UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Certain Triumph: The Left and Guatemala's Transnational Civil War, 1960-1996

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Latin American Studies

by

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The Thesis of Thomas Maggiola is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIRMA	Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica
CISPES	Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador
EGP	Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (Guerrilla Army of the Poor)
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (Revolutionary Armed Forces)
FDCR	Frente Democrático contra la Represión (Democratic Front against Repression)
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation)
MR-13	Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre (13th of November Revolutionary Movement)
NISGUA	Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala
ORPA	Organización del Pueblo en Armas (Armed Revolutionary Organization)
OSPAAAL	Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America
PGT	Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo (Guatemalan Labor Party)
URNG	Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity
WOLA	Washington Office on Latin America

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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This thesis examines the role of transnational networks in shaping the goals, strategies, and tactics of the Guatemalan left during the country's civil war between 1960 and 1996. The thesis presents the argument that transnational networks were fundamental in shaping the positions and strategies of the Guatemalan left via participation in the networks of the internationalist left in the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1970s, when global attention was on Central America, guerrilla organizations sought to cultivate material, political, and moral

support through solidarity organizations abroad. In the 1980s and 1990s, actors in Guatemala and the Global North mutually influenced each other's actions, as both sides were attentive to global circumstances and tried to utilize these forces to further their own political interests. The thesis aims to incorporate Guatemalan actors into the scholarship on the transnational left of this period, as well as to center actors and organizations from the Global South in discussions of the solidarity movement with Guatemala. The analysis is based on internationally oriented publications from Guatemalan guerrilla organizations and the institutional materials of solidarity groups in the Global North, in addition to memoirs and correspondence of individuals involved in these networks.

INTRODUCTION

For two days in August of 1980, activists from around the US convened in Washington, DC for the First National Conference of Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, marking the beginning of the national coordination of solidarity activities toward the Central American country mired in its third decade of civil war. The prior year, the eyes of the world had turned to Central America when the leftist revolutionary organization Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) overthrew the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the latest ruling member of his family's political dynasty in Nicaragua that dated back over four decades. At the same time, leftist guerrilla insurgencies threatened right-wing governments in Guatemala and El Salvador. In the US, policymakers began to discuss potential courses of action in the region. Generally, conservatives pushed to expand military aid to stave off the perceived advance of communism in the hemisphere. Critics of an interventionist foreign policy focused on the abuses of the dictatorships and oligarchies that held power.

These conferencegoers fell into the latter category. However, their interests were not limited to US foreign policy. In their Final Declaration, in addition to condemning interventionist policies implemented by the US, Taiwan, and Israel, they declared support for the Frente Democrático contra la Represión (FDCR), a short-lived revolutionary coalition associated with the labor movement, "as representing in a unified manner, the Guatemalan people."[1] Solidarity activists viewed advocacy for rights in Central America as part of a collective political responsibility and a mutually reinforcing partnership with actors from the Global South. They mobilized to gain support for their arguments among the US public, while insurgents made

[1] "Final Declaration: First National Conference of Solidarity with the People of Guatemala," August 2, 1980, MSS 272, box 4, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.

coordinated efforts at shaping international opinion and challenging their government's narrative, constituting a relationship in which each side engaged with and responded to the other. US-based activists built upon contacts with revolutionaries and human rights activists in Central America to build networks of informational and material exchange. For liberal and leftist observers in the US, the global elements of conflict in Central America had become much clearer after 1979, and increasing numbers began to take action through affiliation with groups such as the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) or the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), which oversaw and coordinated regional solidarity organizations. Such groups focused on dissemination of information via newsletters and events, as well as the facilitation of access to US publics for Guatemalans advocating against the military.

The existence of transnational networks involving Guatemalan leftists was not novel in 1980. These networks connected leftist individuals and groups from around the globe through the distribution of literature, educational exchange, facilitation of travel and exile, and material support.[2] During the period of democratic reformist rule under Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Árbenz from 1944 until 1954 following the October Revolution, leftist exiles from neighboring El Salvador played a role in the founding of communist parties in Guatemala.[3] When the overthrow of Árbenz in 1954 sent many into exile, Guatemalan leftists continued to rely on and expanded their networks.[4] In 1960, the civil war began as new guerrilla organizations developed, maintaining contact with individuals and groups abroad. These connections facilitated travel and study for Guatemalans in locations as diverse as Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, and Czechoslovakia in the

[2] Aldo Marchesi, *Latin America's Radical Left: Rebellion and Cold War in the Global 1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[3] Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 77–78.
[4] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*; Marchesi, *Latin America's Radical Left: Rebellion and Cold War in the Global 1960s*.

1960s and 1970s, where they engaged with internationalist leftist intellectual currents and received military training. The theory of *foquismo* was particularly salient when the Guatemalan insurgency was beginning to take shape in the 1960s due to its role in the 1959 victory of the Cuban Revolution. Revolutionaries in Guatemala adapted *foquista* thought, which entailed an armed popular insurgency based in the countryside, to fit the Guatemalan geographic and social context.

Such transnational networks have been criticized as insufficient and ineffective in meeting their end goal of enacting change, often intended to occur through revolutionary victory.[5] By focusing on the end result, however, this critique ignores the meaningful impacts that these exchanges can have on political subjectivities and strategic outlooks for actors on both sides.[6] This idea begs the question: how did the longstanding transnational intellectual exchange impact the course of the Guatemalan Civil War? How did actors in and outside of Guatemala play off of one another in order to advance their political and strategic interests?

In this thesis, I examine the evolving role of transnational networks in ideological development and revolutionary strategy. I argue that these networks were fundamental in shaping the positions and strategies of the Guatemalan left. As the war progressed, shifting domestic and global contexts necessitated different forms of transnational engagement. When the Sandinista victory provoked Cold War fears among conservatives in the US, insurgents saw the need and the opportunity to leverage the influence of sympathetic populations to garner material and moral support as well as more favorable policies from the US government. In their appeals to audiences in the US and other countries of the Global North, guerrilla organizations tempered their revolutionary rhetoric. Talk of armed popular revolution was interspersed by rhetoric on human

[5] Steve Striffler, *Solidarity: Latin America and the US Left in the Era of Human Rights* (London: Pluto Press, 2019).
[6] Jessica Stites Mor, *South-South Solidarity and the Latin American Left* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022).

rights and liberal electoral democracy, a vision markedly different from previously expressed desires for a rule of the people imposed through military overthrow. Although this discourse modified the ideological roots of the guerrilla movement, it proved useful in advancing strategic interests in a conflict with increasing global ties.

Historiographical Contribution

My thesis aims to expand our understanding of the transnational engagement and strategies of the Guatemalan left during the second half of the twentieth century. Scholars have long explored the transnational elements of Guatemala's political situation in this period. The involvement of the US in Central American affairs has been a consistent theme of historical research dating back to the 1980s. Earlier works on the subject centered the US and focused on bilateral diplomatic relations.[7] Later books, such as Piero Gleijeses' *Shattered Hope* also addressed the 1954 coup but decentered the US, discussing the intricacies of Árbenz's ideological formation and engagement with communists.[8] Work on US interventionism in Central America, even when centering US actors, would increasingly emphasize the disorganized nature of such operations, highlighting the tensions and contradictions of US foreign policy.[9]

More recently, scholars have increasingly employed a transnational lens to provide important insights on Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century. An important line of this research highlights relationships between actors in the Global South. This approach

[7] Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the America Coup in Guatemala*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Richard H Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).
[8] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*.
[9] Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952 – 1954* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Ariel C Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977–1984* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997); Peter Kornbluh and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *The Iran-Contra Scandal: The Declassified History* (New York: The New Press, 1993).

builds on the scholarship on US intervention in the region, shifting its focus to address how Latin American actors interacted, perceived their relations, and adapted to changing geopolitical circumstances. In studying these relations, scholars can highlight agency, alternative visions for the world, and transnational political subjectivities in the Global South. Earlier work with this framework focused on the support for Central American counterinsurgency campaigns from the Global South, contributing to a decentering the overbearing presence of the US in such discussions.[10] Work on South-South interactions involving the left in Latin America, however, has been much more common. In her dissertation, Andrea Oñate-Madrazo examines the relations between El Salvador's FMLN and the revolutionary Cuban government, allowing for a thoughtful analysis of the diplomatic ties between state and nonstate actors.[11] Oñate-Madrazo and others also address Mexico's contradictory role in promoting revolutionary solidarity with leftists abroad while suppressing similar movements at home.[12] Aldo Marchesi makes an important contribution by highlighting the far-reaching impacts of transnational leftist networks on political formation, knowledge production, and solidarity stemming from the movement of exiles around and beyond the Southern Cone.[13] Marchesi's approach informs my first chapter, where I discuss the role of transnational networks in shaping Guatemalan insurgent thought in the 1960s and 1970s. By detailing the many ideological influences of the Guatemalan left, I complicate traditional understandings of Cold War-era leftists in Latin America as being pawns of Cuba or the Soviet Union. Rather, Guatemalan leftists engaged thoughtfully with revolutionary movements around

[10] Armony, *Argentina, the United States, and the Anti-Communist Crusade in Central America, 1977–1984*.
[11] Andrea Oñate-Madrazo, "Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador's Transnational Revolution, 1970-1992" (PhD Dissertation, Princeton, Princeton University, 2016).
[12] Oñate-Madrazo; Renata Keller, *Mexico's Cold War: Cuba, the United States, and the Legacy of the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Eric Zolov, *The Last Good Neighbor: Mexico in the Global Sixties* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).
[13] Marchesi, *Latin America's Radical Left: Rebellion and Cold War in the Global 1960s*.

the world and sought the determine the best path through careful reflection on global and local circumstances.

Scholarly perspectives on Latin America's Cold War also offer many important lessons for this thesis. Greg Grandin has conceived of this period in different ways, talking about both a Cold War starting in 1944 for Latin America as well as a longer "century of revolution" stretching back to the Mexican Revolution.[14] Likewise, Stephen Rabe has framed US involvement in Latin America during the Cold War within the broader context of foreign interventions that can be traced to the end of the nineteenth century.[15] These conceptualizations are important in conceiving of this historical period beyond the externally imposed label of the Cold War, emphasizing the locally embedded cycles of revolution and counterrevolution that can characterize Central America's twentieth century. As these works rightfully point out, the revolutions and counterrevolutions of the Cold War era did not emerge from nothing. Rather, they are part of a longer tradition of power imbalances that have been reinforced and counteracted by different groups in ways that are important to consider. In understanding the experience of the Guatemalan left during the Civil War, we must address the interplay between internal and external factors that shaped the conflict. In other words, these conceptualizations of the Cold War push us to ask how shifting global circumstances shaped the perceptions and goals of the Guatemalan left, how the situation in Guatemala was presented and interpreted in the Global North, and how these two sides were in dialogue throughout the Civil War. Importantly, this approach highlights the agency of Latin Americans in shaping these processes.

[14] Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, Updated (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Gilbert M Joseph and Greg Grandin, eds., *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
[15] Stephen G Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

In further developing scholarship on the transnational engagement of the Latin American left, historians have turned to solidarity and its significance for the politics of both the Global North and Global South. Van Gosse's 1988 work on the Central American solidarity movement in the US traces the political context and development of networks in solidarity with El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.[16] James Green and Heidi Tinsman examine the roots of US-based solidarity organizing with Brazil in the 1960s and Chile in the 1970s. They argue that these experiences of solidarity organizing provided activists with the networks and strategies that they would later deploy in the 1980s with Central America.[17] More recent work on solidarity has aimed to incorporate the experiences and perspectives of Central Americans who participated in this process. Historians Molly Todd and Emily Hobson examine cases of person-to-person collaboration characterized by US activists traveling to the region, developing relationships with Central Americans, and returning to the US to advocate on their behalf.[18] In her analysis of the sister cities movement between the US and El Salvador, Todd discusses the ways that Salvadorans viewed, navigated, and shaped US solidarity activities, as well as how they were active in shaping solidarity agendas according to their desires and interests. Todd and Hobson also discuss the complex negotiation of identity and politics with which activists in both the US and El Salvador had to engage in order to fit certain molds that were more palatable to the other. North-South solidarity collaboration required careful self-representation on both sides.

[16] Van Gosse, "'The North American Front': Central American Solidarity in the Reagan Era," in *Reshaping the US Left: Popular Struggles in the 1980s*, ed. Mike Davis and Michael Sprinker (New York: Verso, 1988), 11–50.
[17] James Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Heidi Tinsman, *Buying into the Regime: Grapes and Consumption in Cold War Chile and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).
[18] Molly Todd, *Long Journey to Justice: El Salvador, the United States, and Struggles against Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2021); Emily K Hobson, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

In these studies of solidarity with Latin America, Todd's book being a notable exception, scholars have generally focused on US-based actors and organizing. Gosse downplays the importance and size of Guatemalan solidarity organizations relative to their counterparts working on El Salvador.[19] While CISPES numerical and organizational strength may have resulted in practical differences on the ground, the importance of solidarity with Guatemala cannot be ascertained only by examining US-based networks. In order to reach a more holistic view of solidarity with Guatemala, I examine the solidarity movement as a multidirectional relationship in which all sides acted toward their political interests.

Jessica Stites Mor has offered valuable insight by investigating the role of South-South solidarity networks involving Latin American actors. She argues that these relationships have been vital for the Latin American left but are understudied due to misconceptions about the "success" of these arrangements, given that most movements have fallen well short of their stated goals, often regarding societal transformation.[20] However, this does not mean that they were not politically impactful within local, domestic, and regional contexts. Rather, these ties have "mobilized a consciousness among the Latin American left and provided an identifiable transnational space for critique and debate" and have created "permanent site[s] of resistance" that are reflected in collective memory.[21] By centering one of her volumes on South-South solidarity in Latin America, she highlights the creation and transformation of political subjectivities over time, thereby facilitating a better understanding of social movements, their relations, and their lasting impacts.

[19] Gosse, "'The North American Front': Central American Solidarity in the Reagan Era," 29–31.
[20] Stites Mor, *South-South Solidarity and the Latin American Left*, 4.
[21] Stites Mor, 4.

Despite the thoughtful development of Central American historiography discussed above, there are many areas where further research is necessary. Despite the recent wave of transnational scholarship involving the left, scholars have yet to incorporate Guatemala into these frameworks. Additionally, in studying these transnational connections, scholars need to clearly address the motivations for and subsequent impacts of transnational engagement for both sides. In order to fill in these gaps, I build on Molly Todd's approach by using a similar framework to incorporate the perspectives, goals, and strategies employed by Guatemalan actors in cultivating solidarity for their cause. In discussing the US side, I hope to explore the complex panorama of solidarity activities with Central America by discussing both grassroots organizations and institutionalized nongovernmental organizations in the Global North. Furthermore, I incorporate Stites Mor's emphasis on South-South relations in order to develop a nuanced understanding of the Guatemalan insurgency's diplomatic strategies with diverse governments, revolutionary movements, international organizations, and sympathetic individuals in the Global South. Transnational networks had a role in shaping the political subjectivities of the Guatemalan left, and I aim to discuss these different forms of engagement and transformations over the course of the civil war.

Sources and Methodology

In conducting research for this thesis, I visited archives in the US, Mexico, and Guatemala. I began the research for this project hoping to write a transnational history of the Guatemalan Civil War with an interest in the movement of refugees and exiles between Mexico and Guatemala during the war. Upon finding the Margarita Melville Papers held in the Special Collections at my home campus, I became aware of, and subsequently interested in, the extensive networks of solidarity activism that proliferated in the 1980s and its connection to prior work and contacts that

Melville had developed in Guatemala as a Maryknoll nun in the 1960s. The Melville Papers are skewed toward a US-based perspective, although there are many 1980s guerrilla newsletters and some EGP and FAR materials dating from the 1960s and 1970s. At Duke University's Human Rights Archive in the Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, I accessed the extensive files of the Washington Office on Latin America, which similarly contained a wide array of documents illustrative of the perspectives of the US-based solidarity movement, although they also collected internationally oriented guerrilla newsletters and communiques. Although the materials produced by guerrillas housed at Duke are not fully representative, the collection has a useful distribution of materials between the EGP, FAR, and ORPA. I have also consulted a collection of ORPA documents privately held in southern California that includes papers from the 1980s and 1990s.

The primary challenge in my research design was to find enough documentation of the perspectives of the Guatemalan left, accounting for the fragmented nature of the guerrilla movement, to make a well-rounded argument about their engagement, goals, and intellectual trajectories. In the Mario Payeras-Yolanda Colom Collection at the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA) in Antigua Guatemala, I reviewed at domestic and international guerrilla publications and communications from the EGP. CIRMA also houses collections of documents from the Dutch and German solidarity committees, including internal documents and correspondence with guerrilla representatives. These collections help to broaden my approach to understanding solidarity across the Global North, rather than just the US.

The archives did not have complete documentation in all areas relevant to my research. For example, material related to the PGT, the fourth faction that would form the URNG in 1982. Given the often contentious relationship between the PGT and other guerrilla organizations, it is important to consider any differences in the PGT's intellectual trajectory and transnational

engagement. However, the available primary sources do not allow for this analysis here. Another challenge with the available sources is the limited material available from the 1960s and 1970s. I use guerrilla memoirs to supplement the primary sources from these decades, as these provide detail on the travels of insurgents. Due to the limited sources available, I restrict my argument about the early period of the war to address broader shifts in transnational engagement, rather than presenting more specific arguments about the nature and impact of these relationships as I do for the period after 1979. Additionally, due to the source base, my discussion of solidarity relationships between Guatemala and the Global North is skewed toward the US. This obscures the role of Western Europe as a key site of expressions of solidarity with Central America at the time.[22] My incorporation of Western European solidarity is restricted to the archival collections of Dutch and German solidarity committees found at the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica in Antigua Guatemala. Furthermore, I was unable to read the full extent of these documents due to language barriers.

Prior to my stay in Guatemala, I spent five weeks in Mexico visiting government archives and newspaper repositories in Mexico City, Quintana Roo, Campeche, Tabasco, and Chiapas. In Campeche, I had the opportunity to interview Guatemalan refugees and a woman who worked on refugee resettlement in the state with the UN and Mexican government. As I developed an analysis that centered intellectual trajectories and social movements, questions on the roles of refugees and the UN in the war were distant from the project's core. I plan to incorporate this research in future projects.

[22] Eline Van Ommen, "Isolating Nicaragua's Somoza: Sandinista Diplomacy in Western Europe, 1977–1979," in *Latin America and the Global Cold War*, ed. Thomas C Field Jr, Stella Krepp, and Vanni Pettinà (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 367–93; Joren F Janssens, "Stumbling among Giants: Europe's Frustrated Solidarity with Guatemala, 1979–1996," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 39, no. 5 (2020): 598–613.

Thesis Structure

In Chapter 1, I examine the period from the beginning of the war in 1960 until 1985. I discuss the Guatemalan insurgency's engagement with currents of the internationalist left and how the guerrillas applied Che Guevara's theory of *foquismo* to Guatemala. I then trace the shifts of the late 1970s and early 1980s that consecrated the opening of the *frente internacional* and changing attitudes toward the application of revolutionary theory to the national context. I incorporate institutional materials from guerrilla movements, such as bibliographies and other informational publications, as well as correspondence and published memoirs written by participants in the insurgency.

In the second chapter, I address transnational engagement of the Guatemalan left from 1979 until the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996. The primary focus is the functioning of the *frente internacional* to cultivate and direct support abroad. In order to fully understand the global engagement of the insurgents in this period, I divide the chapter into sections on solidarity activities in the US, strategies used by Guatemalan insurgents toward the Global North, and the insurgency's relationships with states and movements in the Global South. To substantiate this analysis, I utilize solidarity publications and institutional materials, international guerrilla publications, and correspondence between various parties.

CHAPTER 1
TRANSNATIONAL INTELLECTUAL TRAJECTORIES OF THE GUATEMALAN INSURGENCY, 1960-1985

Upon its founding in 1972, the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres opted to employ the iconic gaze of Che Guevara as its logo, undergirded by the initials 'EGP.' While the Argentine revolutionary's face has remained recognizable long after his 1968 death, the symbolism behind the EGP's appropriation of his likeness shifted between the organization's inception and the escalation of Guatemala's civil war in the early 1980s. Through much of the 1970s, Guatemalan insurgent thought was characterized by adherence to Guevara's *foquista* model of rural uprisings, highlighting the notion of Guatemala's topographical similarity to Cuba, where the strategy proved successful.[23] An EGP training text describes Guevara's writing, alongside that of Marx and Lenin, as having "systematized the scientific or revolutionary experience of great thinkers" and thereby being essential reading for insurgents.[24] In this view, Guevara was put on a pedestal, and revolution could not advance without first the intensive study and replication of historical cases from abroad. By 1981, however, the EGP's rhetoric regarding Guevara had shifted. An EGP publication discussing the symbolism of the group's flag claimed that Guevara's inclusion was symbolic of the organization's political and military structure, as well as an internationalist approach to insurgency.[25] In the span of a few years, Guevara had gone from symbolizing *foquista* leftist revolutionary theory to being reimaged as a representation of international revolutionary solidarity. While many components of this symbolism remained consistent, a consideration of the

[23] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Como Vamos a Tomar El Poder?," June 1979, MSS 272, box 2, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[24] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Los Hombres y Las Abejas," n.d., MSS 272, box 2, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[25] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Compañero, No 5," 1981, WOLA, box 153, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.

overarching historical context adds another layer of meaning to both the changes and continuities in revolutionary symbolism.

What processes guided these changes? Why did the nature of transnational linkages and imaginings of the Guatemalan insurgent left change between 1960 and the early 1980s? In response to these questions, I argue that heightened levels of state repression, failure to attain sustained success, and international conditions spurred changes in guerrilla strategy. These changes are seen in the adoption of a more adaptive ideological approach to revolution and the active incorporation of sympathizers from abroad.

In this chapter, I examine the intellectual shifts in guerrilla thought in Guatemala through a transnational lens, considering how actors and ideologies from other countries influenced Guatemalan insurgent strategy and rhetoric. In addressing the international aspects of the Guatemalan political history, scholars have primarily focused on the role of the United States and its support for the right-wing military regime.[26] Increasingly, however, the role of the US has been decentered, giving greater attention to South-South relations and non-state actors.[27] Additionally, there is a lack of intellectual histories of the Guatemalan left. Scholars have traditionally been more interested in how leftist insurgents were interpreted by the Guatemalan and US governments than how they conceived of their world and their struggle. [28] Within this historiographical context,

[26] Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the America Coup in Guatemala*; Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*; Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952 – 1954*; Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*.

[27] Oñate-Madrazo, "Insurgent Diplomacy: El Salvador's Transnational Revolution, 1970-1992"; Luis Gerardo Monterrosa Cubías, "Una Propuesta Para 'Prender La Flama Revolucionaria En Centroamérica'. Exiliados Centroamericanos En México, 1936," *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 159 (2020): 109–36; Deborah Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror: Guatemala City, 1954-1985* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Heather Vrana, *This City Belongs to You: A History of Student Activism in Guatemala, 1944-1996* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017); Catherine Nolan-Ferrell, "Pedimos Posada: Local Mediators and Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico, 1978-1984," *Historia Crítica* 80 (2021): 153–78..

[28] For examples of intellectual histories, see: Joaquín M Chávez, *Poets and Prophets of the Resistance: Intellectuals and the Origins of El Salvador's Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*.

I contribute to understanding the evolution of leftist thought in Guatemala. By focusing on the ways in which insurgents thought about historical and contemporary revolutionary movements, primarily in the Global South, this chapter advances our knowledge of revolution and guerrilla movements within a broader context of international leftist networks. As such, this analysis moves beyond the constraints of the traditional Cold War framework of bipolarity and superpower conflict.

The Guatemalan Civil War was driven by internal dynamics deeply engrained in a national history of socioeconomic inequality, state repression, and foreign intervention.[29] Despite this domestic nature, the intellectual development of insurgent leaders was not insulated from the global dynamics of the Cold War era. Throughout Latin America, leftists operated across borders, exchanged ideas, and analyzed the overarching global dynamics at play. Because of this, leftist movements throughout the region often acted in ways that reflected common dialogues and understandings, particularly as reflected by patterns of exile and exchange. Insurgents shared strategies and tactics both directly via transnational cooperation and from a distance via the study of other cases and the dissemination of revolutionary texts from other places.[30] Because of these interactions, an intellectual history of the Guatemalan insurgency requires a thorough examination of the ways in which revolutionaries discussed international revolutionary trends, examined historical and contemporary leftist texts, and expressed solidarity with concurrent movements.

Insurgents during the Guatemalan Civil War were not a monolithic group. Within factions that outwardly professed a strict ideology, individuals brought differing intellectual and theoretical

[29] Virginia Garrard-Burnett, *Terror in the Land of the Holy Spirit: Guatemala under General Efrain Rios Montt 1982-1983* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Levenson-Estrada, *Trade Unionists Against Terror: Guatemala City, 1954-1985*; Jennifer Schirmer, *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*.

[30] Marchesi, *Latin America's Radical Left: Rebellion and Cold War in the Global 1960s*; Matthew Rothwell, *Transpacific Revolutionaries: The Chinese Revolution in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

perspectives grounded in their own experiences, studies, and personal connections. At the level of organizational orientation, concrete shifts in ideology and insurgent strategy are discernible over time. This process was shaped by a variety of internal and external factors. In this chapter, I argue that the guerrillas' intellectual atmosphere in the 1960s and much of the 1970s was characterized by theoretical debates and a tendency toward adopting theorized revolutionary models directly from abroad. During this period, insurgents espoused reverence for historical examples of revolution from Russia, China, and Cuba, and used those to inform their thinking about revolutionary strategy and tactics. By the early 1980s, guerrillas were discussing their activities differently. They discussed strategy, tactics, and theory in a flexible manner that acknowledged their failings while adapting their previously strict theoretical against the backdrop of escalating state-sponsored violence directed against civilians. The nature of transnational engagement shifted as well, as guerrillas no longer sought to emulate historical examples. Rather, they focused on expressions of solidarity for contemporary movements in the region, namely the Sandinistas of Nicaragua, the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) in El Salvador, and Castro's revolutionary Cuban government.

Transnational Intellectual Trajectories: From *Foquismo* to the *Frente Internacional*

During the early years of civil war in Guatemala, insurgents organized themselves in clandestine groups that were much smaller than what they would later grow to be. As a result, documentation from the 1960s and much of the 1970s pales in comparison to what would be produced in the 1980s, when violence peaked and Guatemala entered the international spotlight. Nonetheless, early organizational materials and correspondence reveal the inner workings of revolutionary groups in their early days. In this chapter, I do not intend to imply that there was a

singular path to revolutionary involvement for Guatemalan insurgents. Rather, I hope to shed light on some of the myriad influences experienced by revolutionaries in the early part of the war.

One key characteristic of guerrilla thought was the tendency to adopt revolutionary models from abroad. Debates often raged about which model was best, and proponents of different strains of thought clashed. In his 1965 open letter to high-ranking members of the Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre (MR-13), a guerrilla group formed in 1960 by former military officers, Luis Augusto Turcios Lima expends the bulk of his attention denouncing the influence of Trotskyists in the Guatemalan revolutionary movement, including within his own organization. He argues that Trotskyism had "failed as a revolutionary theory," as it has contributed nothing more than "provocation and division."[31] Through this denunciation of an ideological competitor, Turcios Lima made clear that he summarily valued recent successful cases. In his view, as opposed to Trotskyist movements, revolutionary programs pushed in China, North Vietnam, and Algeria had either already triumphed or were perceived to be gaining momentum at the time. Drawing on the writings of both Mao Zedong and Vo Nguyen Giap, he argued that Guatemala was an adequate subject for the application of these proven models of revolution due to its colonial status within the international order.

While Trotskyism presented what Turcios Lima saw as a failed ideology, Guatemalan insurgents did not have to look as far to find a recent example of a resounding revolutionary success. The 1959 Cuban Revolution had an ideological influence on the Guatemalan insurgents in ways that manifested themselves through specific strategic tendencies. In terms of revolutionary strategy, many insurgents gravitated toward the *foquista* model of rural guerrilla revolution, which

[31] Luis Augusto Turcios Lima, "Carta Abierta Del Comandante Luis Augusto Turcios Lima a La Direccion Nacional Del Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre," March 6, 1965, 7, MSS 272, box 4, folder 12, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.

was publicized and popularized by Che Guevara following its success in Cuba. In his 1962 strategic manual *La guerra de guerrillas*, Guevara laid out his three takeaways from Cuba's revolutionary experience: 1) popular forces can beat the state army, 2) the proper conditions for revolution can be made by the insurrectional *foco*, rather than waiting for history to bring these conditions as Marx had posited, and 3) guerrilla warfare in the Americas should take place in the countryside.[32] The influence of these universalizing ideas was evident in discussions of Guatemala's mountainous terrain and emphasis on revolt in the countryside that consistently appeared in guerrilla materials in the 1970s.[33] Guatemala, according to this logic, was fit for the same framework of revolution that was successful in Cuba.

The example of the 1959 Cuban Revolution was unavoidable for insurgents throughout the first two decades of the Guatemalan Civil War. While some actors engaged directly with Cuba through immersive visits to the revolutionary state, others observed from afar via news publications and revolutionary literature. Among those who traveled to Cuba on a trip that spanned 1967 and 1968 were César Montes and Gustavo Porras Castejón. Montes met with Fidel Castro in October 1967. During this meeting, Montes alleged that Castro asked the Guatemalan what he needed in order to fulfill his role as a guerrilla leader, to which Montes replied that the Guatemalan movement needed leadership. To that end, Montes added that he would "study all of [the Cuban revolutionary] experience, especially that of Raul in the second eastern front; that of the Vietnamese; what can be known about Bolivia and Che."[34] Whether or not Montes really said this

[32] Ernesto Guevara, *La Guerra de Guerrillas* (Barcelona: Linkgua, 2007), 12.
[33] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Como Vamos a Tomar El Poder?"; Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Nuestra Concepcion Militar," 1978, MSS 272, box 2, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[34] Julio César Macías, *Mi Camino: La Guerrilla, La Apasionante Autobiografía Del Legendario Combatiente Centroamericano César Montes* (Mexico City: Editorial Planeta Mexicana, 1997), 169.

to Fidel Castro, his inclusion of this anecdote in his memoir likely reflects the nature of his studies during that period.

Montes also pointed to another reason for the perceived leadership deficit among Guatemala's insurgent groups, which was that over fifty combatants were allegedly away from the movement, residing in Cuba due to ideological differences that had not been resolved.[35] This pattern of movement demonstrated a clear connection between the island's revolutionary leadership and the Guatemalan left. Although he would not have been afforded the high audiences given to Montes, Porras Castejón attributed a large part of his adoption of revolutionary thinking to this same trip to Cuba.[36]

While the example of Cuba helped to bring ideological cohesion to certain segments of the insurgency, connections with Cuba also helped to drive some of the divergences between guerrilla factions in Guatemala. Greg Grandin explains that despite its organizational strength through rural and urban networks, the Partido Guatemalteco de Trabajo (PGT) did not change its perspectives to accommodate "its more militant, Cuba-fired members."[37] Rather, PGT leadership opted to pursue potential political openings, thereby pushing away some of its younger members. The FAR was founded by members of the PGT's youth core who had received education and guerrilla training in Cuba "without obtaining permission from party leaders."[38] Cuba, both through its revolutionary example and its internationalist outreach, served to divide an older generation of communists and socialists who hoped to avoid armed conflict from a new generation of leftist militants who were in tune with a rising tide of revolutionary internationalism initiated by the guerrilla triumph in Cuba.

[35] Macías, 169–70.
[36] Gustavo Porras Castejón, *Las Huellas de Guatemala*, 3rd ed. (Guatemala City: F&G Editores, 2009), 275.
[37] Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War*, 92.
[38] Grandin, 92–93.

That Guatemalan insurgents in the 1960s and 1970s were deeply influenced by the Cuban Revolution was no accident. As historian Jessica Stites Mor explains, Cuba exercised a foreign policy of internationalist solidarity toward the Global South.[39] Under Castro, Cuba asserted its leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement, hosting the 1966 Tricontinental Congress in Havana, and made efforts to further incorporate Latin American actors. At the conference, Cuban leaders founded the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL). OSPAAAL coordinated the production and global distribution of books and periodicals, which often promoted "a set of explicit themes that dovetailed with Castro's vision of revolutionary Cuba."[40] In addition to the Cuban experience, OSPAAAL publications gave particular visibility to the Viet Cong insurgency through a series of posters created by renowned artist René Mederos Pazos. Considering the circulation of people and ideas between Guatemala and Cuba, it is likely that such materials made it to Guatemala and contributed to shaping the revolutionary outlook of the budding insurgency.

The most consistent point of reference outside of Latin America for Guatemalan insurgents in the 1960s and 1970s was Vietnam. In a 1972 letter to US activist and former Maryknoll missionary Margarita Melville, EGP members Willy Cruz and Gustavo Porras Castejón pointed to the southeast Asian country as the vanguard of a global revolutionary movement without borders.[41] Other materials from the EGP in the late 1970s demonstrate the continuity of this connection, as demonstrated by the inclusion of works by Ho Chi Min and Vo Nguyen Giap in the EGP's bibliography of foundational revolutionary texts.[42] In his memoir, FAR leader Pablo Monsanto

[39] Stites Mor, *South-South Solidarity and the Latin American Left*, 51–62.
[40] Stites Mor, 58.
[41] Gustavo Porras Castejón and Willy Cruz to Margarita Melville, "Beginnings of EGP," Letter, 1972, 2, MSS 272, box 1, folder 2, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[42] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Bibliografía Para La Formación de Militantes y Cuadros," n.d., MSS 272, box 2, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.

recalled the importance of leftist texts that were distributed among guerrillas in their mountain encampments in the 1960s, which touched on events in the Soviet Union, Vietnam, China, and the Philippines, as well as general Marxist theory.[43] Contrary to the popular trope of isolated guerrillas in the mountains, Guatemalan insurgents were very much in touch with the rest of the world during these moments of ideological formation.

Although Turcios Lima adopted a revolutionary vision that reflected recent international experience, he and those surrounding him were not entirely dismissive of Guatemala's particular national context. César Montes, the guerrilla leader who took over the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) after Turcios Lima's death, wrote in the prologue to his predecessor's short posthumous biography that a main takeaway from the revolutionary example of Turcios Lima was that insurgents "should apply revolutionary principles to the concrete situation of the country" in which they act, because it is unnecessary "to put 'new remedies in old pants.'"[44] This principle was contradictory in some ways, as it encouraged the flexible adaptation of seemingly rigid principles. For example, Turcios Lima found the case of Russia's 1917 revolution to be "completely outside of the national reality."[45] A more applicable case is found in Vietnam, which for Turcios Lima demonstrated the necessity of a prolonged war waged by the masses as well as the inadequacy of primarily urban insurrection. Guatemala, he thought, was fit for a rural guerrilla warfare due to its mountainous countryside, which allowed the adequate conditions for victory.[46] He implicitly recognized the similarities between Guatemala and Vietnam in terms of terrain and colonial relationships, making the Vietnamese revolutionaries adequate role models to follow. By

[43] Pablo Monsanto, *Somos Los Jóvenes Rebeldes, Guatemala Insurgente* (Guatemala: F&G Editores, 2013), 253–54.
[44] César Montes, "Prólogo," n.d., 3, MSS 272, box 4, folder 12, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[45] Turcios Lima, "Carta Abierta Del Comandante Luis Augusto Turcios Lima a La Direccion Nacional Del Movimiento Revolucionario 13 de Noviembre," 3.
[46] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Como Vamos a Tomar El Poder?"

drawing upon both the failures and successes of the Vietnamese revolutionaries, Guatemalan insurgents took away both negative and positive lessons from the experiences of their counterparts in other parts of the world.

Beyond Cuba, other socialist countries with recent experience in warfare had direct involvement in shaping the ideological and strategic formation of Guatemala insurgents. At the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Havana, Montes recalled that the Guatemalans, led by Turcios Lima, felt honored to be placed alongside Cuban and Vietnamese revolutionary leaders in leading the conference.[47] This conference served to bring together decolonial and revolutionary movements from across Africa, Asia, and the Americas, thereby allowing for the exchange of ideas and solidarity among groups in distant places with similar gripes against their oppressors.[48] Beyond promoting general solidarity among the countries of the third world, the networking at the conference produced tangible results for the Guatemalan insurgents. For example, Pablo Monsanto recalled that the Vietnamese offered Turcios Lima military training scholarships for three of his followers.[49] In his memoir, César Montes dedicates as much time to recounting his visit to Vietnam as he does his visit to Cuba. Montes described the warm welcome he received from revolutionary leaders in Hanoi, who allegedly invited him to stay, study revolutionary theory, and eventually get married in the country.[50] He would later claim that the primary lesson that he took away from his stay in Vietnam was the importance of revolutionary unity and thoughtful leadership.[51] After his

[47] Macías, *Mi Camino: La Guerrilla, La Apasionante Autobiografía Del Legendario Combatiente Centroamericano César Montes*, 176–77.
[48] Manuel Barcia, "'Locking Horns with the Northern Empire': Anti-American Imperialism at the Tricontinental Conference of 1966 in Havana," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 7, no. 3 (September 2009): 210; Lani Hanna, "Tricontinental's International Solidarity: Emotion in OSPAAAL as Tactic to Catalyze Support of Revolution," *Radical History Review*, no. 136 (January 2020): 171.
[49] Monsanto, *Somos Los Jóvenes Rebeldes, Guatemala Insurgente*, 267.
[50] Macías, *Mi Camino: La Guerrilla, La Apasionante Autobiografía Del Legendario Combatiente Centroamericano César Montes*, 182–87.
[51] Macías, 190.

trip to Vietnam, Montes went to North Korea. Montes described the North Korean solidarity efforts as more of a strategic formality as compared with what he had received in Vietnam, which he connected to the international spirit of collaboration resulting from China's assistance in the Korean War.[52] Montes had contact with various members of the North Korean ruling party, who offered arms under the condition that Guatemalan insurgents attained internal unity in their movement.[53] After Montes' visit, a group of Guatemalans that included Mario Payeras stayed to further study North Korea's military experience.[54] As these examples demonstrate, transnational movements of insurgents to places like Cuba, Vietnam, and North Korea were extremely important in the ideological formation of Guatemala revolutionary leaders.

In thinking about the national identity of Guatemala, insurgent leaders often cited the presence of several indigenous nations as what made the country stand out against others going through similar revolutionary processes. However, during the 1960s and 1970s, revolutionary leaders did not engage with questions surrounding indigeneity in a substantive way. When discussing the national situation of his country in the 1965 open letter, Turcios Lima focused instead on the stark socioeconomic divisions within Guatemala. A short biography of Turcios Lima, likely written and printed shortly after his death in 1966, illustrated the disconnect between revolutionary leaders and indigenous Guatemalans. The biography starts with a quote from the *Popol Vuh*. Orlando Fernández, the biography's author, then went on to propose that Turcios Lima was, like most Guatemalans, "a synthesis of Spanish and indigenous characteristics." "Behind his predominantly European appearance," Fernández wrote, "there were hidden clear elements of the

[52] Macías, 195–96.
[53] Macías, 196.
[54] Macías, 196; Sarah Foss, "The National Tomorrow: The Utopian Vision of Octubre Revolucionario in the Aftermath of Genocide in Guatemala," *The Latin Americanist* 64, no. 4 (2020): 426.

Indian psychology."[55] Such a description of a white guerrilla leader downplays the particularities of the indigenous experience in Guatemala. By equating his concern for the native peoples of the country with having certain indigenous characteristics, indigenous leaders and perspectives were not holistically valued by insurgent groups. ORPA leader Rodrigo Asturias, better known as Gaspar Ilom and for the son of Nobel Prize winning writer Miguel Ángel Asturias, also coopted aspects of Indigenous identity with his nome de guerre.[56] A similar vein of imposition of a certain vision over Guatemala's indigenous peoples is present in a 1978 EGP article entitled "How our society is and what we should do to change it." The document presents the argument that the EGP's revolutionary class war "should be a national war because it encompasses all of the ethnic groups that inhabit our country, incorporating them equally into a single process, but respecting their particularities."[57] Again, this portrayal of the role of the indigenous in the revolutionary process excludes the possibility of indigenous leadership, strategies of resistance, and epistemologies. While rhetorically trumpeting the importance of national context, this revolutionary vision of the 1960s and 1970s did not go very far in practice to incorporate strategies that differed from the leftist international experience of recent decades.

This incorporation of indigeneity into the revolutionary movements reflects the visions of indigeneity under the governments of Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Árbenz between the 1944 revolution and 1954, the year of the CIA-backed coup. Coinciding with the emergence of *indigenismo* throughout Latin America, Guatemalan reformers in this period attempted to make the Indigenous population into model citizens, rooted in stereotypes about literacy and hygiene.

[55] Orlando Fernández, "Luis Augusto Turcios Lima: Biografía," n.d., 3, MSS 272, box 4, folder 12, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[56] Organización del Pueblo en Armas, "Publication in Commemoration of the 14th Anniversary of ORPA's Public Emergence," 1993, Personal collection of anonymous.
[57] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Como Es Nuestra Sociedad y Que Debemos Hacer Para Cambiarla," 1978, MSS 272, box 2, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.

The Árbenz government "maintained a high-modernist vision for development" by focusing on economic productivity, but Indigenous people selectively engaged in these programs in an expression of their reconceptualized citizenship that reflected certain disconnects between the government's development plans and Indigenous realities.[58] Guatemalan insurgents in the 1960s and 1970s likely took inspiration in these visions and incorporations of indigeneity, given the direct opposition between the pre- and post-1954 moments and the reverence that many held for the successes of the most recent Guatemalan revolution.

Guerrilla leaders often fashioned the revolutionary movement's shortcomings as a scientific self-critique, a constant feature of the 1960s and 1970s, which maintained an atmosphere in which revolutionary ideas could be contested and debated among the leadership. Pablo Monsanto, FAR leader, claimed that in 1968 he facilitated the gathering of many of the leading figures of the revolutionary movement "with the goal that they join together in the effort of starting a process of reflection, of critical analysis and self-criticism" as well as develop new political and military strategies.[59] EGP leader Mario Payeras also demonstrated a keen awareness of shifts in both guerrilla and counterinsurgent strategy in the way by which he analyzed the history of first two decades of the conflict, dividing up the evolution of the tactics of each side into phases characterized by shifts in strategy, size, and location, among other factors.[60] With the clarity of hindsight, the EGP's Payeras described in 1986 the reliance on *foquista* theory as one of the biggest hindrances to the advancement of the revolution during the earlier years.[61] For Payeras, the inefficacy of the strategy was evident from earlier operations going back to 1962. But the ideas

[58] Sarah Foss, *On Our Own Terms: Development and Indigeneity in Cold War Guatemala* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 50–106.
[59] Monsanto, *Somos Los Jóvenes Rebeldes, Guatemala Insurgente*, 443.
[60] Mario Payeras, *Los Fusiles de Octubre: Ensayos y Artículos Militares Sobre La Revolución Guatemalteca, 1985-1988* (Mexico City: Juan Pablos Editor, 1991), 12–27.
[61] Payeras, 89.

persisted throughout the following decades, during which certain ideas helped and others hurt the revolutionary cause. In Payeras' view, the theory failed to appropriately account for the response of the state army, which had antiguerrilla experience, as well as the military education component through which new guerrillas would acquire practical and theoretical knowledge.[62]

What guerrillas often framed as a romanticized process of revolutionary theorizing and self-criticism is better described as a process of trial and error that was attuned to domestic and international circumstances. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, three interrelated factors pushed insurgents to revise and adapt their ways of thinking about their fight. First, increasing state violence directed at the civilian population during the presidencies of Fernando Romeo Lucas García (1978-1982) and Efraín Ríos Montt. In a New York Times article from March 1982, just weeks before the coup that would remove Lucas García from power, insurgent sources are cited as pointing to the intensification of the conflict as creating the need to reevaluate their approach and adapt to changing circumstances.[63] Secondly, in addition to the changing nature of their opposition's tactics, the insurgents also had to grapple with their own inability to find prolonged success in their fight against the government. Revolutionaries often cited their failures as part of a "scientific process" of refinement of revolutionary theory through trial and error. While this had been the case since the beginning of the war, the increased repression by the state served to highlight the revolution's shortcomings and inabilities to make perceived progress toward victory. In the eyes of many, the 1980s were a "new chapter" in Guatemala's revolutionary fight.[64] As the EGP leadership began to increasingly emphasize, it was up to the Guatemalan revolutionaries to

[62] Payeras, 92–94.
[63] "Guatemala's 4 Main Rebel Groups Join Forces," *New York Times*, March 3, 1982, sec. A, MSS 272, box 4, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[64] Payeras, *Los Fusiles de Octubre: Ensayos y Artículos Militares Sobre La Revolución Guatemalteca, 1985-1988*, 110.

learn from international examples, but they "should take out the aspects that are valuable and applicable to our reality," as it is their role to "discover and systematize the laws of Popular Revolutionary War in our country."[65] While similar rhetoric was present during the 1960s and early 1970s, the persistence of such lines of reasoning demonstrates the continued failure to attain these stated goals. The learning process continued as a series of trials and errors. Finally, the internationalization of the conflict played a major role in determining the shifting insurgent tactics. Although the internationalization of the conflict happened as a result of certain factors outside of Guatemala, such as the rise of human rights discourse and increased domestic protest against US foreign policy throughout the 1970s, Guatemalan insurgents sought to capitalize on this wave by opening up the "international front" of the war.

These shifts occurred in various facets of insurgent strategy, tactics, and thinking. One strategic change in response to a specific perceived failure was the increasing focus on political mobilization as a complement to armed insurgency. The formation of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) demonstrated the convergence of interests among revolutionary factions and a willingness to look past certain ideological conflicts in the hope of attaining common goals. The URNG was an umbrella organization that encompassed the EGP, the FAR, the Organización del Pueblo en Armas (ORPA), and the Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo (PGT). The URNG united a wider range of actors in the revolutionary fight, welcoming "the workers, the semiproletariat, the campesinos; … the employees who earn little, the small shopkeepers and entrepreneurs, the middle campesinos; … the students and the professionals, those who live in marginal areas, the unemployed, the underemployed."[66] This more inclusive vision of who could

[65] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Nuestra Concepcion Militar."
[66] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Bajo La Bandera de La Unidad Revolucionaria," April 1983, 4, MSS 272, box 4, folder 14, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.

be a part of the revolution signified a loosening of the traditional theoretical grounding of the movement that had a more limited vision of revolutionary sectors and ideological commitment.

The formation of the URNG and the consequent ideological concessions did not satisfy everyone, however. Octubre Revolucionario, named in homage to both the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the 1944 start to the Guatemalan Revolution, was a group that broke off of the EGP due to its disagreement with the shift in revolutionary strategy.[67] Octubre Revolucionario called for stricter theoretical adherence to Marxist principles and revolutionary examples, although in a manner that was more attuned to shifting contemporary contexts. For example, the organization retook the image of the Soviet Union as representative of "the greatest conquest carried out by the proletariat to this day" and lauded the "advances of socialist democracy" under Gorbachev as solidifying the position of "socialism as an alternative to the crisis of capitalism and imperial domination."[68] Octubre Revolucionario also maintained a reverence for the historical example of the Cuban Revolution alongside the continuous revolutionary internationalism emanating from the island since victory in 1959.[69] Such references are consistent with the principles espoused by the organization in institutional documents, which emphasize the Marxist study of international revolutionary experiences. For Octubre Revolucionario, there should be no "pretense of originality in questions of concept and method," as everything would be grounded in this detailed study.[70] In their conception, Guatemala's revolutionary path was backward from the start. Although revolutionary examples abroad demonstrated a process from class conflict to popular insurrection

[67] Foss, "The National Tomorrow: The Utopian Vision of Octubre Revolucionario in the Aftermath of Genocide in Guatemala," 242; Comité de Dirección de Octubre Revolucionaria, "Informe a Partidos, Organizaciones Hermanas, Fuerzas de La Solidaridad y Camaradas de Lucha Sobre Nuestra Constitución Como Organización Revolucionaria," October 1987, 1, MSS 272, box 4, folder 2, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[68] Comité de Dirección de Octubre Revolucionaria, "Informe a Partidos, Organizaciones Hermanas, Fuerzas de La Solidaridad y Camaradas de Lucha Sobre Nuestra Constitución Como Organización Revolucionaria," 3.
[69] Comité de Dirección de Octubre Revolucionaria, 3.
[70] Comite Provisional de Direccion, "Principios Organicos y de Funcionamiento," August 1984, 12, MSS 272, box 4, folder 2, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.

to organized armies, the leadership of Octubre Revolucionario viewed the history of Guatemala's guerrilla movement as having failed to replicate these conditions, instead in 1963 focusing on topographic characteristics that would supposedly incite popular guerrilla warfare in Sierra de Las Minas.

Despite its reverence for history and theoretical approaches to revolution, Octubre Revolucionario was similar to the URNG in their conception of the need to adapt to the changing course of the war and the shifting international conditions. Revolutionary theory and models could not be applied in any social and geographic context. Rather, leaders needed to be thoughtful in the application of these approaches. Like with the URNG, part of the initial founding of Octubre Revolucionario was framed as the need for new strategies in the face in heightened repression.[71] In 1990, the organization pointed to events such as the Sandinista electoral defeat, the lack of popular insurrection in conjunction the urban offensive in San Salvador, and the US invasion of Panama as evidence of "the end of a whole cycle of revolutionary fighting and the beginning of another."[72] Revolutionary organizations would have to recognize the changes in efficacy of various military and political strategies. From the perspective of Octubre Revolucionario, this shift called for going back to the basics: reconnecting with revolutionary theory. For the wider URNG organization, this shift pushed toward a wider range of political solutions that were less reliant on armed insurgency. Mario Payeras, a primary figurehead of the Octubre Revolucionario splinter group, reflected this shift in thinking with his reengagement of history. However, he did so in a way that differed from the internationally-oriented approach taken by insurgents in the 1960s and 1970s, opting instead to conduct close examinations of histories of Guatemalan armed

[71] Octubre Revolucionario, "Opinión Política, No. 2," February 1985, 6–7, MSS 272, box 4, folder 3, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[72] "Opinión Política, Órgano Divulgativo de Octubre Revolucionario, No. 16," March 1990, MSS 272, box 4, folder 3, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.

insurrections in 1871, 1920, and 1944.[73] This perspective demonstrates that although a variety of perspectives still vied for influence in the 1980s, they had collectively moved away from the ways of thinking and strategizing that had characterized the first two decades of the war.[74] Although ideological disagreement remained a constant feature of the Guatemalan left, the formation of the URNG and their call for unity signaled a distinct shift that was rooted in the shifting circumstances of the war.

Perceptions of the role held by Indigenous people in the revolutionary movement also underwent a shift during this time, as more attention was given to the what was commonly referred to as the *cuestión étnico-nacional*. Historian Sarah Foss argues that for Mario Payeras, years of living in close quarters with indigenous families in the Ixcán and northern El Quiché regions as part of his revolutionary activities fundamentally altered his outlook on indigeneity in Guatemala.[75] This revised perspective included greater respect and inclusion for indigenous perspectives, making Payeras stand out in comparison with his fellow EGP leaders.

In 1985 and 1986, American academics and activists Tom and Margarita Melville corresponded with Guatemalan revolutionary actors about the *cuestión étnico-nacional*. They were approached with hopes that the revolutionary effort could be strengthened through their scholarly expertise and experiences, building on relationships that the Melvilles had developed with revolutionaries during their time in Guatemala as a Maryknoll sister, which will be discussed in the following chapter.[76] A revolutionary named Carmen wrote to the Melvilles, insisting that the

[73] Payeras, *Los Fusiles de Octubre: Ensayos y Artículos Militares Sobre La Revolución Guatemalteca, 1985-1988*, 100.
[74] Octubre Revolucionario, "Opinión Política, No. 5," October 1985, MSS 272, box 4, folder 3, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[75] Foss, "The National Tomorrow: The Utopian Vision of Octubre Revolucionario in the Aftermath of Genocide in Guatemala," 427.
[76] Carmen to Margarita Melville and Tom Melville, "Letter from Carmen to Melvilles," September 6, 1985, 4, MSS 272, box 1, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.

their contribution was "necessary because those of us who work on other levels and dimensions [of the revolutionary fight] cannot take on it all or develop it fully." Carmen also acknowledged the previous failure to adequately think about the role of indigenous peoples in the revolution, stating that "many times it would seem that one does not see or does not value things that are important, when in reality it is that they do not have the capacity or the time to also address and deal with it deeply."[77] These two examples demonstrate how non-indigenous Guatemalan revolutionaries had different ways of learning more about the country's indigenous populations. However, the increased attention given to such questions is shared in both cases.

This renewed focus on the indigenous peoples of Guatemala brought with it some new perspectives, but certain overarching attitudes toward their role in the revolution remained consistent. In the letter to the Melvilles, Carmen suggested that indigenous groups have an important role in the revolution and that indigenous leaders in particular are key actors. Carmen also highlighted the role of psychological and cultural factors as "the deep unpacking and revindication" of these requires, "in addition to a theoretical framework, the militant contribution of those who live that predicament and circumstances within the indigenous world."[78] Despite this elevation of the role of indigenous leaders, however, they were nonetheless expected to fit within a specific theoretical basis that, in the eyes of revolutionaries, "made them capable of understanding, interpreting, and systematizing their own experience, and consequently, the ethno-national revindications."[79] In a set of published interviews from 1993, ORPA leader Gaspar Ilom defended the lack of Indigenous representation among URNG leadership, arguing that the

[77] Carmen to Melville and Melville, 1.
[78] Carmen to Melville and Melville, 2.
[79] Carmen to Melville and Melville, 3.

attainment of high-ranking positions had "nothing to do with one's ethnic or cultural background."[80]

The Melvilles' correspondence with Guatemalan revolutionaries signaled another important shift in the guerrilla strategy, and in particular their transnational interactions. As laid out above, transnational linkages had always been a key part of the revolutionary movement. Most of these transnational connections during the first two decades of the conflict, however, were with groups that were either actively engaged in armed insurrection or had done so in the preceding decades. Particularly in the early 1980s, the insurgents expand their international strategy to encompass sympathizers in the places like North America and Europe. The shift is notable, as it involved heavily contrasting rhetorical approaches toward the US and Guatemala. While strongly condemning the US government for imperial action in Latin America, the insurgents took care to welcome US citizens who were dissatisfied by their country's foreign policy, particularly in terms of respect for human rights.

The reevaluation of the position of Indigenous peoples in the revolution is best viewed as part of a global movement to better understand Indigenous experiences and epistemologies in the 1970s. In 1971, a group of anthropologists met for the Symposium on Inter-Ethnic Conflict in South America, where they produced the "Declaration of Barbados" in dialogue with Indigenous movements throughout the Americas. In the document, they highlighted the colonial subjugation of the region's Indigenous groups and outlined the roles of the state, of religious missions, and of anthropologists in countering these forces.[81] While it is less likely that this academic shift directly

[80] Organización del Pueblo en Armas, "Publication in Commemoration of the 14th Anniversary of ORPA's Public Emergence," 10–11.
[81] "The Declaration of Barbados: For the Liberation of the Indians," *Current Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (June 1973): 267–70.

impacted guerrilla thought, actors such as Margarita Melville, who held a doctoral degree in anthropology, was likely influenced.

Shifting Regional Circumstances

In the wake of the Sandinista victory in 1979, the EGP discussed three primary takeaways in its *Guerra Popular* newsletter. First, they argued, events in Nicaragua confirmed that a people united and committed to armed fighting, if "led by a vanguard with correct ideas" is capable of taking power against a strong military. Secondly, the case serves as an example – "like Cuba did twenty years ago – that in this part of the world, dominated by *gringo* imperialism," revolution is possible if it has a "correct line" and is able to exploit enemy weaknesses. Finally, they posited that the Sandinista victory demonstrated that "armed fighting is the only path to make the revolution and that the armed fighting is different in each country, because each country has distinct conditions."[82] The nature of these lessons signals a clear shift from how insurgents discussed revolutionary theory and tactics. When Guatemalan guerrilla groups were emerging in the early 1960s, they took attempted directly to implement tactics from abroad, such as Guevara's *foco* theory, under the guise that it would be universally applicable. In the late 1970s, guerrillas instead took generalized lessons and moral inspiration from the victories of contemporary movements. By describing general similarities between Nicaragua and Guatemala, but also emphasizing the importance of strategies tailored to the national context, EGP leaders highlighted the need to engage deeply with the specificities of Guatemala's geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic makeup while consequently situating themselves as the ones fit to be this leading

[82] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Guerra Popular, No 8," August 1979, 2, MP-YC 56, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.

vanguard. Now, the discussions of Guatemala's distinct national case in organizational discourse matched up with their actions.

The reinterpretation of the role of transnational linkages in insurgent strategy culminated with the symbolic opening of the *frente internacional* in the early 1980s. In February 1981, the EGP reinitiated publication of their international magazine *Compañero* and published their first international newsletter, *Informador Internacional*, the following December. In these documents, guerrilla leadership explained that the "eyes of the world" were trained on Central America due to the "worldwide implications" of their fight for justice, recent Sandinista victory, and perceived revolutionary momentum in El Salvador. They called for solidarity in their fight for a "revolutionary, popular, and democratic government" in the form of denunciations of US intervention in the region, dissemination of guerrilla publications abroad, and raising awareness of the "genocidal and cowardly nature" of Lucas García's military offensive.[83]

Historians James Green and Heidi Tinsman have argued that solidarity movements with Brazil in the 1960s and Chile in the 1970s respectively established networks of sympathetic individuals and developed tactics that would facilitate wide-ranging solidarity activities regarding Central America in the 1980s.[84] Guatemalan insurgents' approach to the *frente internacional* demonstrated an acute understanding of these established audiences with interest in questions of justice in Latin America and the possibilities for attracting their support. The FAR also started disseminating international newsletters, mailed from Mexico, at the beginning of 1981. Their rhetoric catered to the perspectives of their audience, made up of sympathizers in the in the US

[83] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Compañero, No 4," February 1981, WOLA, box 153, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University; Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Informador Internacional, No 1," December 1981, MP-YC 60, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamerica.
[84] Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States*; Tinsman, *Buying into the Regime: Grapes and Consumption in Cold War Chile and the United States*.

and abroad, as they focused on issues more likely to increase appeal to a wider audience, such as human rights, corruption, democracy, and rights of women and indigenous peoples. In their second newsletter, published in February 1981, the FAR included short articles on hunger, democratic failings, and the imposition of new taxes that negatively impacted the poor masses.[85] The following issue focused on Belizean independence, while the following two addressed the role of women and indigenous peoples in the revolution respectively.[86] Rather than trumpeting the merits of leftist theory, or even discussing some of the more radical components of their revolutionary vision, insurgent leaders adopted a moderated rhetoric. The ways that that Guatemalan insurgents and US solidarity activists played off of each other will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Conclusion

Throughout the Guatemalan Civil War, transnational linkages played a prominent role in revolutionary discourse, strategies, and tactics. The focal points of these connections shifted in origin and strength over time. As Guatemalans adapted to changing circumstances both on the ground and in the international arena, they had to engage with these connections in different ways. The 1960s were characterized by travel and intellectual exchange. Some of these connections have been the focus of scholarship, such as the Cuban and Chinese revolutionary connections with Central America. However, other revolutionary governments, like those in Vietnam and North Korea, played important roles that have long been glossed over by scholars. As these interactions

[85] Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes, "Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes de Guatemala, Organo de Opinion, Edicion Internacional, No 2," February 1981, MSS 272, box 2, folder 3, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[86] Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes, "Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes de Guatemala, Organo de Opinion, Edicion Internacional, No. 3," March 1981, MSS 272, box 2, folder 3, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.

took place in the early years of the ideological formation of many young guerrillas, they left profound marks on how the Guatemalans conceived of their fight.

In the 1970s, the guerrillas turned their focus to the implementation of the tactics and strategies learned through the insurgent networks. This was seen through the attempts at inciting popular uprising through the establishment of rural *focos*, adapted from the Cuban experience. However, as this strategy failed to accomplish its goal, guerrillas stepped back and reevaluated their approach. In the late 1970s, the Guatemalan army ramped up the intensity of its counterinsurgency operations, initiating the deadliest period of the conflict. Because of the human rights abuses against civilian indigenous populations that accompanied the counterinsurgency, Guatemala entered the international spotlight in a new sense. Together, these developments lead to major changes in guerrilla strategy. One resulting effect was the revamping of guerrilla thinking about topics such as political organizing and the *cuestión étnico-nacional*. Building on transnational connections established through US activists, such as those who spent time in Guatemala with the Maryknoll order, in the 1960s, rebel groups and solidarity groups abroad engaged with each other and mutually influenced the other's actions. Guerrilla groups gear some of their activities toward garnering support from abroad. Meanwhile, solidarity groups eagerly heeded to the calls to action while also carrying out their own programs of national outreach, fundraising, and conscientization. The internationalized atmosphere of the 1980s made it apt for the guerrillas to take an approach guided by globally appealing principles like human rights and democracy. While these concepts were inherent in the ideological framing of the 1960s and 1970s, they took on a new force in the 1980s.

The Guatemalan insurgency did not emerge in a vacuum. Nor was it a mere proxy force representing the interests of the Soviet Union and Cuba. Rather, domestic Guatemalan actors

exercised agency in their travels, engagement with ideas and movements from abroad, and strategizing. This history, although centered around Guatemalan, reveals broader lessons about the internationalist left in the second half of the twentieth century. Revolutionary movements around the world relied on both historical and contemporary examples for guidance and lessons, while at the same time adapting the changing domestic and international circumstances. In Guatemala, this constant global engagement would lay the groundwork for a strategy of solidarity in the 1980s that would week to capitalize on shifting global and domestic circumstances. In the following chapter, I examine the opening of the *frente internacional* and the systematization of international solidarity that guerrillas coordinated in the 1980s, and how this allowed for the growth of global networks while also impacting the rhetoric that was permissible.

CHAPTER 2
SOLIDARITY WITH GUATEMALA FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

In January of 1992, the Washington Office on Latin America organized an excursion of artists and writers to Guatemala with the hope of raising awareness of the country's human rights situation in the Global North. Following the trip, the Association of Artists for Guatemala, one of many groups in solidarity, released a statement denouncing the continued violence and impunity for military and security forces.[87] They expressed concern that nine of every ten Guatemalans lived in poverty. However, there was hope. Productive negotiations were ongoing between guerrillas and the state. Furthermore, they saw a role that international observers could fulfill in the path toward peace. "International encouragement is vital" and had already been "crucial" in advancing the "limited improvements reported here." In another statement, they included strongly worded condemnations of US foreign policy in Guatemala and described the US ambassador as a prototypical representative of such policy: "patronizing, sexist, and aggressive."[88] Upon returning to the US, members of the delegation participated in events aimed toward congressional staffers and members of DC foreign policy circles.[89]

Meanwhile, in Guatemala, guerrillas walked a fine line between leftist revolution and peace negotiations with the government. In August of 1988, Guatemalan newspaper *Prensa Libre* published a landmark interview with FAR commander Pablo Monsanto, making careful note of the significance of allowing someone actively rebelling against the government to have a space in

[87] "Statement of the Association of Artists for Guatemala," 1992, WOLA, box 162-173, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[88] Association of Artists and Writers for Guatemala, "Report of a Visit to Guatemala," January 1992, WOLA, box 162-173, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[89] "Invitation to Association of Artists for Guatemala Event," January 21, 1992, WOLA, box 162-173, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.

the media platform.[90] The article signaled a shift, as guerrilla discourse was now palatable enough for the media and government elite to allow a figure like Monsanto to appear in the country's main newspaper. With the presence of the UN in the peace negotiations, the *frente internacional* remained central in insurgent strategy, and insurgents also worked their way into narratives accepted by international organizations and the dominant global order. In 1992, a decade after the publication of her *testimonio*, exiled K'iche' activist Rigoberta Menchú, who had ties to guerrilla organizations, received the Nobel Peace Prize. The URNG continued to look to the international community for support and political leverage, and guerrilla leaders themselves became increasingly present on the national and global stages.

These developments both in the US and Guatemala raise many questions regarding the role of international solidarity in the final sixteen years of the Guatemalan Civil War, after the opening of the *frente internacional* in 1980. In the US, and in the Global North more broadly, what drove the expansion of solidarity networks with Guatemala? From the other side, how did Guatemalan insurgent leaders navigate the need to appeal to both domestic and global audiences? In this chapter, I argue that actors in Guatemala and the Global North mutually influenced each other's actions. Both were attentive to global circumstances and tried to utilize these forces to further their political interests, whether overthrowing the Guatemalan government, protecting human rights, or impacting US foreign policy. Furthermore, I suggest that global interest in human and Indigenous rights in the 1980s served as a key tool for Guatemalan guerrillas to keep their movement alive in the face of extreme violence and political repression. In other words, interactions with actors from around the globe shaped both guerrilla strategy and ideology, as described above, and gave insurgents an opportunity to engage with new audiences for the advancement of their interests.

[90] Mario Castro, "La Guerrilla Habla," *Prensa Libre*, August 28, 1988, sec. Suplemento de Domingo, WOLA, box 162-173, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.

Solidarity is an ambiguous concept that has been applied in vastly different contexts since the 1700s. Generally, solidarity is "the notion of collective responsibility with that of cooperation in pursuit of shared political goals."[91] Historian Jessica Stites Mor situates solidarity as reflecting "the calculated relationships in which one group might engage to defend against the exploitation of or injustices committed against another."[92] While Stites Mor's definition can be interpreted to include a sense of collectivity or reciprocity in relations of solidarity, other scholars take a broader approach. Anthropologist Steve Striffler acknowledges the changing meaning of the solidarity across temporal and geographic contexts, suggesting that "it can be a claim, aspiration, argument, political vision, way of including/excluding particular groups, or all of the above and more."[93] In this view, solidarity can come with wide varieties in levels of commitment, collaboration, and radical vision. Some scholars have emphasized the political potency of solidarity movements, while others have discussed the contradictions and challenges of enacting meaningful solidarity.[94]

Solidarity with and within Latin America has a long history.[95] Dating back to the 1790s, groups in the US organized in support of Haitian revolutionaries. Similar currents of solidarity would emerge with Latin American independence movements in the 1810s. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, US citizens aligned themselves with Latin American causes. However, solidarity often reflected imperial interests or a racist paternalism that imposed a US-centric viewpoint onto social or political movements of the Global South. By the second half

[91] Stites Mor, *South-South Solidarity and the Latin American Left*, 3.
[92] Stites Mor, 3.
[93] Striffler, *Solidarity: Latin America and the US Left in the Era of Human Rights*, 16.
[94] For examples of a more optimistic interpretations of solidarity, see: Stites Mor, *South-South Solidarity and the Latin American Left*; Jessica Stites Mor and Maria del Carmen Suescun Pozas, *The Art of Solidarity: Visual and Performative Politics in Cold War Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018).; For discussions of the limits, challenges, and contradictions of solidarity movements, see: Striffler, *Solidarity: Latin America and the US Left in the Era of Human Rights*; Molly Todd, "The Paradox of Trans-American Solidarity: Gender, Race, and Representation in the Guatemalan Refugee Camps of Mexico, 1980–1990," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 19, no. 4 (2017): 74–112; Todd, *Long Journey to Justice: El Salvador, the United States, and Struggles against Empire*.
[95] Striffler, *Solidarity: Latin America and the US Left in the Era of Human Rights*.

of the twentieth century, these troubling aspects of solidarity remained present, although the overarching solidarity discourse was shifting to incorporate rising ideas of human rights that privileged the experience of the individual. Jessica Stites Mor identifies the founding of the Communist International in 1919 as indicative of the beginning a period of modern transnational solidarity as national liberation movements in the Global South were institutionally connected in their fight against global capitalism and imperialism.[96] In the second half of the twentieth century, solidarity took on new meanings. While revolutionary solidarity, characterized by the types of interactions among leftists discussed in the previous chapter, was prominent within the Global South, solidarity movements in the Global North coincided with a rising human rights discourse oriented toward the individual.[97] In the US, groups such as NISGUA and CISPES coordinated solidarity activities with Central America, while other organizations, like WOLA, engaged in activities adjacent to those of the solidarity movement while also lobbying the US government. While participants in solidarity movements developed a wide range of relationships and activities, all were bound together by a shared sense of collective responsibility to help enact positive change in Central America, where US-based activists viewed their own government as having an adverse impact on human rights.

In this chapter, I analyze the perspectives, goals, and strategies employed by Guatemalan actors in cultivating solidarity for their cause. In discussing the US side, I hope to provide a complex panorama of solidarity activities with Central America by discussing both grassroots organizations and highly institutionalized nongovernmental organizations, namely the foreign policy advocacy group Washington Office on Latin America. Furthermore, I incorporate Stites

[96] Stites Mor, *South-South Solidarity and the Latin American Left*, 6.
[97] Striffler, *Solidarity: Latin America and the US Left in the Era of Human Rights*; Mark Philip Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Mor's emphasis on South-South relations in order to reach a nuanced understanding of the Guatemalan insurgency's diplomatic strategies with diverse governments, revolutionary movements, international organizations, and sympathetic individuals. In doing so, I incorporate archival collections from the US and Guatemala that represent the perspectives and strategies employed in cultivating solidarity from both sides.

Historical Precedence

A shifting relationship between Guatemalan leftists and sympathetic individuals in the US can be traced back to the connections forged between Maryknoll missionaries and young Guatemalans in the 1960s. While a limited number of revolutionaries had been impacted by contact with sympathetic US actors in Guatemala in the early part of the war, these connections provided a framework for collaboration and solidarity that both sides would seek to expand throughout the conflict. Maryknoll missionaries were initially sent to the region as part of a Cold War anticommunist strategy to promote development and the "Romanization" of Latin American Catholicism. Tensions between Maryknoll and communist ideas had ramped up in China, where the government was wary of the presence of US missionaries, placing over one hundred Maryknollers under house arrest in the early 1950s due to suspicions of their ties to the US government. Vatican II, a series of church meetings between 1962 and 1965, prompted a reconceptualization of the missionary endeavor, pushing for a consideration of the roots of oppression social troubles. Missionaries in Guatemala also encountered strains of liberation theology, resulting in a further questioning of their association with the anticommunist goals of the US government.[98]

[98] Theresa Keeley, *Reagan's Gun-Toting Nuns: The Catholic Conflict over Cold War Human Rights Policy in Central America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 15–25.

While activities in Latin America helped to push Maryknoll missionaries to be more committed to social justice, their presence and teachings also facilitated the radicalization for a number of insurgents. Reflecting on the early days of their ideological formation in later memoirs, Guatemalan insurgents recalled the importance of ties between missionary connections and a growing revolutionary movement. Gustavo Porras Castejón recalled how Crater, a group of Catholic youths supported by Maryknollers like Margarita Melville, helped him to "open a world that for many was unknown" by engaging in study of social issues and working with poor Guatemalans in the country's capital and the countryside of the Huehuetenango department. He attributed the radicalization of many to this contact with the "reality of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination" along with the actions of the incipient Guatemalan guerrilla movement and the martyrdom of Colombian priest Camilo Torres Restrepo.[99] For many, Porras Castejón claimed, these experiences served as evidence of the necessity of armed insurgency within the revolutionary atmosphere of the time.

Maryknollers also provided material and logistical aid to Guatemalan revolutionaries in the early years of the insurgency. According to César Montes, Margarita Melville facilitated the use of the Colegio Monte María, a religious school just outside of Guatemala City, as a hiding place for guerrillas.[100] In 1967, Margarita Melville helped facilitate clandestine travel to Cuba via Mexico with fake passports for Montes and Porras Castejón.[101] Such assistance involved more than ideological exchange. Margarita Melville put her own reputation and missionary work on the line by aiding revolutionaries in such ways, ultimately resulting in her expulsion from Guatemala and from the Maryknoll Order.

[99] Porras Castejón, *Las Huellas de Guatemala*, 46.
[100] Macías, *Mi Camino: La Guerrilla, La Apasionante Autobiografía Del Legendario Combatiente Centroamericano César Montes*, 161–63.
[101] Porras Castejón, *Las Huellas de Guatemala*, 236.

In the 1970s in Ixcán Grande, Maryknoll became deeply involved in development projects, which historian Sarah Foss frames as an alternative to the state-led modernization model of development prevalent elsewhere in the country.[102] Father William Woods played a major role in leading this project, obtaining international funding, and forming ties with Indigenous families that would result in a development that placed Indigenous communities at the center. His sudden death in a 1976 plane crash created a void which the Guatemalan army filled by occupying the zone and eventually targeting the population as part of a scorched earth campaign in response to the perceived threat of the "autonomy and success" of the colony.[103] It is likely that the role of Maryknoll in supporting an alternative development project that aimed to fundamentally change the outlook for landless *campesinos* further reinforced the potential of organizations from the Global North to provide material and intellectual support against the designs of the state and precipitated further relations of solidarity, like those that would reemerge with *Comunidades de Población en Resistencia* in the Ixcán Grande in the 1980s.

People associated with the Maryknoll Order in the 1950s and 1960s retained their contacts in Guatemala and their resistance to the military regime. Former Maryknoller Peggy Healy, for example, continued her activism by working with the human rights advocacy organization Washington Office on Latin America. Maryknoll Priest Blase Bonpane founded the Office of the Americas in Los Angeles, focused on pursuing justice and peace through educating the public about US foreign policy. Tom and Margarita Melville, former Maryknoll missionaries who had been expelled from Guatemala in 1967 for aiding revolutionary plans, maintained correspondence with and insurgent leaders, discussed in the previous chapter, also demonstrates a sustained trust and collaboration between insurgents and US activists. In a 1972 letter to Margarita Melville, EGP

[102] Foss, *On Our Own Terms: Development and Indigeneity in Cold War Guatemala*, 168.
[103] Foss, 196.

leaders Willy Cruz and Gustavo Porras Castejón explained the advent of the guerrilla organization. They expressed a desire to establish a "future dialogue or collaboration" with Melville and asked her to share the letter with fellow former Maryknoll priests Tom Melville, Arthur Melville, and Blase Bonpane.[104]

Likewise, the US actors who had forged connections with budding revolutionaries in the 1960s never lost track of the people they had known and the events that they felt they had had a role in influencing. In a 1997 letter to the Melvilles following the signing of the peace accords, Maryknoll priest Blase Bonpane remarked that "it was amazing to see [former CRATER member] Gustavo Porras Castejon pictured in the NY Times" for his role as a peace negotiator. "You did a great job of educating him, Margie!"[105] The continued ties between former Maryknollers and the Guatemalan insurgency will be further discussed in the following section.

North American Solidarity

The early 1980s in the US was an opportune time for the expansion of networks in solidarity with Guatemala. The US political and cultural context facilitated the proliferation of groups in solidarity with Guatemala, as well as with Central America more broadly. Activists had worked over the previous two decades to establish networks of individuals interested in Latin America and developed strategies to raise awareness, laying the groundwork for what would come. In the 1960s, solidarity movements emerged between US-based activists and the Brazilian left, in particular highlighting the prevalence of arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killing.[106] The 1970s saw the expansion of networks of Latin American solidarity with Chile and the

[104] Porras Castejón and Cruz to Melville, "Beginnings of EGP," 1972.
[105] Blase Bonpane to Margarita Melville and Tom Melville, Letter, September 18, 1997, 1, MSS 272, box 1, folder 4, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[106] Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States*.

emergence of new strategies, such as consumer boycotts.[107] Historian Mark Bradley situates this decade within the reemergence of human rights discourse in the US that had initially risen to prominence during World War II but later retracted with the advent of the Cold War. Bradley highlights the role of grassroots organizations and a revitalized conception of individualism in the 1970s in shaping sympathies toward the sufferings of others, allowing solidarity with Chile to be much more expansive than the solidarity movement with Brazil the decade prior.[108]

By 1980, Central America entered the spotlight for many observers in the US and around the world. Army violence against civilians in Guatemala, such as the 1978 Panzós Massacre, was reported globally, and US president Jimmy Carter suspended military aid in an attempt to promote a foreign policy that incorporated rising human rights ideals. However, the 1979 victory by the Sandinista revolutionary movement in Nicaragua, along with a perceived revolutionary momentum in El Salvador and Guatemala, attracted the attention of the Ronald Reagan and other staunchly conservative policymakers. The 1980 presidential election brought up debates around US response to "our troubles in this hemisphere," as Reagan put it while advocating for direct action against the advance of revolutionary interests.[109] Upon assuming the presidency in 1981, Reagan sought to actively support right-wing military regimes in the region, which he justified as an attempt to stave off the advance of Cuban and Soviet interests. The resumption of military aid and training at the School of the Americas provided activists with a direct link to view themselves as having a role in the conflict.

While the world paid greater attention to Central America, activists in the US worked to make their solidarity work more institutionalized, systematic, and intentional. In August 1980, the

[107] Tinsman, *Buying into the Regime: Grapes and Consumption in Cold War Chile and the United States*.
[108] Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*.
[109] "Transcript of 1980 Presidential Forum" (Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, April 23, 1980), https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/1980-presidential-forum.

First National Conference of Solidarity with the People of Guatemala was held in Washington, DC. At the same time, the National Steering Committee was founded, which served to unite the loosely organized regional groups, of which there were over 80 in the US by 1981.[110] At the conference, attendees engaged in a series of meetings to determine the means and ends of the movement. They demonstrated an understanding of the transnational nature of the war and situated themselves within this framework. In their "Final Declaration," they condemned US, Venezuelan, and Israeli support for the military governments of Guatemala and El Salvador, while also speaking against the recent military coup in Bolivia.[111] NISGUA emerged from networking done among activists from regional groups at this conference. Although operations were not always smooth, NISGUA would act as a centralized body that helped to coordinate national campaigns while assisting regional groups in their local work.

US-based groups of solidarity with Guatemala conceived of the country's struggle as closely grounded in its regional context. The implication of this was that groups explicitly oriented around Guatemala remained interested in the revolutions of El Salvador and Nicaragua as well. Local groups in solidarity with the different countries shared office space in many cities, and places lacking sufficient interest to form country-specific groups had alternatively formed groups in solidarity with Central America as a whole.[112] Despite this level of integration, by 1987, the Chicago Area Zone Coordinator of NISGUA lamented that "a United Central America movement is a hope that is still a long way off," although he suggested that up to a quarter of the organization's

[110] El Comite de Coordinacion Nacional en Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Guatemala en Estados Unidos to Comision Coordinadora Europea de Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Guatemala, May 1981, 1, MSS 272, box 4, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[111] "Final Declaration: First National Conference of Solidarity with the People of Guatemala."
[112] El Comite de Coordinacion Nacional en Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Guatemala en Estados Unidos to Comision Coordinadora Europea de Solidaridad con el Pueblo de Guatemala, May 1981, 1.

work did not need to be specific to Guatemala.[113] Solidarity work with Guatemala was never viewed in isolation, but rather activists attempted to maintain a balance between country-specific and regional programming while stretching collective resources as far as possible.

Solidarity groups developed a diverse set of activities over time, responding to both the evolving dynamics of the conflict as well as specific calls to action from insurgent organizations. A primary function of solidarity work was to raise awareness about the conflict in Guatemala and highlight the violence disproportionately impacting poor, rural communities. Many solidarity publications, both local and national, sprung up in the early 1980s. These publications often contained emotive photos coupled with testimony from Guatemala, alongside discussions of US interventionist foreign policy in Central America. While the numeric reach of this method of divulgation of information is unclear, a consistent set of subscribers funded the printing and distribution of the publications.

Another important component of the effort to raise awareness of the political situation of the country was a surge in the publication of books about Guatemala for both academic and nonacademic audiences. In 1982, policy researcher Stephen Schlesinger and journalist Stephen Kinzer published *Bitter Fruit*, their landmark book on the CIA's involvement in the 1954 coup against Jacobo Árbenz.[114] The same year, historian Richard Immerman published *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*.[115] Historian Piero Gleijeses' 1992 monograph *Shattered Hope* also analyzed US intervention, but also shifted focus to address in greater detail the reforms undertaken by the revolutionary government in Guatemala between 1944 and 1955.[116]

[113] Joe Schaub to NISGUA Zone Coordinators and National Office, November 16, 1986, MSS 272, box 4, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[114] Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the America Coup in Guatemala*.
[115] Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*.
[116] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944-1954*.

Publishers also highlighted texts that told stories of violence and repression. The 1982 publication of Rigoberta Menchú's *testimonio* attracted worldwide attention, and she published a less acclaimed follow-up in 1998.[117] *Ignacio: The Diary of a Maya Indian in Guatemala*, published in 1992, and Victor Montejo's 1987 *Testimony: Death of a Guatemalan Village* show the continued interest in first person accounts.[118] Photography collections, such as Jean-Marie Simon's 1988 *Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tryanny* and Gianni Vecchiato's 1989 *Guatemala Rainbow* provided striking photographs in order to cultivate a sense of visual connection with readers in the Global North.[119] Also active in publishing book-length treatments of the situation in Guatemala were former Maryknollers. Tom and Margarita Melville were particularly involved on this front, as Margarita went on to complete her doctoral degree and hold academic appointments at the University of Houston and the University of California Berkeley. In 1971 alone, they jointly published three books: *Guatemala – Another Vietnam*, *Guatemala: The Politics of Land Ownership*, and *Whose Heaven, Whose Earth?*[120] In fact, *Whose Heaven, Whose Earth* was rumored to become a film starring Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland as Tom and Margarita, before plans to film apparently fell through.[121] Tom Melville's 2005 *Through a Glass Darkly* tells the story of Maryknoll's shift from Cold War anticommunism to protesting Reagan's foreign policy through the lens of mission work in Guatemala.[122] Former Maryknoll priest Blase Bonpane

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[117] Rigoberta Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, ed. Elisabeth Burgos, trans. Ann Wright (London: Verso, 2010); Rigoberta Menchú, *Rigoberta: La Nieta de Los Mayas* (Mexico City: Aguilar, 1998). For more on Rigoberta Menchú and the controversies surrounding her *testimonio*, see: Greg Grandin, *Who Is Rigoberta Menchu?* (London: Verso, 2011).
[118] James D Sexton, ed., *Ignacio: The Diary of a Maya Indian of Guatemala* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Victor Montejo, *Testimony: Death of a Guatemalan Village*, trans. Victor Perera (Curbstone: Willimantic, 1987).
[119] Jean-Marie Simon, *Guatemala: Eternal Spring, Eternal Tyranny* (New York: Norton, 1988); Gianni Vecchiato, *Guatemala Rainbow* (Petaluma: Pomegranate, 1989).
[120] Margarita Melville and Thomas R Melville, *Guatemala - Another Vietnam?* (London: Penguin, 1971); Margarita Melville and Thomas R Melville, *Guatemala: The Politics of Land Ownership* (New York: Free Press, 1971); Margarita Melville and Thomas R Melville, *Whose Heaven, Whose Earth?* (New York: Knopf, 1971).
[121] A H Weiler, "Jane and Donald," *New York Times*, December 5, 1971, sec. D.
[122] Thomas R Melville, *Through a Glass Darkly* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2005).

published his examination of liberation theology in Central America, titled *Guerrillas of Peace*, in 1985. The book garnered enough interest to have been rereleased in two subsequent editions. Catholic activist and former Maryknoller Tom Quigley wrote the forward to the Archdiocese of Guatemala's human rights report in 1999.[123] While these publications touched on a wide variety of topics, they all shared a sympathetic perspective toward the Guatemalan people and promoted narratives that complicated the discourse put forth by the army and the US government on the global stage. While not necessarily going as far as to endorse revolutionary socialism, they helped to situate the Guatemalan struggle within its global context and allowed observers in the US to feel a sense of connection and responsibility.

The US solidarity movement provided a platform and institutional support for Guatemalans to conduct speaking tours. The person-to-person connections allowed by speaking tours served as a mechanism for fundraising and the dissemination of an unfiltered account of the war. By promoting Guatemalan speakers and facilitating their movement, solidarity networks helped these actors gain exposure and global appeal. For example, in 1982, NISGUA organized a speaking tour featuring Rigoberta Menchú, while another aimed to bring Guatemalans in conversation with Indigenous communities around the US.[124] Such tours had the potential to reach wide and varied audiences, impacting both outreach and funding. NISGUA touted that their speaking tours in 1993 alone had visited 45 cities and generated over $24,000 in fundraising for Guatemalan grassroots organization.[125]

[123] Thomas Quigley, "Foreward," in *Guatemala: Never Again*, by Archdiocese of Guatemala Human Rights Office (Ossining: Orbis, 1999).
[124] Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, "Mailer," November 1994, WOLA, box 134, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[125] Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala.

Solidarity groups also sponsored cultural activities that gave audiences in North America a chance to learn about politics and Central American indigeneity. For example, the Guatemalan band Kin Lalat, which was formed by militants associated with the URNG and based out of Sandinista Nicaragua, regularly performed throughout North America. These concerts, such as the July 1983 performance at the Museo de las Culturas Populares in Mexico City and the September 1984 show at the Vancouver Folk Festival, were framed as "political-musical act[s]" that blended art and politics in an attempt to raise awareness and shape political subjectivities.[126]

In addition to promoting Guatemalan musicians, artists from the US and Canada produced songs that conveyed messages of solidarity with the Guatemalan people. In 1984, Canadian musician Bruce Cockburn released "If I Had a Rocket Launcher," which had been inspired by his visit with NGO Oxfam to refugee camps along the Mexico-Guatemala border in Chiapas.[127] In the song, which experienced a brief stay on the US Billboard Hot 100 in February of 1985, he wrote:

Here comes the helicopter -- second time today

Everybody scatters and hopes it goes away

How many kids they've murdered only God can say

If I had a rocket launcher... I'd make somebody pay

…

On the Río Lacantún, one hundred thousand wait

To fall down from starvation -- or some less humane fate

Cry for Guatemala, with a corpse in every gate

[126] Frente Popular 31 de enero, "Boletín Internacional," 1983, 11, MSS 272, box 5, folder 2, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections; Solidarity Committee with the People of Guatemala, "Guatemala Vencerá, Bulletin H2," September 1984, 8, MSS 272, box 5, folder 18, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[127] Bruce Cockburn and Greg King, *Rumours of Glory: A Memoir* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2014), 213–26.

If I had a rocket launcher... I would not hesitate.

I want to raise every voice -- at least I've got to try

Every time I think about it, water rises to my eyes.

Situation desperate, echoes of the victims cry

If I had a rocket launcher... Some son of a bitch would die.[128]

Cockburn appealed both to the moral outrage in response the military's actions against rural populations as well as a desire in the Global North to take action in support of the victims of violence. While the idea of retaliation through violence has attracted much attention to the song, Cockburn reflects the goals and strategies of solidarity networks in his desire to "raise every voice." Other songs, such as R.E.M.'s "Flowers of Guatemala," Jackson Browne's "Lives in the Balance," and Peter, Paul, and Mary's "El Salvador", all released in 1986, added to the musical expression of solidarity with Central America, focusing on themes of death, destruction, and US interventionism.

Visual artists also participated in Central American solidarity activism through their work. In San Francisco's Mission District, muralists produced politically engaged works. In the late 1970s and 1980s, new murals served as "visual markers and representations of Central American history and culture" in an area heavily populated by Latinos and growing communities of people fleeing Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.[129] In 1984, a New York City group called for

[128] Cockburn and King, 226; "Chart History: Bruce Cockburn" (Billboard), accessed April 7, 2023, https://www.billboard.com/artist/bruce-cockburn/chart-history/hsi/.

[129] Mauricio Ramírez, "Central American Solidarity Murals of the Mission District," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, September 2022, https://www.sfmoma.org/essay/central-american-solidarity-murals-of-the-mission-district/; Mauricio Ramírez, "Visual Solidarity with Central America: An Interview with Maestra Muralista Juana Alicia," *Chiricú Journal* 4, no. 1 (Fall 2019): 115–27; Cary Cordova, *Heart of the Mission: Latino Art and Politics in San Francisco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

artists across the US to engage in activism via "a huge series of exhibitions and events" that would display "art from Central America, art about Central America and art in support of Central America, as a political and esthetic strategy" to raise awareness.[130] Later that year, artists in San Francisco painted three murals titled *Después del triunfo*, *Keeping the Peace in Central America*, and *Culture Contains the Seed of Resistance, Which Blossoms into the Flower of Liberation*, examining alternative revolutionary futures while condemning the violence and destruction wrought by army abuses and US intervention. The public murals provided local residents with a visual, artistic reminder of injustices and visions of hope, constituting an example of how solidarity politics were infused into the daily lives of the Mission District's Latino communities.

Other solidarity activism centered around direct or indirect economic activities, and the prevalence of multinational corporations with US-based owners provided activists with a point of entry to impact events in Guatemala. In the 1980s, solidarity groups and labor unions promoted boycotts against Coca-Cola to support striking Guatemalan workers.[131] Steve Striffler points to the Coca-Cola campaign as a "remarkable and pioneering case of international solidarity" due to its mobilization of consumers and resources against both a powerful multinational corporation and a repressive military regime, laying the groundwork for subsequent widespread corporate-oriented solidarity in the 1990s such as the anti-sweatshop movement.[132] Global labor organizations

[130] Claes Oldenburg, "Artists Call Against U.S. Intervention in Central America," January 1984, Center for Digital Research in the Humanities, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, https://rozsixties.unl.edu/items/show/97#:~:text=Description,by%20American%20sculptor%2C%20Claes%20Oldenburg.
[131] Solidarity Committee with the People of Guatemala, "Guatemala Vencerá, No. 3," November 1984, 1, MSS 272, box 5, folder 18, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[132] Striffler, *Solidarity: Latin America and the US Left in the Era of Human Rights*, 190.

mobilized in support of the striking Guatemalans, giving them a chance to also highlight the political repression against those challenging the interests of the wealthy.[133]

Another boycott movement targeted the tourism industry and was promoted with lofty hopes to "save lives, oppose tyranny, support justice, [and] help restore democracy."[134] Organized labor played a key role in organizing and supporting the tourism boycott. In 1979, the Geneva-based International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF) proposed a boycott at its International Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Conference, at which Shirley Fuentes Mor, widow of assassinated Social Democrat leader Alberto Fuentes Mor, spoke to attending workers.[135] The boycott was formulated in response to political violence, such as the killing of Fuentes Mor, and repression of labor in the country, such as the arrest of labor leaders of the Camino Real Hotel and union repression from Coca-Cola.[136] In addition to promoting the idea that harming Guatemala's tourism industry could provoke political change, organized labor and solidarity organizations also sowed fear by pointing to the shooting of three foreign tourists in 1979.[137] In 1981, a solidarity newsletter published an eerie two-page spread warning that "Tourists Risk Death in Guatemala."[138] In 1981, American Express discontinued its Guatemala travel package as reports of violence under the government of Romeo Lucas García spread in the press, which activists hailed as a victory. In just

[133] International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations, "Coca-Cola Information," July 10, 1984, WOLA, box 119, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[134] Solidarity Front with Guatemala, "Guatemala News," November 1980, MSS 272, box 6, folder 5, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections; Committee of Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, "Update on Guatemala," April 3, 1981, 1, MSS 272, box 4, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[135] International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations, "Press Release: Union Tourist Boycott of Guatemala," December 3, 1979, WOLA, box 119, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[136] Shirley Fuentes Mor, "Speech at IUF-HRC Workers' Trade Group Conference," December 1979, WOLA, box 119, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[137] Solidarity Front with Guatemala, "Guatemala News."
[138] Green Revolution, "Guatemala!: The Terrible Repression and Its Roots in the U.S. National Security State," Winter 1981, Global Rights Records, Box 15, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.

the first year of the boycott, solidarity groups trumpeted claims that tourism from the US had decreased twenty five percent.

In 1982, the US solidarity movement also pressured Bank of America to cease its activities in Guatemala, as activists alleged that "the bank's Guatemalan portfolio reads like a 'Who's Who' of human rights violators": businessowners with ties to violence against organized labor, supporters of the military regime and the Guatemalan government itself.[139] Although Bank of America defended itself by dismissing any political aspect of its business in Guatemala, activists countered that the country's human rights record was well known and that loans to the wealthy did not help poor Guatemalans in the countryside obtain food and land. The bank's troubling activities were not limited to lending in Guatemala, however. NISGUA leaders also identified Bank of America as a major lobbyist in favor of military aid for Guatemala. This connection further fomented a feeling of connection between activism in the US and impacts in Guatemala, as denunciations against this "economic bulwark of repression … [in the US] can make a difference in lives [in Guatemala]."[140]

Many nonprofit organizations sprung up in the 1980s, many of which centered their activities around the artwork of indigenous women, which became solidarity art as it circulated around North America and Western Europe. Jacqueline Adams defines solidarity art as artistic creations marketed toward sympathetic individuals abroad who buy with the idea that their money will go support the needs of artists, often women, enduring violence, natural disaster, or other hardships.[141] Monimbo Interamerican Trading Co, "a nonprofit society set up to aid Central

[139] Rebecca Bogdan, "Bank of America in Guatemala: Bankrolling the Right-Wing," *The Multinational Monitor*, October 1982, https://www.multinationalmonitor.org/hyper/issues/1982/10/bogdan.html.
[140] David McCarthy, "Letter to NISGUA Members," March 1, 1982, MSS 272, box 4, folder 1, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[141] Jacqueline Adams, "What Is Solidarity Art?," in *The Art of Solidarity: Visual and Performative Politics in Cold War Latin America*, ed. Jessica Stites Mor and Maria del Carmen Suescun Pozas (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 241.

Americans in their struggles, economically" was one of many organizations that fit the mold as sellers of solidarity art during the Guatemalan conflict.[142] Another example was Maya Hands, a nonprofit with the stated goal of assisting widowed Guatemalan women, as "a humanitarian solution to holiday gift giving."[143] Such economically-driven advocacy is driven by the Alternative Trading Organization (ATO) model, which purports that poverty "could be eliminated through creative solutions rooted in the market."[144] ATOs proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s, having become an established and institutionalized solidarity mechanism by the 1980s. In the 1970s, activists in solidarity with Chile marketed and sold *arpilleras* to audiences primary in North America and Western Europe as part of an extensive network of artists, refugees or exiles, middlemen, sellers, and buyers that were tied together by a broader awareness of human rights abuses under the Pinochet regime and a desire to help financially.[145] The continuation of this strategy is an example of the connections between Guatemalan solidarity networks in the 1980s and earlier iterations of Latin American solidarity in the 1970s.

The many strategies employed by the solidarity movement served to expand consciousness among the public and cultivate a greater cultural awareness about Central America. However, organizations like NISGUA, due to its geographic spread and public-facing orientation, were limited in their ability to lobby the US government for change in its foreign policy. Advocacy based in Washington was able to counter this issue through its direct involvement with government officials and staffers, as organizations like WOLA developed programming aimed at impacting the course of US policy debates in ways they viewed as positive for Guatemalans.

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[142] Solidarity Committee with the People of Guatemala, "Guatemala Vencerá, Bulletin H2," 8.
[143] "Maya Hands Pamphlet," n.d., WOLA, box 162-173, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[144] Striffler, *Solidarity: Latin America and the US Left in the Era of Human Rights*, 157.
[145] Adams, "What Is Solidarity Art?"

Washington-Based Human Rights Advocacy and Foreign Policy Lobbying

While solidarity organizations proliferated around the country, human rights advocacy groups in Washington also took up an interest in the events of the Guatemalan conflict. The Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) was among the most prominent of these groups, which tended to be better funded and more organized than their grassroots activist counterparts. Historian Mark Bradley identifies WOLA as being part of a wave of new human rights advocacy groups established in the 1970s, a growth facilitated by the rise of "concern with moral witness and individual testimony."[146] WOLA had been founded in 1974 by church leaders within the context of a wave of right-wing authoritarianism in Latin America with the goals of promoting human rights and lobbying policymakers in the US capital.[147] WOLA's advocacy involved the careful maintenance of relationships with the US government, with which they sought to both criticize and collaborate. WOLA's Guatemala programming engaged in many of the same activities as solidarity organizations, primarily consciousness-raising for the general public through events and publications. However, WOLA's work was unique in its engagement with politicians in lobbying for change in foreign policy.

Unlike grassroots solidarity organizations, WOLA maintained relationships with a wide range of actors, including Guatemalan insurgents, actors from both the US and Guatemalan governments, academics, and grassroots activists. Hosting human rights-oriented events and talks in Washington was a key component of WOLA's Guatemala programming. The events highlighted a diverse set of themes and speakers, including academics, attorneys, activists, and politicians from

[146] Bradley, *The World Reimagined: Americans and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, 202–3.
[147] Coletta A Youngers, *The Washington Office on Latin America: Thirty Years of Advocacy for Human Rights, Democracy and Social Justice* (Washington, DC: Washington Office on Latin America, 2006), 2.

the US and Guatemala. In March 1984, WOLA hosted a brown bag lunch with Vinicio Cerezo, at the time the Secretary General of the Christian Democratic Party of Guatemala, to discuss the upcoming Constituent Assembly election. The invite list included exiled former Guatemalan Vice President Francisco Villagrán Kramer, US academics William LeoGrande and Piero Gleijeses, former Maryknoll priest Tom Quigley, several congressional aids, and representatives from NISGUA.[148] In 1990, WOLA hosted an event on "Prospects for Peace and Democracy" with upcoming elections with John Schwank, Guatemala's ambassador to the US, and another luncheon with a trio of activists representing the Guatemalan organizations the Council of Ethnic Communities Runujel Junam (CERJ), Mutual Support Group for Relatives of the Disappeared (GAM), and the National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA). In 1993, historian Piero Gleijeses was the discussant for a WOLA-sponsored luncheon about the Guatemalan democratization process with ORPA leader Gaspar Ilom, marking the first time a top URNG official traveled to the US.[149] Although Ilom did not come into direct contact with US government officials, staffers and others associated with policymaking were present.[150] That a guerrilla leader actively in rebellion against a government allied with the United States could take part in such an event in Washington is revealing about WOLA's carefully managed relationships, as well as the shifting public image of the insurgents as they negotiated for peace and engaged with solidarity audiences abroad.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Wolistas corresponded with high-ranking Guatemalan government officials. Both sides hoped to use the other to push for their own goals. For example ,

[148] Washington Office on Latin America, "Invitation and Invite List for Brown Bag Luncheon with Vinicio Cerezo," 1984, WOLA, box 162-173, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[149] Washington Office on Latin America, "Flyer for Brown-Bag Luncheon with Gaspar Ilom," November 1993, WOLA, box 162-173, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[150] Organización del Pueblo en Armas, "Publication in Commemoration of the 14th Anniversary of ORPA's Public Emergence," 23.

in 1994, Guatemalan President Ramiro de León Carpio wrote to WOLA's Executive Director George Vickers regarding "another terrorist attack against against the country's communications infrastructure," thanking WOLA for making a public statement against the action.[151] In his response, Vickers extolls de León Carpio's work as human rights ombudsman and cautioned him against imposing a state of emergency.[152] In this relationship, each side sought to use the other to advance its interests. Vickers hoped to be on good terms with Guatemalan officials in order to influence their policies and actions. Likewise, de León Carpio engaged with WOLA in order to promote an image of a democratic Guatemala that respected human rights. In the midst of peace negotiations, image was important, and the government's position would be strengthened by appealing to groups that could influence global perceptions.

WOLA also developed close ties with US governmental actors who were receptive to criticism of US foreign policy and sympathetic toward the victims of violence in Guatemala. The primary US government contacts for WOLA were congressional staffers, who were regular attendees at WOLA's events. WOLA also engaged with members of the US Congress and the president's cabinet. In a 1993 letter, for example, WOLA employees urged US Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen to consider progress on human rights, democracy, demilitarization, and social reform as prerequisites for funding through the Inter-American Development Bank.[153] In many cases, US government officials were open to dialogue with WOLA, although it is unclear how these direct conversations may have impacted policy decisions.

[151] Ramiro de León Carpio to George Vickers, March 1994, WOLA, box 162, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[152] George Vickers to Ramiro de León Carpio, April 7, 1994, WOLA, box 162, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[153] WOLA, "Letter to Lloyd Bentsen," March 19, 1993, WOLA, box 119, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.

Despite frequent correspondence and collaboration, WOLA associates clashed at times with officials from the US embassy in Guatemala. In late 1990 and early 1991, a series of letters were exchanged between WOLA and the embassy, namely Ambassador Thomas Stroock and a Human Rights Officer accused of making "gratuitously insulting remarks" about WOLA staff members.[154] In a contentious letter, the officer dismissed the claim, responding that any criticism had been about WOLA's reporting, not staff members themselves. He alleged that WOLA failed to criticize human rights violations by guerrillas and claimed that they used "obviously defective sources of information" while being unable "to handle even simple, easily verifiable facts."[155] Such tensions suggest the presence of a deeper antagonism between organizations like WOLA and the US government. However, lobbying the federal government required the careful construction of relationships, so Wolistas attempted to refrain from pointed criticism against individuals or institutions that could help shift US policy.

A look at WOLA's tax returns during the Guatemalan conflict captures the organization's growth as well as the public interest taken in its activities, as human rights discourse took on greater importance in US politics. In the early 1980s, WOLA continued to derive much of its funding from religious organizations and grants from organizations such as Oxfam. Of the $241,000 of income accounted for in the 1982 budget, nearly half came from religious groups, both Catholic and Protestant, and $15,000 came from subscriptions and individual contributions.[156] By the 1990s, however, WOLA's budget had skyrocketed, and the nature of its donors had shifted. The modest $10,000 contribution from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers was dwarfed by the $398,000 given

[154] Alex Wilde to Thomas Stroock, November 29, 1990, WOLA, box 162, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[155] "Letters WOLA-Embassy," December 24, 1990, WOLA, box 162, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[156] Washington Office on Latin America, "WOLA Application for Category II Status with Economic and Social Council," 1984, 113, WOLA, box 33, folder 1, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.

by the Ford Foundation, for example.[157] Between 1996 and 2000, WOLA's direct public support nearly doubled from $1,022,228 to $1,909,949.[158]

Radical Revolutionary Solidarity from the North

While dominant solidarity currents with Guatemala in the 1980s primarily took on a liberal, human rights approach, a small number of actors in the US took direct actions to aid the armed insurgency.[159] ORPA maintained a number of clandestine networks clustered in the states of the US southwest along the border with Mexico. One recruitment tactic employed by members was to forge connections with more radical members of Central American solidarity organizations, such as the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), on US college campuses. While these organizations undertook activities to raise awareness of conflicts of Central American conflicts, they did not have a strong ideological commitment to the revolutions. Mobilization through ORPA provided radical Marxist members to take their activism a step further. An important function of these networks was to provide ORPA with arms, which would be purchased in the US and transported through Mexico by collaborators. US-based members also traveled to Guatemala and spent time with high-ranking guerrilla leaders like Gaspar Ilom. Although the US left is considered to have been weak and disorganized in this period, revolution in Guatemala served as a catalyst to mobilize networks of those who not only wanted to resist US empire and Guatemalan military abuses, but also actively support armed Marxist insurgency.

[157] Washington Office on Latin America, "Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax," 1996, 14, WOLA, box 33, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[158] Washington Office on Latin America, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," 2000, 1, WOLA, box 33, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[159] Information in this section comes from interviews conducted with former US-based ORPA militants.

The Working of the *Frente Internacional*

While widespread networks of sympathetic individuals mobilized to raise awareness of violence and political repression in Guatemala, insurgents worked to curate their image for broader appeal and solicit support from the Global North. From liberal audiences in the Global North, insurgent groups primarily asked for solidarity support in the form of awareness campaigns and resistance to US foreign policy. While there was a marked shift to emphasize solidarity in the Global North after 1980, the guerrillas did not neglect their ties with revolutionary movements in Latin America, particularly those in Central America. In this sense, the Guatemalan left maintained distinct channels of international connections through which they promoted certain interpretations of their movement in hopes of obtaining benefits for their movement.

Guatemalan insurgent organizations engaged creatively with the world in a variety of ways during the final two decades of the civil war in order to advance their interests. However, the content of their global calls to action tells a different story. While guerrilla rhetoric was filled with hope in 1980 when revolutionaries began concerted campaigns to cultivate and direct international support, this optimism would not last long, and strategy and tone on the international front reflected this shift. For historian Greg Grandin, the guerrillas' fight became focused on a "rearguard defense against wholesale slaughter" rather than a "fight for revolutionary change" following the violent counterinsurgency campaigns carried out under the leadership of Ríos Montt between 1982 and 1983.[160] Although they attempted to maintain a triumphalist narrative, the shifts in guerrilla rhetoric soon became clear. Rather than focusing on the path to socialist victory with the framework of *Guerra Popular Revolucionaria*, insurgent messaging increasingly highlighted democracy and human rights as core themes, entering a global liberal mainstream that made their

[160] Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 16.

movement more palatable to the world powers that had a hand in brokering the peace deal via the UN.

In the view of guerrilla leadership, global circumstances opened up the international front as a new range of possibilities for the advancement of the interests of revolution. The tides had begun to shift with the Sandinista victory in 1979. In October of that year, just three months after the Sandinista's rise to power, the EGP published its "International Manifesto," directly addressing audiences around the world.[161] Through the manifesto, guerrilla leadership expressed great hope for the potential of armed popular revolution, citing several examples of success in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. In spite of the Chinese Communist Party and leftist organizations in Europe straying from their principals, socialism was revitalized, and the presence of this renewed, globally strengthened socialist movement "guarantee[d] revolutionary development." As a result of these momentous victories, they reasoned, imperialism had entered a crisis and was now increasingly vulnerable. In this global atmosphere of revolutionary momentum and hope, the EGP also declared that the "understanding and solidarity of revolutionary, democratic, and progressive peoples, organizations, governments, forces, and personalities" would be fundamental in the success of the Guatemalan insurgency.[162] Following the publication of the EGP's "International Manifesto," references to the role of solidarity in the guerrilla movement became more common. In its January 1980 domestic newsletter, the EGP's Frente Guerrillero Luis Turcios Lima declared that solidarity committees, governments, international organizations, organized labor groups, and Christian networks were playing a greater role in supporting the revolution through denunciation and consumer advocacy, pointing specifically to the tourism boycott.[163]

[161] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Manifiesto Internacional," in *Lecturas y Testimonios*, 1979, 18–40.
[162] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, 36–40.
[163] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Pueblo Armado, No. 2," January 1980, MP-YC 63, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.

In order to capture, manage, and direct this increased international support, insurgents expanded efforts to connect with audiences abroad and cultivate their support. In February 1981, the EGP mailed a letter to solidarity groups accompanying an early international publication. In the letter, the EGP stated the goal of establishing a "tribune of diffusion" for news on the Guatemalan struggle.[164] The international distribution of this publication marks the beginning of an increasing systematization of the international front. Connections across borders had always existed, but now, guerrillas were building institutionalized networks of solidarity and support that could capitalize upon global dynamics and mobilize global forces.

Another mechanism of dissemination of information were the *partes de guerra*, periodic newsletters that would detail developments on the battlefield, including both guerrilla maneuvers and army attacks.[165] The EGP started distributing these newsletters in August 1982, just months after the coup that brought Ríos Montt to power and in the midst of an escalation of violence against Indigenous communities in the northern highlands. These documents were addressed to "national and international public opinion" and directly called for the dissemination of information related to violence against noncombatants. The documents also reflect that insurgent leaders meticulously tracked developments on the international front, providing updates on high profile protests, international press coverage, denunciations by organizations such as the UN, and events like a "solidarity week" in Paris in early 1983.[166]

On February 8, 1982, guerrilla factions EGP, FAR, PGT, and ORPA joined forces for revolutionary unity, marking the founding of the URNG. While this moment marked a major

[164] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Letter to Solidarity Groups," February 1981, Archivo del Comité Holandés, Cartapaz 3, No. 72, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
[165] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "El EGP Informa: Coyuntura, Comunicados, Partes de Guerra, Boletines de Prensa," August 1982, MP-YC 78, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
[166] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "El EGP Informa, No. 4," February 1983, MP-YC 75, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.

development for the domestic coordination of fighting, it also carried implications for work on the international front. Organizations had developed international networks independently, and now hoped to be able to unify these networks into a single, strengthened movement in solidarity with Guatemala. URNG leadership identified the international front, along with urban guerrilla campaigns, as an area of work in which different factions had entrenched their positions and failed to collaborate with other organizations.[167] The EGP emphasized that "international solidarity is with the people of Guatemala as a whole and not with one organization or another individually."[168]

Although factions continued to distribute their own publications, the URNG used its platform to elevate the perspectives of the movement. For example, the URNG released a statement prior to the visit of Pope John Paul II to Guatemala in early 1983, an occasion that would bring the eyes of the Catholic world to the conflict.[169] The URNG urged the pope to "dialogue with the great majorities of Catholics, the impoverished, ladinos, and indigenous people" and also pointed to the "powerful anticatholic sects in the government," referring to the conservative protestant Ríos Montt.[170] Despite inevitable internal inconsistencies in its early years of operation, the unified guerrilla organization was able to project a singular message at international observers in this moment in a way that likely would have been challenging with four factions competing for global visibility. Another example of the utility of a unified front in international dealings is the URNG's engagement with the Non-Aligned Movement, which will be discussed further in the following section.

[167] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Circular de La Comision Ejecutiva de La DN a Todos Los Miembros Del EGP Sobre El Trabajo Unitario," March 1983, MP-YC 45, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
[168] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Bajo Las Banderas de La Unidad Revolucionaria," April 1983, 4–5, UCSD Special Collections.
[169] Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, "Declaración Con Ocasión de La Visita Del Papa a Guatemala," February 26, 1983, MP-YC 53, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
[170] Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca.

Guatemalan insurgent groups consistently called for the international dissemination of information regarding the war and, in particular, the indiscriminate violence of the military. They invested time and money into producing international bulletins, and used existing solidarity networks abroad to amplify distribution. For example, the EGP sent copies of *Compañero*, its international magazine, to Dutch solidarity leaders for distribution in the Netherlands. In its accompanying letter, the EGP highlighted how distribution would shed light on "the reality of the revolutionary struggle" and the ideological positions of the organization.[171] The EGP also requested payment of one dollar per copy to cover printing and shipping costs. In addition to distribution of materials, the EGP also called on solidarity groups to reproduce articles from the magazine in the newsletters and publications produced abroad.[172] Some newsletters included press releases, targeted toward the international press and solidarity organizations with hopes of further diffusion.[173] As I have demonstrated above, groups like NISGUA in the US heeded to these calls.

Another core component of strategy on the international front was protest and resistance against US foreign policy. Members of the Guatemalan revolutionary movement long understood their struggle as part of a long history of colonialism and foreign intervention. The CIA-backed 1954 coup that ended ten years of democratic rule constituted a key moment of recent history, and insurgents could easily point to Reagan's push for military aid as evidence of continued interventionism against the popular movement.[174] For Guatemalan insurgents, US-based audiences were a logical choice to help combat *el imperialismo yanqui*, as US policymakers would, in theory,

[171] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Carta al Comité Holandés," December 1982, Archivo del Comité Holandés, Cartapaz 3, No. 14, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
[172] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Letter to Solidarity Groups."
[173] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "El EGP Informa: Coyuntura, Comunicados, Partes de Guerra, Boletines de Prensa."
[174] "El Golpe de Estado Del 23 de Marzo y Las Tareas de Movimiento Revolucionario Guatemalteco," May 1982, 8–9, MP-YC 67, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica; Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, "Comunicado Internacional Urgente," May 4, 1982, Archivo del Comité Holandés, Signatura 1, No. 110, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.

be responsive to organized public outcry against aid, training, and logistical support for military operations in Central America. Furthermore, those who live in the metropole and have a social consciousness could possess an inherent understanding of the contradictions of this system and thereby be able to mobilize within and against that framework.[175]

In addition to standardized print materials sent to audiences in the US and western Europe, guerrilla leaders had direct engagement with solidarity leaders. In 1984, URNG leadership sent a letter to the coordinating committee of European solidarity groups requesting a meeting between European solidarity leaders and guerrilla officials tasked with managing affairs on the international front.[176] The letter's writer proposed an agenda comprised of a substantive update on the state of the conflict from the guerrillas, a discussion about "solidarity, its challenges, and its problems," and a statement of recognition for the recent fundraising campaign promoted by the Europeans. While it is unclear whether the meeting occurred, the request itself is indicative of a direct relationship between leaders of both sides. URNG officials were well aware of the need to understand the perspectives of the solidarity movements, and they demonstrated a willingness to listen and adjust strategy. It does not appear that there were regular in-person meetings between URNG delegations and solidarity leaders in the Global North. Given the timing of the meeting within a year of the end of Ríos Montt's presidency, it is likely that the gathering represented a collective reevaluation of strategy after a wave of mass killings against Indigenous communities.

As I mention above, Guatemalan insurgents engaged with solidarity networks as a source of financial support. While the 1984 URNG letter to European solidarity coordinators

[175] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Manifiesto Internacional"; "El Golpe de Estado Del 23 de Marzo y Las Tareas de Movimiento Revolucionario Guatemalteco."
[176] Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, "Carta a Coordinadora Europea de Comités de Solidaridad," June 2, 1984, Archivo del Comité Holandés, Signatura 1, No. 84, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.

acknowledging fundraising efforts, it did not include any detail about the nature of such campaigns or the destination of the funds.[177] It is also unclear whether this solidarity strategy originated from Guatemala or abroad. However, guerrilla leadership used this idea and worked to formulate campaigns throughout the war. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, *La Voz Popular*, the URNG's radio station, solicited over one hundred thousand dollars from abroad in order to upgrade equipment, train reporters, and maintain programming.[178] In the soliciting pamphlets, revolutionaries attempted to appeal to the liberal sensibilities of solidarity networks abroad. Hoping to reach a wider audience, they prefaced their materials with an introduction to the country and the state of the popular struggle, reminding readers that "Guatemala is a small country in Central America" and highlighting the sixty percent Indigenous population.[179] Donations were fuel for a "future of peace and liberty for Guatemala."[180] Donors were not sending money to further a revolutionary program to reshape Guatemala, but rather to support the dissemination of information and freedom of press.

In their international messaging, Guatemalan insurgent groups attempted to cultivate a sense of reciprocity in their audience. Central in these communications was that solidarity networks abroad were not merely passive observers of the war. Rather, they were *compañeros* of the international front. By incorporating solidarity activists, at least rhetorically, into their movement, the insurgency was able to provide concrete incentives for action abroad by reinforcing the ways that such action can make a difference. In a mailing commemorating the eleventh anniversary of the EGP's founding, the organization included letters from soldiers of the Frente

[177] Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca.
[178] Gerardo González, "Solicitud de Financiamiento: Capacitación Profesional y Apoyo Técnico Para La Voz Popular, Guatemala," circa -1996 1990, Archivo del Comité Holandés, Signatura 1, No. 10, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
[179] González.
[180] La Voz Popular, "Folleto," n.d., Archivo del Comité Holandés, Signatura 1, No. 12, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.

Guevara to solidarity networks abroad. One letter noted that hearing denunciations of military atrocities on international radio or via the BBC served as a reminder that "[insurgents] are not alone." The letter's writer implored the international audience to continue consciousness-raising work in the Global North, as "denunciation is another arm of the people's struggle for liberty."[181] International bulletins from various organizations frequently included sections to express immense appreciation for these denunciations, further reinforcing the idea of connection.[182]

In Europe, the URNG furthered this sense of involvement and connection by establishing a physical presence. In 1986, a URNG representative travelled to Europe, where he met with the London-based Guatemala Working Group and gave an interview for publication in their newsletter. In the interview, he highlighted the new civilian government's ties to military repression and reiterate the need for international supporters to continue monitoring human rights and material conditions of the masses.[183] In the late 1980s, Belisario Aldana served as the organization's representative in Belgium. While there is little information available regarding the extent of Aldana's activities and networking in Europe, his correspondence demonstrates an active working relationship with regional solidarity leaders.[184] Although the information he distributed, such as newsletters and recordings from *La Voz Popular*, were no different than those sent to groups in the US, it is likely that having a representative in Europe facilitated cooperation and fomented greater feelings of belonging and connection for those in solidarity networks. It is unclear where else the URNG may have stationed representatives. However, postmarks on international mailings suggests that guerrillas had bases of material support in Mexico City and Havana,

[181] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Carta Sobre Decimoprimero Aniversario," January 1983, MP-YC 125, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
[182] Frente Popular 31 de enero, "Boletín Internacional," 11.
[183] Guatemala Working Group, "Guatemala Update," Winter 1986, Archivo del Comité Holandés, Signatura 1, No. 61, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
[184] Belisario Aldana, "Carta a Grupos de Solidaridad," September 1988, Archivo del Comité Holandés, Signatura 1, No. 16, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.

although the postmarks could be due to the participation of Mexican or Cuban actors organizing on behalf of the insurgency rather than a concrete base of guerrilla operations.[185]

South-South Solidarity

While solidarity from the Global North grew in importance after 1980, expressions of South-South solidarity remained central to Guatemalan insurgent strategy. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Guatemalan insurgency had a long and intimate history of relations with the Global South. In the first two decades of the conflict were marked by an adherence to a discourse closely tied to the internationalist left in which insurgents sought to analyze their movement in the framework of historical and contemporary cases. However, after the opening of the International Front in 1980, relationships with the global south took on a tone of moral support and stated solidarity. The domestic terror inflicted by the army on Guatemala's civilian population, coupled with a losses by the global left and the rise of neoliberalism, contributed to this shift, as remaining revolutionary movements were less able to provide material support.

Insurgents appealed directly to actors in the Global South considered to be potentially supportive. Mexico, Guatemala's northern neighbor, held particular importance in solidarity relations. Attention given to Mexico is not surprising, as, in addition its proximity, the Mexican state also played a prominent role in regional political affairs via the Contadora group. As mentioned above, Mexico served as a base from which arms were transported to Guatemala and solidarity publications were printed and distributed. Additionally, Mexico was home to tens of thousands of refugees who fled from Guatemala because of the violence and destabilization of the

[185] Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, "Detalle Del Accionar Revolucionario Del 21 de Julio al 15 de Agosto de 1981," 1981, Archivo del Comité Holandés, Cartapaz 3, No. 61, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica; Frente Popular 31 de enero, "Boletín Internacional."

war.[186] As a result, the national press and local news outlets in the south consistently discussed the conflicts in Central America and their repercussions on Mexico. Because there was already sustained concern about Central American affairs, the URNG hoped to make these discussions favorable to their interests. In January 1988, URNG leadership sent a letter to a group of Mexican intellectuals lamenting the improved international image brought to Guatemala by the ascent to the presidency of civilian Christian Democrat Vinicio Cerezo two years prior. In the letter, the URNG also highlighted the consistent contributions of Mexican solidarity over the course of the war and urged for the continuation of discussions about the shortcomings and failures of the Cerezo presidency.[187] The tone of the letter to Mexican intellectuals is indicative of a shift in the optimism and end goals of the Guatemalan insurgency. In light of the challenges of the war, the URNG maintained that "with the participation and support of the best of Mexican intellectuals, the mission will not only be less arduous but will also cease being what sometimes seems unreachable."[188] Previously, insurgents talked about the certain victory that would come with the support of international solidarity. Now, solidarity would not make this path certain, or even more straightforward, but rather "less arduous."

As I examine in the previous chapter, Cuba's internationalist foreign policy in the 1960s and 1970s was influential for the ideological formation of Guatemalan insurgent leaders. Such connections would continue in the 1980s. FAR guerrilla Luis Domingo Ovalle Villatorio, part of a younger generation of insurgents, related how he had devoured texts related to Cuba as an eighteen-year-old who had fled to Sandinista Nicaragua for safety. In his memoir, he claimed to

[186] María Cristina García, *Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Beatriz Manz, *Refugees of a Hidden War: The Aftermath of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987).
[187] Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, "Letter to Mexican Intellectuals," January 1988, Archivo del Comité Holandés, Signatura 1, No. 50, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
[188] Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca.

have arrived in Cuba in 1985 for a journalism course and subsequently as a representative of the URNG in the Youth and Student Dialogue of Latin America and the Caribbean on Foreign Debt as a naïve young man. He left having initiated the growth of his "growing political ideological conviction and my love for the Cuban Revolution."[189]

Another form of South-South solidarity resembled traditional interstate diplomacy. The URNG engaged in global forums alongside governments of the Global South. One example is the URNG's involvement with the Non-Aligned Movement. In fact, non-alignment was listed as one of the core tenets of the unified revolutionary front upon its founding.[190] Yet, this was much more than an ideological statement. It also facilitated the creation of political ties and the cultivation of solidarity among other members of the movement. In 1986, these diplomatic ties increased in importance as a civilian became Guatemala's president for the first time in decades, improving the country's international image. That year, the URNG sent a delegation to the eighth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Harare, Zimbabwe.[191] In the final declarations of the summit, world leaders of the movement expressed encouragement with the establishment of a civilian government yet concern with continued violence and abuses of human rights in Guatemala.[192] Although the declaration praised the "process of democratization initiated by this constitutional government," a narrative highly disputed by the URNG, it also called for the inclusion "of all sections of the population in the search for a political solution" to the civil war.[193] In a short article about the experience printed in the URNG's international newsletter, the guerrillas put a positive spin on

[189] Luis D Ovalle Villatorio, *Historias y Anécdotas Guerrilleras* (Guatemala City: Self-published, 2020), 44.
[190] Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, "Unitary Statement from the Revolutionary Organizations to the People of Guatemala," January 1982, WOLA, box 162-173, Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Human Rights Archive, Duke University.
[191] Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, "Boletin Internacional, No. 1," October 25, 1986, 6–8, MSS 272, box 4, folder 13, Margarita Melville Papers, UCSD Special Collections.
[192] United Nations, "Final Documents of Eighth Conference of Non-Aligned Movement," September 1986.
[193] United Nations, 112.

their efforts in international diplomacy.[194] The final declaration upheld the antiimperialist principles fundamental to the revolutionary struggle. Additionally, the summit gave insurgents an opportunity to raise awareness, and their message "was widely circulated among governments, delegations and the international press," along with a feature in Zimbabwe's main newspaper. The URNG delegation to Zimbabwe illustrates the challenges of engaging in state-to-state diplomacy as well as the benefit of generating conversation and attention for Guatemala.

Conclusion

The 1980s dawned on Central America with a newfound sense of optimism for the forces of revolution. The 1979 Sandinista victory in Nicaragua had sparked important shifts for insurgents in nearby Guatemala. With a concrete example of a successful Central American socialist guerrilla movement, hopes soared and strategy shifted to accommodate a new global environment in which Central America was at the forefront of Cold War political tensions. Guatemalan insurgents carefully cultivated their image abroad and established several publications aimed at influencing international opinion. In the Global North, activists formed organizations around protesting human rights abuses and interventionist US foreign policy. The two sides were attentive to each other's moves and played off of one another in order to best advance the interests of their respective movements. As the trajectory of the conflict shifted, so did the nature of these relationships. In the early 1980s, solidarity was framed as a key component of victory, but by the end of the decade, the insurgency had suffered immense military and political losses. As revolutionaries entered into UN-brokered peace negotiations with the government, it became crucial to influence global public opinion in their favor, so insurgents leaned further into discourses of democracy and human rights,

[194] Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, "Boletin Internacional, No. 1."

themes palatable to their mainstream global audience. Although the insurgency attained little success when measuring against their stated goals in the early 1980s, international solidarity impacted the trajectory of the conflict. As the insurgency's position became increasingly precarious, they knew they could mobilize networks abroad that, even if not in agreement about the ideology of armed socialist revolution, would reliably align against the violent actions of the military. As a result, developing an analysis of the role of solidarity in the Guatemalan Civil War is crucial in understanding the trajectory of the conflict as a whole and its place in a history of the Cold War in Latin America.

CONCLUSION

In May 2013, Efraín Ríos Montt was convicted on charges of genocide. The eighty-six-year-old former president was sentenced to eighty years in prison for the Guatemalan army's scorched earth campaign against Indigenous communities during his nearly seventeen months in charge of the country between 1982 and 1983.[195] This moment came as part of a long process of reckoning since the signing of the UN-facilitated Peace Accords in 1996. The Historical Clarification Commission (CEH), led by German law professor Christian Tomuschat investigated army massacres and pushed for those in power to be held accountable in their extensive report released in 1999. In addition to the CEH, grassroots activists sifted through archives and grappled with the intense repression of the civil war.[196] While the truth commission conducted its work, the URNG became a political party and many of its members entered into electoral politics. While the party never achieved success at the polls, figures formerly associated with the insurgency like Pablo Monsanto, Gaspar Ilom, and Rigoberta Menchú remained on the national political stage. Monsanto went on to be federal deputy, while all three would run for president in the early 2000s. Monsanto ran again for federal deputy in 2019, when he called for further democratization and lamented that the Peace Accords were never fully implemented.[197] Although Guatemala no longer attracts the international attention that it once did, an understanding of the transnational engagement of the insurgency during the war is central to making sense of the left that would emerge after 1996, a far cry from the revolutionary drive of the 1960s and 1970s. Tracing the

[195] Elisabeth Malkin, "Former Leader of Guatemala Is Guilty of Genocide Against Mayan Group," *New York Times*, May 11, 2013, sec. A.
[196] Kirsten Weld, *Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).
[197] "Entrevista Con Anibal Samayoa y Pablo Monsanto, Candidatos a Diputados" (Guatemala City: Guatevisión, June 7, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/live/y0PdwXeO8x8?feature=share.

internationalist left and solidarity linkages allows scholars to contextualize Guatemalan electoral politics within the shifting goals and strategies of the insurgency and understand how leftists could fight for their ideals through fundamentally different national and global circumstances. The move into electoral politics UN-backed attempts at promoting memory and remembrance was a new chapter in a long history of transnational engagement.

As I discuss in this thesis, transnational engagement was a fundamental part of the formation, development, and tactics of the Guatemalan left throughout the war. This engagement took many forms, from military training and ideological instruction in Vietnam to participation in public talks in Washington. The effects touched insurgent morale, strategy, and discourse. Across the world, artists, activists, and academics also understood the civil war in a global context. US-based muralists covered the walls of San Francisco's Mission District, while members of solidarity organizations in the Netherlands organized to fund supplies *La Voz Popular*, the URNG's radio station. Each side took personal meaning in their own activities, as participants viewed their work as supporting human rights and liberal democracy or advancing a leftist revolution aimed at overthrowing an oppressive class structure. Despite the diversity of meanings and interpretations created by those involved with this process, actors in Guatemala and abroad collaborated, negotiated these meanings, and figured out how to advance their personal and collective projects. For all, this meant being attentive to global currents and political shifts, and then adapting appropriately. Actors in these networks constantly shaped these global currents, and constantly played off of the responses of others, establishing a mutually constitutive set of relations.

Guatemala today bears the scars of a thirty-six-year civil war on its human landscape, forever altered by the great portion of the country's population that was displaced or died. Much of the memory of the civil war, however, remains outside of Guatemala. Hundreds of thousands

fled during the war as part of the Central American diaspora. The histories of these individuals and communities are inherently transnational. Not only did they traverse borders at some point, but they also interacted with townspeople, local officials, development promoters, religious leaders, and representatives from international bodies like the UN. These histories constitute an important next step in understanding the Guatemalan Civil War through a transnational lens.

Future Research: The Central American Refugee Crisis and Global Refugee Politics

On July 28, 1999, Japanese diplomat and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata visited Santo Domingo Kesté, a town in the Mexican state of Campeche that had been settled in 1984 by Guatemalan refugees fleeing army violence. There, she described a collaborative refugee program led by the Guatemalan and Mexican governments, NGOs, and refugee leaders. Ogata also lauded the UN's efforts in promoting economic development and a path to naturalization for the refugees, expressing the hope that "other refugees, in other parts of the world, will be able to share the positive fate of those who came from Guatemala to Mexico."[198]

In July 2022, I met with Doña Marta, an Ixil Guatemalan who has called the town of Los Laureles, Campeche, Mexico home for four decades. The town, along with many others, was founded in the 1980s as part of a highly lauded initiative by the United Nations and Mexican government to support long-term economic solutions for Guatemalans fleeing war at home. Rather than tell a tale of successful aid to refugees, Doña Marta described feelings of abandonment by national and international authorities. The Mexican government had never granted her citizenship,

[198] Sadako Ogata, "Remarks at the Ceremony of Closure of the Guatemalan Repatriation and Reintegration Programme, Santo Domingo Kesté, Campeche, Mexico" (United Nations, July 28, 1999), https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/admin/hcspeeches/3ae68fc22c/remarks-mrs-sadako-ogata-united-nations-high-commissioner-refugees-ceremony.html.

a centerpiece of aid programs, which prevented her from receiving important services. Doña Marta described the state of uncertainty that refugees experienced for years as authorities restricted their movements, failed to establish consistent schooling practices, and stood idly while refugee leaders allotted land unevenly among community members. Her experiences raise many questions that interrogate the complexity of Mexican and international refugee policy in this period. How did Central American refugees navigate the geopolitical dynamics of UN and Mexican refugee programs? How did they give meaning to the competing identities and citizenships that emerged from this process?

Scholarship on Central American refugees has increasingly understood them as global actors, highlighting their interactions with solidarity movements and international institutions.[199] However, more research needs to be done to understand the ways that these individuals and communities exerted agency on the various institutional authorities at the local, national, and international levels. This approach to understanding the transnational components of the Central American civil wars serves to put at the center those whose lives were deeply impacted by the upheaval of the conflicts. In doing so, we can develop a more thorough and more human understanding of the far-reaching implications of the Guatemalan Civil War.

[199] García, *Seeking Refuge: Central American Migration to Mexico, the United States, and Canada*; Arón Enrique Pérez Durán, "Barreras Educativas: El Caso de Rosa Raymundo Terraza, Los Laureles, Campeche, México," *IC Investig@ción* 18 (November 2020): 264–85; Manz, *Refugees of a Hidden War: The Aftermath of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala*; Clark Taylor, *Return Of Guatemala's Refugees: Reweaving the Torn* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); Nolan-Ferrell, "Pedimos Posada: Local Mediators and Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico, 1978-1984"; Molly Todd, "The Politics of Refuge: Salvadoran Refugees and International Aid in Honduras," in *Human Rights and Transnational Solidarity in Cold War Latin America*, ed. Jessica Stites Mor (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 209–36; Cécile Rousseau and Maria Morales, "Going Home: Giving Voice to Memory Strategies of Young Mayan Refugees Who Returned to Guatemala as a Community," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 25, no. 2 (2001): 135–68; Paula Worby, "A Generation after the Refugees' Return: Are We There Yet?," in *War by Other Means: Aftermath in Post-Genocide Guatemala*, ed. Carlota McAllister (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 330–52.

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