." The Texas Travel Agency has been sending warnings, stating that it is believed that wealthy Asians are after the testicles of Mexicans. Reportedly, its origin is the French translation of a Spanish satire written in 1928. In the French translation: "The gland thieves operate in the parks around Cine-ville; they leave their victims good-for-nothing, suddenly tamed, with a painful wound and deprived of the purse with two priceless coins." Another tale that involved male genitalia comes from Addis Ababa, about a particularly virulent venereal disease that caused the penis to explode. Apparently, this rumour was so pervasive that prostitutes stopped working for weeks until the Ethiopian government issued a report stating that a medical investigation proved that this disease does not exist (Lienhardt 1975: 120).

> Because of the large number of people who must be involved in an organ transplant, the sophisticated medical technology needed to conduct such operations, the extremely short amount of time that organs remain viable for transplant, and the abhorrent nature of the alleged activities, such operations could neither be organized clandestinely nor be kept secret.

Furthermore, as the UNOS report states, this surgery is a complex operation that requires trained and qualified medical personnel. For legitimate transplants, the cause of death must be known; and in the United States, if the origin of the organ is not known, the organ is rejected. It would appear, then, that the 'kidney heist' tale has evolved to address the technological and moral problems it presented in its earlier guise. Not only does it echo a tale of morality (like the *borracho* returning home) and its warning of premarital, or extra-marital, relations with a stranger; but a complex medical operation has been performed, replete with what we assume to be a form of anaesthesia and a followup procedure that is not harmful to the 'patient.' Even the allegation that it is performed by medical students gives the story some sense of authority, rather than a handful of *gringos* performing the operation in a van on the outskirts of a Brazilian slum.[4]

I will attempt the task of interpretation of this particular context. I would argue that this tale is derived from a fear of losing, not necessarily through theft, body parts, specifically organs vital to the running of the body. Tales of kidney theft do not specify the number of kidneys, though I would infer from the instances of ice water immersion, which slows the metabolism of the body, that both kidneys are supposed to have been stolen. Furthermore, none of the 'kidney heist' tales ever state what happens to the unfortunate victim *after* the paramedics arrive.

The 'kidney heist' is similar to other stories as well, but it would appear that the victims are not lonely men on business trips; rather, they are innocent children.[5] Brunvand

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[4] The symbolism of the van in other urban tales will be analysed in further detail below.

[5] Lienhardt (1975: 113) briefly mentions the abduction of women for the white-slave trade in Orleans while being fitted in Jewish clothing shops. He states that this rumour has appeared since 1959 in various places, and is unclear on what motivated it. It did, however, cause a stir due to fears

(1981: 182-185) discusses an urban tale of children being kidnapped from amusement parks. One amusement park, Lagoon, was the site of a 1978 tale (though it became associated with Disneyland): "others heard it was a black-market adoption ring...And then I heard it was really an older child who was taken, and that she (seldom "he") had been recognized later (by whom?) as an actor in a kiddy-porn film." This tale was spread through word of mouth, and no mention was ever made of actual kidnappings in the local newspapers. The author discusses a similar tale of a teenaged girl being drugged at a movie theatre, usually by a needle, and beginning to feel sick. The person who drugged her then pretends to be a concerned citizen and offers to take her to the hospital, at which point the girl's companion appears from his errand of getting refreshments and tells the 'concerned' person to leave (Brunvand 1989: 206). This story appeared in a New Zealand newspaper, written to warn people; yet no proof ever surfaced of an actual drugging (or a victim).

According to *CNN and Times'* "Innocence for Sale" (February 7, 1999), there is a booming child sex trade in Central America, specifically in Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemala. The report states that tourists are coming to these countries to solicit sex from children and/or sexually abuse children. One person stated that because of the rise of AIDS in Central America, it is perceived by many that children will be free from HIV. The father of a boy who was involved with a professor of economics from the United States said to the reporter, "I want to know why the Americans are bothering us Hondurans and why we can't put a stop to this and punish them." Examples like this add to the frustration that local people, particularly the parents, feel towards foreigners and their own government for not acting.

Tales of children as the targets of organ thieves are of a complex nature; involving many facets of the cultures in which the tales appear. Organ theft tales are intimately associated with indigenous beliefs in bloodsuckers, witches, and 'bogey men' (Scheper-

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of an anti-Semitic revival (Morin 1969). Brunvand (1993: 250) recounts similar stories of Japanese female students being kidnapped from department stores and forced into prostitution. Such stories appeared in the United States at the beginning of the present century: the government passed the Mann Act in 1910 to stop 'white prostitution' (Campion-Vincent 1997: 7).

Hughes 1992: 234), under the rubric of "anthropomorphic supernaturalism"[6] (Nutini and Roberts 1993); constant oppression of the lower sector by the elite (local and international); illegal and legal adoption processes; and/or, as briefly mentioned above, a thriving sex trade.

The association of kidnappers with supernatural beings appears in many cultures. I will outline a few examples, though I must stress that I have not encountered this phenomenon in Guatemala. While it occurs in Peru (Oliver-Smith 1969; Gose 1986), Bolivia (Wachtel 1994), Mexico (Nutini and Roberts 1993), and Brazil (Scheper-Hughes 1992), stories of similar beings performing similar actions in Guatemala has not yet occurred, though there have been references to suspected kidnappers as witches. The purpose of such an outline is to demonstrate that children are prominent in tales of kidnapping, whether it is the blood/fat sucking witch or the *gringa*. These cultures share a common trait which will become evident throughout the outline.

In the Peruvian Andes, the *pishtaco* figures in tales of organ theft. According to Oliver-Smith (1969: 363), the *pishtaco* is a nocturnal murderer of Indians, who extracts the fat from their bodies to sell to industries to lubricate their machines or to sell to pharmacies to cure certain diseases. In many of the stories, the *pishtaco* looks like a white man or a mestizo and usually rides a horse or drives a car. More importantly, "*pishtacos* are often associated with the richest and most educated positions in highland society and are believed to carry safe-conduct passes and enjoy other privileges in the eyes of the law" (ibid). In appearance, it is difficult to distinguish a *pishtaco* from a wealthy mestizo or a white man, especially if he drives a car. Oliver-Smith (ibid: 363-364) attributes the origin of these tales to the treatment of the Indians by the *conquistadores*. Reminiscent of the descriptions of Díaz del Castillo and his comrades in Mexico (see chapter Two), the *conquistadores* in Peru likewise used the fat of Indians to treat wounds and diseases.

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[6] Though not in the context of 'organ thieves,' but more of a representation of the uncertainty people felt during the recent Guatemalan crisis, Warren (1998: 101-109) describes a local narrative about "transforming selves". Narratives such as these, she argues, represent the inability to trust others. See Gossen (1999) for representations of the Other among the Tzotzil Maya in Mexico.

> See how many were roasted and burned alive, how many were thrown to the wild dogs to be eaten alive, how many were killed because they were fat in order to extract their grease (*unto*) to heal the sores of the Castilians...(Herrera 1952: 80).

This fear appears to be so prevalent that mestizos told the author, "with much hilarity," that they would kill a dog or a pig, remove its entrails, and place them with a bloodied skirt or a hat in order to convince the Indians that a *pishtaco* was in the vicinity. The purpose of this deception was to make the Indians work harder and behave (Oliver-Smith 1969: 367-368). According to Oliver-Smith (ibid: 364-365), the *pishtaco* serves to reinforce the concept of the relationship of the Indian to the mestizo: the Indian is considered to be biologically and socially inferior to the mestizo; "the ghastly tales confirm in grotesque fashion his everyday experiences and suspicions, making him even less eager to interact and ever more eager to maintain himself as a distinct cultural entity." Another characteristic of the *pishtaco* is education: *ingenieros* (engineers) are often associated with this being (ibid: 365).[7] Furthermore, children are encouraged to behave, lest the *pishtaco* carry them away (ibid: 366). This threat is similar to "Papa-Figo" of Brazil, who devours the livers of badly behaved children who refuse to sleep at night (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 243; Freyre 1986: 339). For the Indian children of the Peruvian Andes, this tale introduces the fear of the mestizo at a very early age (Oliver-Smith 1969: 366). When the Food for Peace program was offered, many of the Indians stopped sending their children to school, for it was widely believed that the purpose of providing one meal a day at school was to fatten the children up, the fat then used as grease for airplanes (ibid: 367). Furthermore, it was believed that the Peruvian government issued safe conduct passes to the *pishtacos*, increasing an already pervasive wariness of the government (ibid: 368).

During one of my last days in Quezaltenango, I encountered possible physical evidence of a *pishtaco* - like being. On a sidewalk across from the busy Parque Benito

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[7] Unfortunately Oliver-Smith (1969) does not discuss what type of engineers are more commonly associated with the *pishtaco*. In Indonesia, where a similar phenomenon occurs, the engineers feared to be headhunters are associated with modern buildings and bridges (Gregory Forth: pers. com.).

Juárez was what appeared to be a bloodied dress wrapped around a piece of meat. Many of the Maya working in the vicinity, mostly ice cream salesmen, were employed by ladinos. However, on my subsequent visit (June-July 1997), when I asked certain individuals about it, no one knew anything. One individual laughed at my persistence and said "Coincidencia!" Another individual said that I would encounter nothing like it in the city; but in the surrounding villages, that was another story. As I demonstrated earlier, one sometimes encounters a fear among some ladinos that Indians are *brujos*; I detected a similar fear that, while the city was 'safe' from witchcraft and similar practices, the villages, mostly populated by Indians, were not.

According to Wachtel (1994: 52), the *pishtaco* is the same as the *nakaq*; he uses the Aymara term *kharisiri* to describe a similar being in Bolivia. *Pishtaco* is derived from the Quechua verb *pishtay* ("to cut into pieces"); *nakaq* is from *nakay* ("to slaughter"), and *kharisiri* is from *kharini* ("to cut something with a sharp instrument") (ibid: 72). In the Bolivian Andes, the *kharisiri* has the same physical features of the mestizo and uses his sharp knife to remove the fat from his victims. Furthermore, the author states that there have been many instances when foreigners - engineers, doctors, anthropologists - were suddenly suspected of being *kharisiri* and were forced to leave (ibid: 53). Gose (1986: 297) presents a similar statement: "Since virtually every ethnographer of the Andes, including myself, has been identified as a *nakaq*, there is by now a literature on the topic that is too large to be treated superficially." Gow (1993: 335) recalls being suspected as a *sacacara* ("face taker") while doing research in Western Amazonia.

Wachtel (1994: 82-89) offers modern examples of tales of the selling of fat and organs to industries. In 1988, a rumour spread throughout Lima that a group of *gringos*, armed with machine guns, entered a school, kidnapped the children, and tore out their eyes to sell abroad. Other variations told of kidneys and hearts being removed instead of the eyes, and the fear was so great that mothers rushed to the schools and removed their children. Furthermore, it was told that children were found in the street with bandages over where their eyes had once been; and the doctors who had performed the surgery had even placed money in the tunics of the children as payment.

In Oruro, Bolivia, it was told that the president had asked the World Bank to send *gringos* to extract the fat of peasants in order to pay the foreign debt. "When the red jeep from the institute is spotted traveling through the countryside, terror breaks out..." (Wachtel 1994: 87). As the Bolivian judicial system does not recognize *kharisiri* accusations, the local population will set up its own tribunal and burn the accused alive, scattering his ashes to the wind (ibid: 53-54). This account is similar to an incident that Nutini and Roberts relate from Tlaxcala, Mexico, in which Nutini encountered the mutilated body of a woman who had been accused of being a blood sucking witch and subsequently executed (Nutini and Roberts 1993: 74).[8]

Before I explore the extensive research undertaken by Scheper-Hughes (1992; 1996) on similar instances in Brazil, where the intent of child traffickers is upon the harvesting of organs and not fat, I will conclude the analysis of Andean folklore. Taussig (1987: 237) speculates upon the origin of the usage of Indian fat: "how magical such a usage was I cannot say, but certainly the Frazerian principles of sympathetic and contagious magic are clear: with the fat of those who wounded me I will heal that wound." Or, as the author offers, fat represented vitality and healthy living, which, by the end of the Conquest, the Spaniards were surely lacking. For why the fear of fat stealers is so pervasive in the present, Oliver-Smith (1969: 366) offers a Kardinerian approach: "the stresses for which society has not provided some sort of socially sanctioned outlet are projected into religion and folklore." I will critique this stance in the concluding chapter.

As mentioned previously, Brazil's Papa-Figo is believed to prey on the livers of children (Scheper-Hughes 1992: 243; Freye 1986: 339). The inhabitants of the Brazilian slums fear the organ thief as well, and this fear is closely associated to the trafficking of Brazilian children.

> ...the organ stealing rumour has its basis in poor people's perceptions, grounded in a social and biomedical reality, that their bodies and those of their children might be

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[8] Darling (1998) offers a fresh analysis of multiple inhumations in Anasazi sites in the American Southwest. The evidence of bone breakage, cutting and defleshing, in the light of ethnographic literature, points to the possible execution of witches.

> worth more dead than alive to the rich and powerful. They can all too easily imagine that their bodies, and the bodies of their young children, may be eyed longingly by those with money. As poor people in shantytowns see it, the ring of organ exchange proceeds from the bodies of the young, the poor, and the beautiful to the bodies of the old, the rich, and the ugly, and from poor nations in the South to rich nations in the North (Scheper-Hughes 1996: 7).

Judging from the material Scheper-Hughes (1992, 1996) offers, there are four primary instigators of the organ theft rumours in Brazil. All four are reminiscent of the occurrences in Guatemala, and they are as follows: a large international adoption service (1,500 legal adoptions a year); the presence of death squads, and consequently, forced disappearances; a clear disparity between the rich and the poor; and the treatment of unclaimed bodies. I will briefly outline these.

There are roughly 1,500 legal adoptions a year from Brazil by foreigners. Financial cost is about $3,000 (excluding airfare and living expenses for the adopting couple): $1,000 to the children's home, $1,000 to the adoption lawyer, and the remainder for legal processing fees and a court translator (Scheper-Hughes 1996: fn 3). Such expenditures, when they become known to the general populace, lead to the rumours of rich people buying children. Closely associated with the rumours is the commodification of body parts. The inhabitants of the slums know that the rich frequently pay for plastic surgery and body sculpting, and they are also aware that the rich can buy organs when they need them. As one informant told the author, "So many of the rich are having plastic surgery and organ transplants that we really don't know whose body we are talking to anymore" (ibid: 7).

The last factor is the treatment of the bodies of the unknown. When the body of an unknown individual turns up, as it often does in the slums of Brazil, it becomes the property of the State. The body will then be turned over to the medical schools for lessons in anatomy, or certain organs will be removed for transplant purposes. For this reason, many poor Brazilians will avoid dying in a hospital or seeking medication from a hospital (Scheper-Hughes 1996: 5-6). Regardless of the rampant mistrust of the Brazilian medical system, the Brazilian Senate proposed a 'presumed consent' of organ donorship in 1996. Upon death, the organs would become available for transplant purposes, unless the individual

had previously opted out. This proposal was passed on January 1, 1998, but was opposed by the Federal Medical Council. Federal Attorney Geraldo Brindeiro stated: "We need to take into account the possibility that the person did not have the opportunity to oppose donation before their death," thus providing the opportunity for family members to protest organ removal (*Vancouver Sun*, January 12, 1998). This rule is tolerable *if* family members know that the individual has died, but what will happen if the individual is one of many unknown? Scheper-Hughes (1996: 9) compares a similar program in South Africa; there are so many bodies that turn up at the mortuaries; and there is no time to notify kin, who often live in distant townships, or new settlements with unnamed streets, so that "presumed consent (accompanied by an unwarranted assumption of 'abandonment') is used in the interest of 'saving lives.'

Another factor in the Brazilian rumours occurred during the transition to democracy: the sudden knock on the door late at night, the entry of masked men, and the forced removal of a father or teenaged son. Two bodies of these kidnappings, the author discusses, were found dumped between rows of sugarcane, grossly mutilated (Scheper-Hughes 1996: 8). As I have described in the previous chapter, this situation is similar to what occurred in Guatemala.

It is important to consider *when* these rumours begin to surface. As Campion-Vincent (1997: 14) and Scheper-Hughes (1992; 1996: 9) make clear, rumours abound *after* a crisis:

> In Argentina, Brazil, and Guatemala, the rumours surfaced *soon after* the democratization process began and in the wake of truth commission reports...The rumours have appeared, then, during a time when ordinary people finally became aware of the magnitude of the atrocities practiced by the state and its henchmen against the bodies of the poor and vulnerable (Scheper-Hughes 1996: 9).

In socio-political situations like those I have discussed, rumours would be dangerous. In locales like Brazil, where people 'spoke' of the presence of death squads through the means of a complex sign-language (Scheper-Hughes 1996: 8); or in Guatemala, where the slightest action could be construed as 'subversive' in the eyes of army informants (or 'pro-

government' in the eyes of guerrilla informants), *silence* was safety, a silence that was dropped after the crises.

5.2 *Global Narratives*

Beliefs in beings attributed with supernatural powers that feast on the organs of the young are not restricted to Latin America. I will briefly discuss such beings as they appear in a different location; but as will become evident, the social-political contexts in which these rumours appear are remarkably similar to what was portrayed in Latin America.

For example, the association of such supernatural beings with real people appears in East and Central Africa: vampires, *banyama*, are associated with firemen. "It was a well established fact that firemen captured people for their blood" (White 1993a: 31); yet others referred the prevalence of *banyama* stories to the time when Africans refused to participate in European colonial medical experiments and therefore were kidnapped. In 1972, a Tanzanian newspaper ran a story stating that firemen did not capture and kill people for blood. A month later, an individual naming him/herself "Nearly Victim," wrote to the editor to refute the article, asking "Where did hospitals get their blood in those grim days, before Independence? People used to disappear mysteriously in those days...or didn't you know that the blood was used to treat the white man only" (ibid).

When asked why fire vehicles were so feared as the suspected transportation of vampiric kidnappers, White states she did receive the "obvious" association of blood to the colour red (White 1993a: 31). However, on an interesting note, her informants were more fearful and suspicious of "cars which bore a cross" or "a grey Land Rover with a shiny metal back" than red firetrucks (ibid: 31-32). These particular vehicles were often windowless and had no lights, resembling the vans of Latin America that organ thieves are supposed to use to kidnap their victims, and once inside, remove their organs. In Africa, the origin of these stories varied according to the locale. In Tanzania, a fire engine was always placed next to the airstrip which was used for the airplane that supplied plasma to troops during World War II; and in Dar es Salaam, firetrucks, under the direction of a European, were used in the blood transfusion service, which had no transportation system of its own (ibid: 32). Subsequent rumours of firetrucks driving through the streets and kidnapping innocent people, draining

their blood, and dumping the body in the gutter, ranged from Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi (ibid). One white geologist was attacked in Tanzania because there were curtains in the windows of his truck (ibid).

Furthermore, Catholic priests ("White Fathers") are often associated with *banyama* stories and accusations, though these seem to be derived from unfair labour practices (e.g., children attending catechism had to work for their lessons) (White 1993b:754); and, to a certain extent, the 'eating of the flesh' and the 'drinking of the blood' in Communion (ibid: 757-758). The latter was encouraged by the priests, who told the converts that their religion would protect them from witchcraft. Furthermore, in Zambia, potential *banyama* victims were marked with a cross that only the White Fathers could see; and at a certain signal, all those marked would travel to a lorry and "be transported to a place where they would drained of their blood or turned into pork or beef" (ibid: 752-753).

The method of transportation for alleged organ thieves needs further analysis. The vehicle of choice is often a windowless van or a van with tinted windows. There are many reasons for this feature: the most obvious is the large amount of room inside in which to perform illegal operations and organ removals unseen. In reality, however, these vehicles could also contain a death squad, also unseen. The effectiveness of such a vehicle was due to its 'unknown' character: anybody witnessing a kidnapping could not, even if they wanted to, identify the occupants or those with whom they were associated, government security forces or guerrilla forces. Secondly, in developing nations, any type of vehicle, let alone a dark van with expensive tinted windows, is an obvious sign of wealth and subsequently authority. Hence, the rumours of *gringos* driving around searching for children: the only people driving such vehicles usually being the rich, tourists, and government agents.

This fear is not limited to developing nations. One might compare how we feel upon seeing a dark van cruising a street slowly at night in contrast to the sight of a minivan, all windows, driving down the same street at night. Our mass media have contributed to this concern; how many movies or television shows have a serial killer using a van to travel in and do his grisly work, or government/police agencies using a van to do surveillance? This

is not to say these evils do not exist. They do, but the end result is a fear and apprehension of the unknown; exactly the intention of those in the vehicle.[9]

In Italy, there was a rumour of a black ambulance that had kidnapped 200 children in 1990 (Toscelli 1991). The purpose of the ambulance is to save lives and transport those who need medical attention; and therefore, an ambulance possesses technology to keep patients alive until they can reach the hospital. Inversely, ambulances can also be used to transport the dead. "Africans did not misrepresent ambulances - vans with tubes and pumps inside them - but they misrepresented their motives" (White 1993a: 34). White (ibid) attributes this misrepresentation to a 'blurring of boundaries': vehicles being where they should not be (a firetruck near a runway, or firetrucks being used for blood transportation); and further 'blurring' on the actions of the workers: African men wearing uniforms and performing drills, working for European commanders at a job that was "categorically different from the casual labour a man could take up and abandon with ease."

I will focus briefly on another post-colonial context in which rumours of thieves are prevalent. However, these 'thieves' are not after organs *per se* - but are believed to be after human heads. This tale may appear unrelated, but its relevance lies in the fact that the stories are rumours, rumours which associate colonial authority figures, members of other groups, and foreigners with the headhunter. The Meratus of Indonesia believe that the government periodically sends out headhunters; and in stories of such violence, "Meratus create themselves as peripheral political subjects as well as victims" (Tsing 1996: 194). The Meratus have traditionally seen themselves as victims of headhunting, in contrast to the Iban of Sarawak, who recall an "aggressive heritage of headhunting" (ibid: 195). Tsing related a problematic task of identifying historically specific ethnic groups who preyed on the

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[9] An example from our culture are the 'boogy' vans of the late 1970s and the early 1980s, often painted black, or a dark blue, with fantastical paintings on the exterior. I am also reminded of a movie (the title of which escapes me) from the same era about a demonical van, completely painted black with electrical tape over the windows and lights, that sped around running over people. Another movie that is similar is Stephen King's "Maximum Overdrive" about a group of people stranded in a truckstop because all the vehicles in the parking lot (and all the electrical/mechanical appliances in the building) have become possessed and run down anybody who leaves the safety of the building.

Meratus for heads, but stated that people use the word *urang laskar* ("the laskar people") to designate a type of government headhunter (ibid: 199). *Laskar* is also the Indonesian word for "soldier". In 1991, rumours spread that these government headhunters were at large, and the general consensus was that these raids were due to malfunctioning oil drills. The purpose of the heads was to 'stabilize the faulty machinery, and one man "reported that the army had authorized 500 headhunters and 500 thieves to get the ritual resources necessary" (ibid: 200). This belief is reminiscent of the human grease that was deemed necessary to lubricate machinery in Lima, Peru.

However, in this context, human fat does not hold the same symbolic value as it does in the Andes; human heads in Indonesia have traditionally been used for 'construction sacrifice' (Forth 1991, Erb 1991, Drake 1989). According to Drake (1989), 'construction sacrifice,' combined with the pre-colonial tradition of headhunting, have contributed to rumours of colonial agents hunting heads. In central Flores, it was reputedly the Dutch who employed Indonesians to obtain the heads necessary for construction and the term *mo gele* was used among the Nage people to describe these headhunters (Forth 1991: 259-260). The head was typically buried under the foundation stone or some major vertical section of a bridge to lend it support, prevent accidents, or help the bridge withstand floods (ibid: 259). However, the Nage were insistent that *mo gele* was not an indigenous institution, but a Dutch custom (ibid: 260). Reminiscent of the rumours I discussed above, vehicles were a suspected method of transportation for *mo gele;* and therefore all motor vehicles in the region, especially those driven by foreigners, were suspect (ibid: 261).

Metcalf (1996) recounts a story of when he was almost shot by a boy in Borneo whom he surprised on a jungle path during a *penyamun* panic. The *penyamun* is a Malay word for "bandit" or "robber", but it is widely understood to be a headhunter (1996: 281). Unlike the situation in the Meratus mountains, where headhunters were primarily thought be to government agents without supernatural abilities, the *penyamun* have 'extrahuman' qualities: according to one old woman, the *penyamun* hang upside down from trees like

inverted humans. Inversion "is itself a symbol of otherness" (ibid: 282).[10] However, on a 'nonsupernatural' level, the *penyamun* also resembled the army units that were regularly sent out to solve land claim unrest or "a nagging communist insurgency." Furthermore, members of one such unit that was sighted at a lake "were reported to have no badges on their uniforms, and this was taken as evidence of evil intentions" (ibid: 281). Paramilitary units typically lack any form of markings in order to ensure secrecy.

4.3 *Los Linchados*

In the first chapter I introduced the subject of Guatemalan lynch mobs; and I return to that topic in order to analyse it more fully with the material previously reviewed; mainly, the recent Guatemalan crisis and the propagation of rumour. The circulation of rumours is not the sole motivator of lynch mobs. As I will demonstrate, this plays a role, albeit a large one; but in combination with a pre-existing and growing frustration with both local law and government agencies.

The media plays no small part in this affair, as evidenced by the beating of June Weinstock. Tonya Lewis, the wife of the missionary who attempted to rescue Weinstock, recalls that the *Prensa Libre* article, "The purchase of children for mutilation has become frequent" was posted on the wall of a store in the town (*The Washington Post*, May 17, 1994). Though Guatemala has a low literacy rate, all it would take is one person reading the article (and I am assuming whoever posted the article had a grasp of Spanish) to begin the spread of rumours. After that, the rumour takes a life of its own.

In Guatemala City alone, at least 150 people were killed in 1998 by lynch mobs. These were mostly petty criminals, transvestites, and prostitutes; thus the lynchings received the name of 'social cleansings' (*The Globe and Mail*, November 25 1998). The article states that no one knows exactly who is responsible, but some speculate that the army is behind many of the killings. Furthermore, the Guatemalan national police force has had a reputation

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[10] Metcalf (1996: 282) notes Middleton's analysis of Lugbara belief regarding human inversion as a sign of otherness (1960: 230-238). The Lugbara believed that humanity decreased the farther from home; therefore Europeans were the farthest from humanity, and were thought to walk on their hands when no one was looking.

of being corrupt and ineffective. This deficiency is being remedied by a United Nations mission and the presence of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in certain townships to instruct the 'new' police force. However, up to 90 per cent of the new policemen are from the old police force; and according to RCMP Inspector Len Babin, "We know the track record of the police: corrupt, underpaid, under-educated, under-trained, under-everything...Recycling means three months in the police academy, a new shirt, and double the pay" (ibid).

Furthermore, the judical system is in dire need of repair; the United Nations mission found at least 500 cases in which judges barely possessed basic judical concepts. Once people *are* arrested, many Guatemalans feel that the court will not convict and punish them. If they are punished, the chances are great that they will either escape prison; or, once released, go back to crime, due to a lack of rehabilitation (*The Globe and Mail*, November 25, 1998).[11]

The majority of the lynchings occur in the rural areas, and usually target suspected thieves. According to Jean Arnault, the Director of the United Nations Mission, lynchings rarely occur over suspected cases of homicide or sexual assault, but rather over property disputes. This observation is exemplified by the actions that occurred in Comitancillo, San Marcos, where the lynch mob executed five individuals, reportedly in a dispute over two animals. Perhaps it is because homicide and cases of sexual assault stand a better chance of police investigation, and not 'petty' cases as property theft, that lynch mobs are typically not involved.

While some lynch mobs are spontaneous, (as was the Weinstock incident, as I demonstrated in Chapter 1), observers say that many of the lynch mobs are premeditated; and are usually organized by the former members of the civil patrol (*The Globe and Mail*,

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[11] I am reminded of a cartoon that appeared in *The Siglo News* last summer (1998) regarding a highly-publicized prison breakout. It was during the World Cup; and, accordingly, the cartoon had all the prison guards gathered around the office television and cheering on their favourite team while, unbeknownst to them, the prisoners were fleeing through a doorway, their arms in the air cheering in mimicry of the prison guards. Standing by and silently watching was the infamous *Pollo Campero* chicken (the mascot for a popular fast food restaurant), perhaps mocking the sponsoring of the World Cup in Guatemala.

November 25, 1998). This observation raises a contrasting conjecture, as Paul and Demarest (1988:146-147) describe what occurred after the former commissioners were released from jail and returned to San Pedro. After one outspoken Pedrano was kidnapped, his wife recognized four men from the town; and after three relatives notified the town, fifteen men were detained. They were taken to a Sololá prison after the military commander arrived to preside over a general meeting. At the meeting, the assembled townspeople declared that they were loyal to the army and they wished to see these fifteen suspects tried. The commander promised they would be (ibid: 143). Two weeks later, the fifteen returned, accompanied by a military guard of eighty soldiers and were restricted to house arrest. It was the general consensus that no punishment would be given to the fifteen men. Yet, after the careful litigation process initiated by a young Pedrano studying law in Guatemala City, the eighty soldiers left and the fifteen suspects were sent back to Sololá (Paul and Demarest 1988: 146). Many were eventually released from prison, but three disappeared. One night a pig pen was set on fire; as its owner was a released commissioner, speculation was that the destruction was an act of vengeance (ibid: 147).

This incident demonstrates two critical features. One, even during the height of the crisis, when loved ones were being forcibly removed from their houses in the dead of night, the townspeople rounded up fifteen suspects, notified the military commander, and requested that justice be served. Though they were painfully aware of recrimination if they had acted violently, this action by townspeople demonstrated a rational line of thinking in an irrational time. Second, after the commissioners were released, those that were ultimately responsible for the disappearances in San Pedro, the most violence expression that was enacted was the burning of a pigpen. Once again, any other expression of violence, in all likelihood, would have been brutally opposed by the army.

Like the circulation of child trafficking rumours, it would appear that lynch mobs started to occur *after* the crisis. They could not occur during the crisis, as the reign of terror employed by the *Ejercito* was too tight; but they occur with surprising frequency after the crisis. This is an important point that I will address in the conclusion.

Fear of army reprisal is still evident, as demonstrated by the murder of Juan Gerardi shortly after he delivered the report on atrocities committed by the *Ejercito* during the crisis. Prosecutors have yet to investigate any military suspects; though many have declared that the primary suspect, a lame homeless man, could not have been the murderer. Dan Long, an observer for the World Council of Churches, states that this lack of action sends a message to the Guatemalan population: "There's impunity for those who lynch because there's impunity for those who kill with official sanction...Once you have impunity at the highest levels, everyone else thinks they have the same" (*The Globe and Mail*, November 26, 1998).

This observation demonstrates a superficial view of the lynch mob occurrences; those that kill at the highest level do so, quite simply, because they can. This fact does not mean that everybody else thinks they can also; rather, lynch mobs are a tangible expression of the frustration that the rural people feel towards the local law enforcement agencies, who they know will not act for their cause. Why would they? After years of exploitation and terror committed by those who are supposed to protect them, why would anyone turn to the police to see justice served? Furthermore, lynch mob are expressions of violence committed by people who have witnessed and experienced the worst type of violence during the Guatemalan crisis. This interpretation would logically seem to indicate that the violence would be directed towards those who were responsible for the atrocities committed; yet that approach would designate the army and the locals involved in the death squads. As for the army, that is impossible.

The lynch mobs have usually executed, or attempted to execute, foreigners and fellow Guatemalans; and, it would appear, not out of retaliation for the crimes committed during the crisis, but over such things as suspicion of theft. The Guatemalan crisis left in its wake a population resigned to the fact that the government was not about to admit its guilt to the international audience, let alone the general populace. This conclusion is demonstrated by the fact that the peace accords signed between the URNG and the military made it explicit that one of the primary steps to peace would be the dismantling of the Presidential High Command (responsible for much of the bloodshed); this has yet to occur. The army, the real monarchy in Guatemala, will always hold power, not any democratically - elected

government. And, similar to any ruling family, the army will protect its own and will hide the truth of its actions. In this light, it is not difficult to see what extremes people will go to have justice served.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Once a rumor is underway, it cannot be controlled by any one of the participants, any more than a lynching mob can be stopped when a few members change their minds.

-Tamotsu Shibutani, *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* (1966: 15).

According to Kapferer (1990: 16), once a rumour is embraced by the media, it becomes 'true'.

> If the medias take up the torch in spreading the news - without warning the public that it is a rumor - they ennoble it: they turn it into information, giving it the *Good Housekeeping* seal. The rumor phenomenon is then no longer pure: it has been "informationalized" and "mediatized."

This observation raises an interesting point: we all have a tendency to believe what we read, especially if it is found in the newspaper. Yet, as I have demonstrated, the media does not always present the 'whole' truth; and more importantly, it is limited to a certain audience. In his discussion of the historical and political role of folklore within western Marxism, Limón (1983: 38) describes the importance of art in the Frankfurt tradition. Art, the Frankfurt theorists emphasize, possesses an emancipatory function which "lies in its power to break the monopoly of established reality (i.e., of those who established it)" (Marcuse 1978: 9). Subsequently, Limón sees a dilemma: such emphasis on emancipation may place this Marxist tradition in "an untenable elitist position and in the company of such conservative thinkers as F.R. Leavis, T.S. Eliot, and Ortega y Gasset" (1983: 38).

> As the Frankfurt theorists define it, art as a liberating phenomenon is available largely only to those privileged few with the requisite socioeconomic and educational resources permitting access to this form of expression. Mass media culture - that other expressive domain available to everyone else - is, in their analysis, a substantially tainted experience.

Furthermore, the author criticizes the scholars of the Frankfurt tradition for their definition of folklore, which they see as a 'historical phenomenon associated with

precapitalist modes of production, socially marginal sectors, or childhood, and therefore in a process of decline"; and remain trapped in a type of dilemma (1983: 39).[1] Limón offers the introduction of folklore as a resolution for the dilemma described above.

> For whatever else it may be, I take folklore to be expressive, *shared,* patterned behavior. In emphasizing "shared," I simply want to suggest that folklore has a far more democratic distribution than "high" art. Perhaps more importantly, folklore has relatively *autonomous* origins within communities in contrast to mass media culture. As such, folklore avoids the class restriction of "high art" and the largely imposed character of mass media culture.

However, I do not see this dilemma: the type of folklore that is apparent in this particular context has infiltrated the mass media in the form of the articles in the Guatemalan newspapers. If folklore is "shared," as Limón maintains, what occurs when it enters a linguistic sphere that excludes a significant portion of the country, namely those Maya speakers who have very limited reading knowledge of Spanish? As I have demonstrated, news stories about child trafficking occur throughout the world; and, in part, are based on folklore. This instance of folklore, because of the sphere it appears in (mass media), is not "democratically distributed" as Limón maintains.

In the second chapter, I introduced the concept of 'truth' in regard to history; and now I am compelled to address it again in regard to the veracity of the rumours presented above. People tell stories (or 'spread rumours') primarily because they believe them to be true. They are also shared because of the need to entertain, to amuse, and to inform. In this respect, they resemble the goals of mass media. However, mass media possesses authority to convince and persuade its readers that it is the truth they are reading or watching. Authority is given to the media, it would seem, by how well they *convince* the reader of the veracity of a tale. As compared to a storyteller, authority is given by how *well* the tale is told. Elaborating on a similar line, Benjamin (1968: 88-89), in paraphrasing Villemessant ("To my readers, an attic fire in the Latin Quarter is more important than a revolution in Madrid"), states that the

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[1] According to Limón (1983: 39-40), the three major theorists of the Frankfurt tradition and their primary works are Adorno (1978), Benjamin (1968), and Marcuse (1964, 1978).

prime requirement of information is that it appears "understandable in itself." Regardless of who the teller is, inevitably we are led to question what is true, untrue, or partly true; we must question the veracity of child trafficking rumours.[2] International adoptions do exist, especially from those countries that possess a stunning number of orphans (or assumed orphans) from genocidal events. Tales of children being kidnapped and sold for the purpose of harvesting their young organs border on the surreal.

Scheper-Hughes (1996: 5) maintains that these rumours are repeated because they are true "at that indeterminate level between fact and metaphor." She also argues that to state that these stories are metaphorically true; and "operating by means of symbolic substitutions," as Taussig (1992) does, for example, is not enough. Instead, the metaphors, at least in the context of Brazilian shanty-towns, "are materialized in the grotesque enactments of medical, economic and social relations which are experienced at the immediate level of the violated and dismembered body" (loc.cit). When dismembered bodies frequently appear, mutilated by enforcers of the State, it is easy to see how her argument remains true. As Campion-Vincent (1997: 7-8) demonstrates, this fear is attributed to the distrust of the medical establishment; the rich receiving organ transplants with far more ease than the poor (Scheper-Hughes 1992, 1996); and the fear of ambulances and the suspicious technology that they contain (Toscelli 1991, White 1993a), to name a few examples. However, in many of the examples I provided above, mutilated bodies do not appear; and therefore do not figure in the rumours of child trafficking.

Under the guise of industrialization, colonial exploitation is still occurring. This observation is demonstrated by the perceived need of human fat in Lima to lubricate airplanes and other machinery, and the perceived need of human heads to remedy faulty oil drilling equipment in the Meratus mountains. In countries like Guatemala, in which foreign

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[2] Taussig (1997: 55) portrays a similar situation in regard to spirit possession in his 'surreal ethnography' that takes place in a fictive Latin American country. "In his [Leiris] study of spirit possession among people of Gondar, Ethiopa, whom he visited in 1933, he concluded some possessions were real, some fake, and most were inbetween. This is a real problem for students of ontology. Even sophisticated anthropologists shy away from its implications for truth and being."

influence is widely documented, the "plunder of human resources" is more subtle. Obviously, the children are not intended for the purposes of industrial sacrifice: of the rumours I encountered in Guatemala in 1998, children were believed to be used as *mulas de la droga* into El Salvador and Mexico, or sent to Taiwan and Japan for child prostitution rings, and or "purchased" by rich foreigners.

It is difficult to procure 'ethnographies,' in the classic sense, of the modern Maya. By this remark I mean the traditional means of careful documentation of virtually all aspects of everyday life, each replete with its own chapter. Due to this fact, I have resorted to generalization from the classic texts of Mayan life to demonstrate the importance of children. Many of these ethnographies were written between twenty to sixty years ago; and unlike a particular use of technology, for example, child rearing beliefs and practices are not subject to rapid change.

The birth of a child is met with much happiness and celebration, particularly if it is the first born. The first born alters the status of the parents: "it cements the marriage and establishes the young people as fully mature adults" (Bunzel 1952: 98). The child's soul is vulnerable during this early period, being loosely attached to the body; and great care is taken to ensure the bond between body and soul (Vogt 1969: 184-185). To protect their baby from the evil eye, sorcerers, strong blood, and the contamination of pregnant women and those afflicted with magical disease, the mother will use rue as well as a red cloth covered over the face and head of the baby (Wisdom 1940: 293-294). Steggerda (1941: 49) notes that family ties are very strong among the Yucatan Maya, in stark contrast to a comment of Asturias (1977: 83), who states that "the Indian family continues to decline without having really achieved the characteristics of a family...its existence is purely fictitious." Furthermore, the economic value placed upon children has been noted: "the prevailing view in the village is that children should be useful to their parents" (Redfield 1950: 149). Cosminsky and Scrimshaw (1982: 49) state that the birth of a child reaffirms the status of the woman as a wife.

When a child's life is believed to be in danger, the community will act, as a whole, to prevent the situation. In this respect, the movement of rumour is similar to the formation

of a lynch mob: there is no single person in either. Both Shibutani (1966) and Lienhardt (1975) have noted this similarity, though not in the specific sense that I am attempting. "Rumor, then, is not an individual creation that spreads, but a collective formation that arises in the collaboration of many" (Shibutani 1966: 14). Furthermore, according to the author, some individuals will pass on the information if they believe the group to be in danger (ibid). This observation is particularly valid in regard to the lynch mob that almost executed June Weinstock: a child had gone missing, therefore one of the members of the community was in danger. Coupled with a news article discussing the purchase of Guatemalan children, one can readily discern that this was far from a irrational decision on the part of those in the mob. Even though the child had been located, the rumours and the lynch mob had already been initiated.

According to Scheper-Hughes (1996: 11), rumours of body and organ trafficking are the only response the "most vulnerable people" possess under the compromised situations that exist within those locales where such rumours exist. Tsing (1996: 186) offers a similar line of thought in regards to headhunting rumours in the Meratus: such rumours, while convincing Meratus to take the state seriously, also provide the impetus for the Meratus to refuse the state's explanation that it is the Dayaks, not state raiders, who are the headhunters. In both contexts, such rumours act as forms of resistance.

Indeed, according to Scheper-Hughes (1996: 11), rumour is a form of resistance. This is a valid point considering that these rumours typically arise *after* the crisis has passed. Furthermore, the poor are rarely called upon to speak in truth commissions; and Scheper-Hughes (ibid) states that one could interpret the presence of rumours as a "surrogate form of political witnessing." More importantly, such rumours are an expression of the "abnormality of the 'normal' and the chronic 'state of emergency' in which poor people live" (paraphrasing Taussig 1992: ibid).[3] Child trafficking and organ theft rumours are also an expression of

[3] I caution mistaking the notion of Carnaval (*carnivalesque)* when discussing the abnormality of normality in this context. While subversive and surreal, like the Carnaval, rumours do not possess sexual and humourous content as the examples described in Limón (1997) and Scheper-Hughes (1992). Both are using the works of Bakhtin (1984) and his study on the European carnivals and their expression of 'pure' folk culture.

"the subjectivity of subalterns living in a negative zone" (Scheper-Hughes 1996: 11). Lynch mobs occur after the crisis as well. Granted, there exists a sense of immunity from the state after the crisis has passed; and this immunity could be taken as the primary reason why this phenomenon occurs. But the existence of rumours as a possible form of resistance begs further analysis.

Scott (1986: 6), in his discussion of the 'weapons of the weak,' describes the everyday forms of resistance as "footdragging, dissimulation, false-compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth"; and they "require little or no coordination or planning." According to the author, these forms occur between revolts; revolts that are typically rare because they are usually crushed "unceremoniously" (ibid: 5). Furthermore, he states that after a revolution, the peasant usually finds himself in the ironic position of "having helped to power a ruling group whose plans for industrialisation, taxation, and collectivisation are very much at odds with the goals for which the peasants had imagined they were fighting" (ibid: 6). In summary, there are forms of resistance available to the oppressed that do not include an overt rebellion that tends, and has tended, to lead to bloodshed and/or a new, more coercive state. Child trafficking rumours that implicate the state and internationals is such a form of resistance.

Lynch mobs, however, are not examples of Scott's 'weapons of the weak' because they are overt, open, and not directed against the state. While lynch mobs are open and collective, rumours are closed and collective. Furthermore, lynch mob incidents are directed against those suspected of a crime; and are a direct result of a feeling of frustration towards the law enforcement agencies. Lynch mobs are, however, a form of resistance; a form that begs the state to investigate its law enforcement practices. As Scott (1986: 28-29) makes clear, the modes of resistance "may oscillate from organised electoral activity to violent confrontation, to silent and anonymous acts of footdragging and theft." Such oscillation may be due to changes in social organization of those involved, but are most likely due to changes in the level of repression (ibid: 29). If is this true, how can we explain the presence of both forms of resistance at the same time?

If child trafficking rumours and lynch mobs are two forms of resistance, then they embody a dichotomy: the former is non-violent and typifies what Scott classifies as a 'weapon of the weak,' while the latter is a violent tangible expression. Both forms of resistance exist among the same actors, survivors of a terrible crisis and undergoing the same process of adapting to the changes imposed by the signing of the peace accords. Perhaps, then, these forms represent a double-edged sword; striking both covertly and overtly.

Earlier in the present chapter, I questioned the veracity of child trafficking rumours. Scheper-Hughes (1996: 5) stated that such stories "are repeated and circulated because they are true at that indeterminate level between fact and metaphor"; but within this statement, she critiques critical interpretive anthropologists (Comaroff 1985; Taussig 1992; Nash 1977; Niehaus 1993) and their stance that the truthfulness of metaphor operates by "means of symbolic institutions" (loc.cit). According to Scheper-Hughes (1996: 5) "the metaphors are materialized in the grotesque enactments of medical, economic, and social relations which are experienced at the immediate level of the violated and dismembered body." In a similar line of thought, and as I mentioned above, Campion-Vincent (1997: 32) claims that such rumours "reactivate the immemorial fable of the massacre of the innocents thus appealing to our emblematic mode of thinking while functioning at a metaphoric and emotional level." In contrast, in discussing headhunting rumours among the Meratus, Tsing (1996: fn.2) states that such rumours are not a metaphor for "contemporary conflicts that reconstitute the divide between ancient times and the present."

The typical urban legend is circulated for a variety of reasons: it possess an entertainment value and serves to amuse; it may possess a lesson and serves to instruct; or, it is believed (to a varying degree), and is employed as a warning. On a certain level, child trafficking rumours are true: international adoptions, as I have demonstrated, require a certain amount of economic mobility. More importantly, such rumours are true to those who believe they are the victims: the parents and the community. The actions of lynch mobs toward those suspected of kidnapping speak of the degree that these rumours are believed. Belief in rumours is not restricted to this particular context: I have received countless e-mails from well-meaning friends and family warning me of such items as Edmonton gang member

initiation rites of cars driving at night without their headlights and killing those who 'flash' their lights at them, computer viruses, and the Darwin awards (posthumous awards 'given' for acts of stupidity). All have appeared, in one collection or another, as examples of urban legends; yet, they are sent as warnings because they are believed.

In conclusión, lynch mobs and child trafficking rumours are remarkably similar in origin and intent. The 'culture of terror,' or the 'state of emergency' that was created during the recent crisis has a direct hand in the events that are occurring in Guatemala now. The constant trepidation; the repeated loss of life; the growing frustration with the Guatemalan state, and to an extent, the rest of the world, have left remnants of frustration. Child trafficking rumours, let alone any type of rumour, present an interesting and effective mode of resistance. They subtlely point an accusatory finger at those who are guilty. When a rumour becomes embraced by the media, it becomes 'true.' More importantly, who can accurately say who started the whole process of rumour propagation? Once it is started, members from all ethnicities and spheres spread it: even those who are the suspected traffickers. Effective indeed.

Rumours are translucent, resembling ghosts who haunt the guilty. It is near impossible to pinpoint their origin; and, more importantly, to discern their true nature. Lynch mobs, however, are tangible. They exist, as the pictures in the *Prensa Libre* attest. Lynch mobs express the true nature of the outrage that is felt by those who experienced genocide, and are still experiencing the unwillingness of the military to confess their crimes. In villages where the nearest judge is miles away, where the police have gained an international notoriety for corruption, it is no small wonder that people are taking the law into their own hands. Lynch mobs and child trafficking rumours share this sense of outrage, and both exist as a means of resistance; a long overdue resistance against the state that appears, judging by the attention it has received, to be more effective than the attempts of the 'insurgents' during the civil war.

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Appendix I

Official statement from the New Orleans Police Department concerning rumours of crime ring involved in kidney stealing (www.urbanlegends.com)

January 30, 1997

Internet Subscribers:

Over the past six months the New Orleans Police Department has received numerous inquiries from cooperations and organizations around the United States warning travelers about a well-organized crime ring operating in New Orleans. This information alleges that this ring steals kidneys from travelers, after they have been provided alcohol to the point of unconsciousness.

After an investigation into these allegations, the New Orleans Police Department has found them to be COMPLETELY WITHOUT MERIT AND WITHOUT FOUNDATION. The warnings that are being disseminated through the Internet are FACTIOUS and may in violation of criminal statutes concerning the issuance of erroneous and misleading information. Any organization wishing to speak with members of the New Orleans Police Department is asked to contact Lieutenent Marlon Defillo, Office of Public Affairs at (504) 826-2828.

LIEUTENENT MARLON DEFILLO

Commander,

Public Affairs

Appendix II

Chronology of Investigations of Child Trafficking Allegations (1987-1993)

- (Leventhal 1994: 35-37)

1987 After the appearance of the first allegations that Americans were kidnapping children for the purpose of organ transplants, the following investigated the claims: the U.S. Justice Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. None of the bodies found any evidence supporting the allegations.

07/1987 In response to a European Parliament resolution asking for an investigation of such charges, the European Community Commission stated that it has found no evidence of transplant operations performed in Europe using the organs of Latin American children.

10/1987 The non-governmental organization Defense for Children, International stated that, after attempts to verify such rumours, it has not been able to find any evidence.

08/1988 Gene Pierce, Executive Director of the United Network for Organ Sharing, states that since the establishment of the Scientific Registry, there has been no documentation of any Latin American child under five becoming a donor in the United States.

09/1988 The Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights issues a report stating that they have not found any evidence to indicate that child trafficking is occurring.

09/1988 The Federal Bureau of Investigation states that charges of child trafficking are completely unfounded, based on their investigation.

10/1988 The U.S. National Bureau, which represents the United States in Interpol, states that its records have no requests for criminal investigative assistance either from the police in the United States or police in other countries concerning child trafficking.

06/1989 U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health and U.S Surgeon General release a lengthy letter outlining the impossibility of performing organ transplants secretly; such transplants require trained staff and specialized technical arrangments.

06/1993 The director of complaints at Mexico City's attorney general's office states that he has not seen any cases of victims being kidnapped and reappearing days later with organ removal scars. Director of Mexico's National Registry of Transplants likens the possibility of clandestine hospitals to stealing three space ships from Cape Carnaveral and flying to the moon.

Appendix III
Recent Media Reports on Organ Theft and Trafficking

03/19/99 "Egyptians open probe into alleged sale of orphan organs" (*Edmonton Journal*). Ten Parliament members alleged that an orphanage in Shebin el-Kom sold the organs of children to wealthy Gulf Arabs. No charges had been laid at the time of this report.

03/03/99 "Doctors take organs from live patients. Commons told" (*Edmonton Journal*). Doctors are removing organs from 'brain dead' patients who are still clinically alive. Obviously, this is not new; the controversy lies within whether or not the person is actually dead with no hope of recovery, or as many cases attest, the patient recovers after such a prognosis.

04/04/98 "British pair convicted of stealing body parts for use in sculptures" (*Edmonton Journal*). A sculptor and a laboratory technician were convicted for the theft of human remains; the sculptor was using the parts to make molds. "The sculptures made no big splash in the art world but were so realistic that an anatomical expert contacted the police, suspecting the artist had unauthorized access to human remains.

03/08/98 "'Shot to order' for organ transplants" (*Edmonton Journal*). Human rights activist, Harry Wu, provides proof that the Chinese government is selling the organs of executed criminals. Chinese doctors living in the West have sworn they had been called to prisons to select organs; they claim that 90 per cent of organs transplanted within China come from prisoners.

25/02/98 "Arrests shed light on China's booming trade in body parts" (*Edmonton Journal*). Two Chinese citizens are arrested for attempting to sell organs in the United States.

24/02/98 "Two charged over sale body parts. Chinese nationals arrested in New York" (*Edmonton Journal*).

01/12/98 "Federal attorney rules all Brazilians are organ donors" (*Vancouver Sun*). This law rules that all Brazilians are organ donors unless they register against the practice. (This policy of 'presumed consent' is covered in greater detail in Chapter Five.)

13/12/97 "Family still upset girl was buried without her eyes" (*Edmonton Journal*). After a three year old girl was buried, her family was notified that she had been buried without her eyes. It took three months to get her eyes back, (they were assumed to have been donated); however, by this time, it was too late for her to be buried whole.

Plate 1 - *The Siglo News* (from the week beginning July 1, 1998:6)

Plate 2 – Guatemalan police act against an alleged nursery (*Prensa Libre*, June 29, 1998:3)

Plate 3 – The charred foot of a lynch mob victim in Almolonga
(*Prensa Libre*, July 1, 1998:26)

Plate 4 – Bodies of five lynch mob victims in Comitancillo
(*Prensa Libre*, October 23, 1997:4)

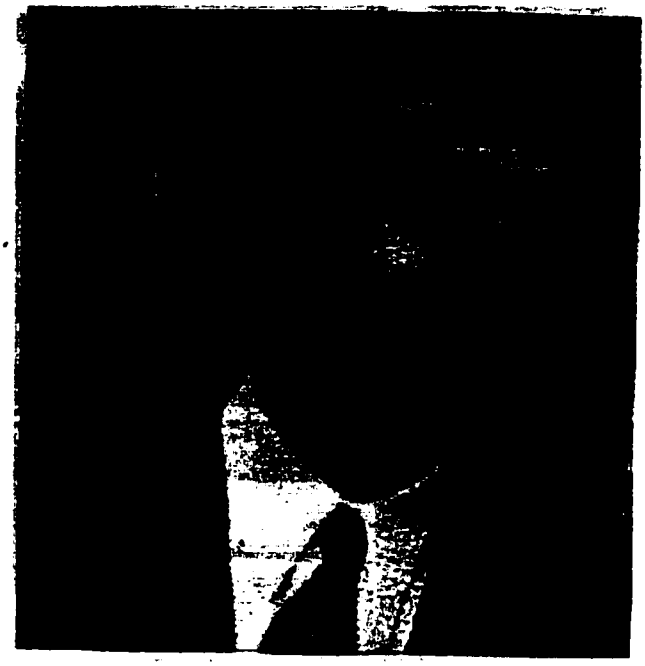

Plate 5 – Jean Arnault commenting on the occurrence of lynch mobs (*The Siglo News*, from the week beginning June 24, 1998:2)

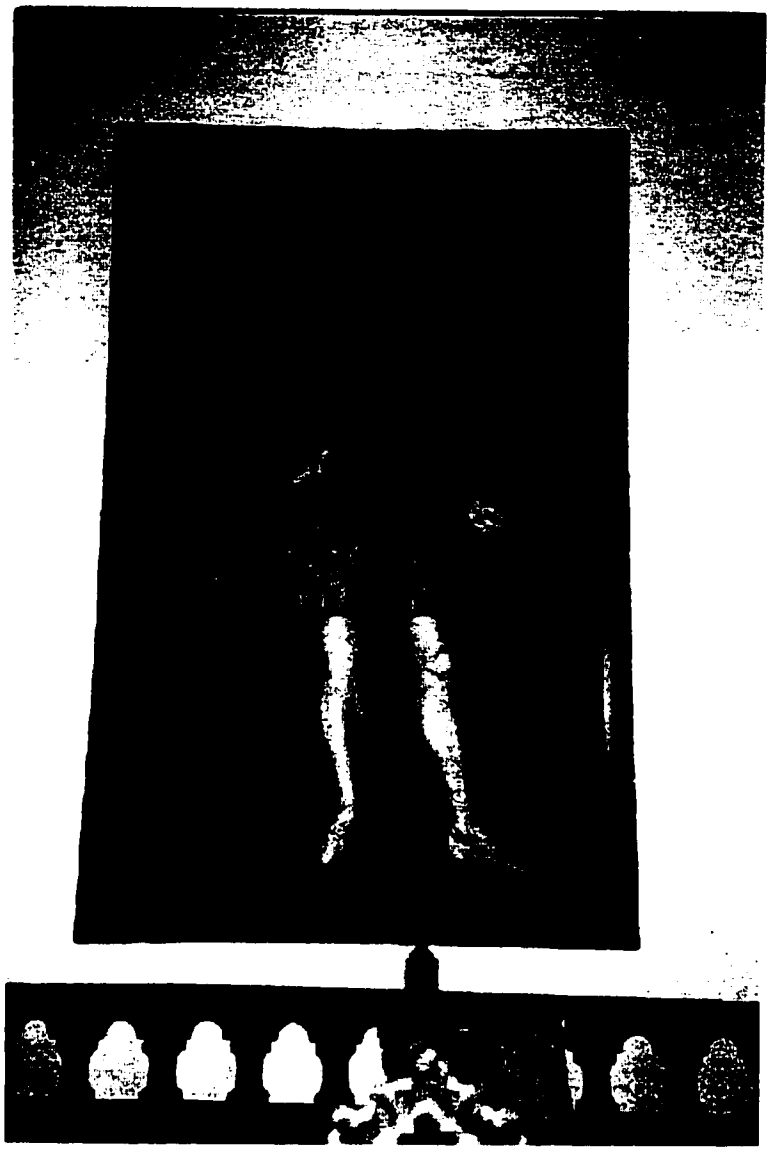

Plate 6 – Painting of Pedro de Alvarado (Casa Popenoe. Antiqua)
(Photo: Derek Honeyman)